

**IGBO SOCIALISM: A HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH TO THE  
CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY**

***Eruka, C. Raphael, Ph. D.***

*Department of Philosophy,*

*Madonna University Nigeria, Okija Campus, Anambra State.*

*drerukar@gmail.com*

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**Abstract**

*The historical reality of ideological systems constructions has always tended to project the theoretics and pragmatics inherent in the perspectives of socialism and its sometimes necessary preceding capitalist practice. These have remained global theories and socio-cultural movements since social and political economies are part and parcel of global cultural realities. The era of pure ideological systems constructions and the economic and political anti-parties they tend to garner seem to be now part of a definite historical past as most of the global community moves towards a post-ideological socio-economic welfare of the mixed economy type. If this postulation remains true to current realities, then there are grounds to entertain the point that the people's collective consciousness tilts in the direction of socialism. There is a move towards the realization of some of the ends of socialism without the attempt at the adoption of the explicit theory from the scientific standpoint and the implications thereof. Socialism can be said to be true to human nature even if this does not imply wholesale historical socialism of the West. This entails that when reference is made to socialism in a work of this nature, such reference is not to a univocal conception of the theory. All socialism has not been the product of the type of struggles that characterized the occidental and oriental theories of the same. The paper settles for Igbo-African socialism which is less popularized historically with less literary pool to its credit. Modal socialisms of the cultural type have remained existential realities in traditional communities. It is a theory of socio-economic-pragmatism and even moral didacticism since cultural peoples not only lived it but somehow made it a dependent factor in the whole valuation of their existence. Traditional socialism provides lots of theoretical insights through its generational value appreciation but these are from posterior systematic reflections concerning its true end. In this work, an effort has been made at extracting salient values from the socialist ideology of the Igbo past. The methodology used in highlighting theories and behaviours within a given worldview and recommending implementable policies in light of the current Nigerian situation was derived from the wider hermeneutical context.*

**Keywords:** Igbo Socialism, Hermeneutics, Nigerian Society, Didacticism

## **Introduction**

The Igbo was, and remains to an extent a traditional people; a people who possess cultural values to which they continue to look back to draw modalities for some of their programs. Perhaps one question that may toss itself in some minds is whether the existence of Igbo socialism should be taken for granted. Given the conditions that have thrown up socialism in the West and their oriental counterpart, one may begin to wonder when such upheavals ever occurred and their place at all in the socio-cultural values of the Igbo people! Igbo socialism was never premiered on any disruptive pre-conditioning and probably for this reason the non- or less- a dramatization of its existence remains an essential part of its features. There may be a need to mention that this being the case, human nature remains the same. If socialism in its fundamentals is a value that springs from human nature, that is, in its true and humanizing form, then, it must be, in its essentials, common to humanity. If the Igbo know themselves truly as a people that appreciate the development and the good that go with it, this includes the knowledge that socialism is part of their cultural values. The Igbo may not have thought out socialism from the intellectual and ideological viewpoint, but if they reflected at all and this they do all the time, it must be apparent that this socio-economic system exists and operates in their way of living. This is expected since socialism is understood to be a theory of justice – mankind’s aspiration within cultural realities to address the contradictions occasioned by needless actions and inactions of the people. What is required is a systematic reflection as to what socialism entails and how it operates in the uniqueness of the people’s cultural realities.

Heraclitus of Ephesus gave orientation to this perspective when he stated in fragments 113 and 116 that thought and reflective activity remain common heritage of mankind; hear him, ‘The thinking faculty is common to all’ (Kaufmann, 1963, 18; frg116). Of course, if it is the case that man is a rational animal, a thinking being – *res cogitans* – in the Cartesian sense; ‘a thinking reed’ in Pascalian view, then, the fact of thought and, or reflective activity can be predicated of all men (Okolo, 1993, 1).

‘All men are granted what is needed for knowing oneself and sane thinking’, (Kaufmann, 1963, 20; frg113). If this is true, as Heraclitus claims, then what poses a problem is the capacity to make explicit the fundamentally implicit; for, it is no simple task to really know oneself and think sanely. All problems of society stem from this inability to self-comprehend; self-grasp and achieve sanity in reflective engagement.

All men have the capacity of knowing themselves and acting with moderation (Freeman, 1956, 32; frg116). Freeman is struggling to render the same thought of Heraclitus that Kaufmann dealt with above, in a different translation. In this case, what Kaufmann understood as ‘sane thinking’ translates to ‘acting with moderation’. Whether understood

from the cognitive perspective or the moral, the value and virtue being advocated point to the sanitization of society through human reflective activity and action. It is all about seeking to think and do the right things; thinking and realizing the positive contents of thought in human action or existential praxis.

The implication of the above reflection, among others, is that the Igbo society, then and now, was; and, is still, not only a predictable subject of that which is essentially human but has as well demonstrated the capacity for the existential realization, in the course of history, of the praxiological content of positive socialist value reflection. If this did characterize their lived condition at some point in history, it makes sense to try to see how much could be re-enacted, as applicable, in the larger context of Nigeria's contemporary struggles to achieve better existential value for her citizens.

### **Socialism**

The first step towards understanding the meaning of socialism is that it is an economic system whereby in its organized variants, the government owns the means of production. Here, 'the state controls the means of production and distribution of goods' (Omoregbe, 2007, p. 7). These means of production include land, labour, capital and entrepreneur. The reason for this is to foster economic justice. People pool their resources together under government ownership to get a fair share of the proceeds of their collective labour. Socialism is always a collective enterprise. In essence, it does away with individualism and the healthy or unbridled competitive spirit inherent in the capitalist system. Socialism values cooperation for economic welfare. 'It creates a sense of altruism (consideration for the welfare of others) in every citizen and encourages all citizens to work together for the common good of all (Omoregbe, 2007, p. 7; Omoregbe, 2007, p. 39). The people collaborate for their good. The operating principle that is fundamental to socialism is distribution. The emphasis is on the fair distribution of the proceeds of labour rather than on acquisition, especially of the maximal type that places the ultimate premium on mere material value and what it is meant to represent.

Socialism is not the ideology of a unilateral system: it has no absolute claims that pertain to it unilaterally in the strict sense but within the socialist system, there are broad characterizations. Scientific socialism is a prominent variant. It is usually based on the Marxian paradigms of thought. Its main features include the recognition of class distinctions between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat – whereby the former refers to the capitalist while the latter refers to the poor and peasants. The struggle between the classes has remained a historical development that was a feature of historical epochs and whatever represented classism in given historical periods. The history of mankind has

been that of class struggles (Marx & Engels, 1990, p. 13). Scientific socialism was a function of Marxian dialectics – a historical dialectical process that would usher in the realization of Marx's dreams. Marx believed in the possibility of the catalysis of the process through violent struggle. For Marx, the historical-dialectical process is inexorable since he believes that capitalism contains within itself contradictions that would be its undoing (Omogbe, 1991, p. 150). Buzuev put it differently: according to him, capitalism would eventually 'go down under the weight of its contradictions' (Buzuev, 1987, p. 12). Not all socialist ideologies are scientific or Marxian. Marxian scientific socialism failed to grasp the dynamic principle in the human socio-economic sense which has made concerned humanistic consciences re-engineer economic theories for successful welfarist adaptation. The evils of capitalism are factual; but, it is also true that there are within capitalism those who recognize these evils and opt for strategies to cushion them. However, barring its scientific fundamentals and the projection of violent struggles and the over-arching consequences, Marxism does maintain elements of goodwill.

Socialism is not synonymous with Marxism or scientific socialism. There are other variants which may take their departure from scientific socialism, or affirm its radical principles. In his 'Ideology for Nigeria', Zik hinted at the existence of many other socialism brands, some of which include utopian socialism, Christian socialism, Democratic socialism, Guild socialism, Fabian socialism, and Evolutionary socialism (Omogbe, 2007, p. 40). The emergence and existence of many strands of socialism can be explained from the point of view that some of these ideologies consciously moved to free themselves from some of the serious pitfalls of Marxism while others may have evolved unobtrusively from the cultural realities and developmental needs of the people.

### **African Socialism**

In its African variant, mainly of the Nyerere strand, socialism is an attitude of the mind. This is what needs to be emphasized although it does take into cognizance the reality of poverty and want especially in the African post-colonial era. It is not necessarily the quantum of material wealth or the lack thereof that determines who is a socialist (Nyerere 1963:9). However, wealth and poverty must intersperse themselves in any discourse on socialism that is meant to bear fruit. The foundation of socialism is the psychological orientation of the people towards its core values. It is the orientation towards reaching out to others in the spirit of justice and welfare. This reaching out is an all-ramification requirement – the rich towards the poor; and this, in all emphasis and of course, the poor towards the rich – especially in terms of attitudes and relations. The cause of relations is socio-economic to entrench a collective just socio-economic system. African socialism promotes hard work. It encourages the generating of wealth in increasing proportions

through fair means – industry and human welfare sensitivity in this process. It works to ensure economic security, especially for children, the infirm and the aged. Socialism is a practice that entrenches in its operation the concept of African brotherhood. In African socialism, the poor retain dignity and guaranteed welfare is structured into the system for their sustenance. The wealthy are respected for their status and discipline. Emphasis is on values that pertain to man and not the material conditions prevalent in society. In traditional African communities, socialism is not a full government policy since labour is not always collectivized and individual enterprise and profiteering are parts of the practice. Julius Nyerere made concerted but unsuccessful efforts in the days of Africa's independence to raise this traditional practice to a state policy. This effort among others helped in articulating the principles of this practice for the comity of nations and as such contributed to lots of literary output to the credit of African socialism.

Nyerere believes that 'Socialism is essentially distributive' (Nyerere, 1963, p. 11). The distributive propensity of socialism is a core value of the socioeconomic system. This can only be viewed further in value-diametrical opposition to capitalism which has as its core value the accumulation of capital. 'For it is not the efficiency of production, nor the amount of wealth in a country, which makes millionaires; it is the uneven distribution of what is produced' (Nyerere, 1963, p. 9). Socialism essentializes the distributive motif and its realization in the practical details of lived conditions. However, it must have to be stressed that mere material distribution is not a sufficient factor for economic redress; there must be in a place other factors that have to aid the distribution process to ensure stable, reliable and sustainable economic well-being. Perhaps, this is why Nyerere believes that the term 'socialist' is not an absolute designation for the poor or peasants. The term cuts across the board in its connotations such that the materially rich can fit into the larger interpretation. Hear him, 'A millionaire can equally well be a socialist; he may value his wealth only because it can be used in the service of his fellow men' (Nyerere, 1963, p. 9). It is in this scenario that the attitude of the mind which ought to define a socialist is brought into play. Even the poor can be anti-socialist, indeed, potential capitalists if given the opportunity are bent on exploiting their fellow men and women. Ochieng'-Odhiambo understands Nyerere as saying that 'destitute people can be potential capitalists, exploiters of their fellow human beings (Ochieng'-Odhiambo 1994, p. 77). Ultimately, socialism is a psychological disposition or predisposition; even possibly a spiritual worldview that interprets wealth in terms of its utilization for the welfare of others, especially the poor. Thus, the materially wealthy can be rightly said to be rich and poor at the same time; poverty here is the result of what Nyerere would refer to as an attitude of mind that favours wealth distribution.

The larger picture of successful socialist claims is to be seen in its collective effects on the lived condition of the people. African socialism left people secure. Economic security is a goal worth aspiring towards. Economically secure people imply a stable society with the capacity to make strides towards prosperity. Nyerere noted the significance of this achievement when he opined that ‘One of the most socialist achievements of our society was the sense of security it gave to its members and the universal hospitality on which they could rely’ (Nyerere, 1963, p. 12). Social and economic security is the panacea to most of the vices and ills of society. This, therefore, is preventative of future disruptions in the social equilibrium just as it ensures a sense of well-being at the time. Brotherhood, fellowship and the feeling of togetherness to an extent result from a stable and ordered society where people are not easily distracted by needless or avoidable wants. African relationship is usually a web; extending outwards from the family origin. Hospitality results from the distributive attitude of the mind which becomes realizable in value distribution to the stranger, including the material component. By the same token, the Africans care for the stranger in all respects – proper guidance, security, material need and good social relations. The presence of these underlying values among Africans links them to fellowship. Nyerere maintains that ‘The true African socialist does not look on one class of men as his brethren and another as his natural enemies. He does not ally with the ‘brethren’ for the extermination of the ‘non-brethren’ (Nyerere, 1963, p. 17). The concept of brotherhood is germane to African socialism although the Nyerere vision of it has been subjected to lots of critical reflection by scholars such as Erumebva who makes distinctions based on sanguinity and outside of this for mere co-operative ventures (Erumebva 1985:195 – 197). However, African brotherhood cashes in on sanguinity but in Nyerere’s postulation, it ought to go beyond this to the brotherhood of mankind.

Weighing the values in-store from an analysis of the pristine African society, Nyerere underscores and thereby recommends that ‘Our first step, therefore, must be to re-educate ourselves; to retain our former attitude of the mind. In our traditional African society, we were individuals within a community. We took care of the community, and the community took care of us. We neither needed nor wished to exploit our fellow men (Nyerere, 1963, p. 13). Nyerere tends to portray that these values inherent in the cultural past may have been lost to the present value system, hence the need to re-awaken our sense of values in the direction of things that made the past thick.

‘African socialism is a belief in sharing economic resources in a ‘traditional’ African way, as distinct from classical socialism. Many African politicians of the 1950s and 1960s professed their support for African socialism, although definitions and interpretations of this varied considerably’ (Wikipedia). It has to be pointed out that Nyerere’s Ujamaa is not all there is to African socialism. There are other articulations with minor variants.

However, the main elements of African socialism are clearly articulated in Nyerere's Ujamaa. Others include Senghor's 'African socialism' (Ruch & Anyanwu, 1984, p. 225); Nkrumah's African Socialism (Egbomuche-Okeke, 2006, pp. 65 -66). Nkrumah was credited as one of the founding fathers of African socialism alongside Nyerere (Hallen, 2002, p. 72). However, Nkrumah's ideological affiliation to Marxism is obvious and this exposes his ideological claim to Africanity as potentially arguable. Ruch and Anyanwu, discuss Senghor's position on Nkrumah's socialism critiquing especially its metaphysical foundations as unfit to deliver credible African socialism (Ruch & Anyanwu, 1984, p. 211). From another perspective, Zik's African socialism epitomized in his Neo-Welfarism is well known, and so is Awolowo's Democratic Socialism; Tom Mboya's 'African socialism and Mobutu's 'African Authenticite'. In the immediate post-independence era for Africa, the new direction being sought was not going to be a new invention of sociopolitical and socioeconomic theories but the patient discovery of the past and its value-laden socioeconomic realities. The African leaders of that era strongly believed this; although they had to wrestle with forces quite opposed to the long-term socioeconomic transformation of the continent consequent on the recourse to the application of these principles.

The synthesis of core socialist values of the African mode as shown above include orientation towards a fair distribution of wealth; program for economic security; hospitality as an African value premised on hard work; anthropocentric consideration as against mere material conditions for valuation of the human person; brotherhood as against antihuman orientation; the moral sense dimension in which case the value of the human person becomes part of political economy; the attempt to integrate traditional values into the African political system as best interpreted by the African politicians for the welfare of the people in its widest possible extension.

### **Igbo socialism**

Why is this emphasis on socialism part of the tradition of the Igbo people? Igbo socialism needs this qualification because of its link to the past. The origin of the ideology may lack historical dating though it can be said that it is as old as the people and an inherent component of their cultural development. To a large extent, pristine Igbo communities depended on this practice to solve some of their problems. Because the principles and practice were clearer then, a discourse on Igbo socialism of contemporary times tends to point to the nostalgia for the glories of its past practices in the lives of the people. Because socialist past values were considered almost sacred and the practice then more extensive, the ideological link to tradition has become essential. Due mainly to the vagaries of time

socialism practice in Igbo land, there is a need for a hermeneutic of Igbo socialism for the present. Socialism for the Igbo is not a singular pursuit to the exclusion of every other socio-economic perspective. It was never pursued in its purity as a system that solely defined their lives. This explains the fact that no drama was woven into its development and practice nor did it know theoretical amplification or fundamentalist operational approach. What was woven into it rather naturally was its unpretentiousness, simplicity or lack of complications; its steady and stealthy operations and consequently its impactful results in the lives of the people.

Igbo socialism needs this continual analysis, proper contextualization and critical ideological exploration to be able to contribute to a wider developmental scope. Before delving into aspects of Igbo socialism of the past, a look into the method that would be used to understand it better would be relevant to the study. In this light, the effort would be shifted below to the definition, explanation and understanding of the hermeneutic method – a socio-literary and scientific tool for textual and socio-historical interpretation of meaning embedded in texts, thought patterns, social conditions and world-views of the people at given era or times.

### **Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics as the science of textual interpretation and criticism is recent in its development. According to Hallen, the methodological investigation commonly used in African philosophy has been the analysis, this having been borrowed from the analytic school. He recommends that another approach deserves consideration, and in this he points to hermeneutics. His views: ‘Up to this point, the only mainstream methodological approach to the discipline that has been explored in any detail is that conventionally referred to as analysis or analytic philosophy. Another approach that deserves consideration is that derived from the phenomenological tradition and is conventional, at least as far as its African manifestations are concerned, referred to as hermeneutics’ (Hallen, 2002, p. 56). Hermeneutics attempts to critique and render meaning where values could be blurred by the passage of time. Its successful deployment in the un-earthing or uncovering of obscured meaning from historical texts has resulted in its application to wider spheres where textual criticism could be replaced by that of human behaviour. Textual critique transposes to the critical examination of human behaviour in socio-cultural contexts. Martin Heidegger noted that philosophy should be hermeneutical (Madu, 1992, p. 3) dealing with, and from manifest content and meaning to *hidden meaning*. Philosophy should be able to deal with meaning and offer explanations or interpretations in given contexts. It should, for instance not be taken for granted that world views of the past would be outright plainly or clearly understood by every other age.



Symbolisms of a given age may be subject to interpretation to be grasped by eras widely separated from one another by the passage of time. Friedrich Schleiermacher applied hermeneutics *generally* forming the basis for the interpretation of all kinds of texts (Madu, 1992, p. 9). In Wilhelm Dilthey's hands, hermeneutics had to cover other fields of inquiry especially the humanities and social sciences (Encyclopedia Hutchinson). The development of the discipline that began with scriptural texts gradually included secular literature, world views and finally human behaviour.

One understanding of hermeneutics is that it is 'The science of interpretation or exegesis of Scripture' (Thinkexist.com). Hermeneutics is popularly comprehended in this function of being used to unravel the hidden meanings in scriptural passages since the cultural background, linguistic modes and their expressions were peculiar to given cultures and times. Hermeneutics is not only meant to be used in the interpretation of Judeo-Christian texts of remote antiquity but also for other such texts such as the historical Hindu or Buddhist texts of the remote past. Hermeneutics comes from 'The Greek word meaning to explain or interpret ... the science which fixes the principles for the interpretation of sacred writings' (probertencyclopedia). It is clear from here that Hermeneutics has to do with hidden meaning; with the tendency to make the implicit in texts quite explicit.

What is true is that it is not only texts that contain what can be viewed as obscure. Human behaviour and certain practices can remain obscure to others especially if they are separated from the worldview and culture therein by time. To this extent, Hermeneutics remains 'The philosophical tradition concerned with the nature of understanding and interpretation of human behaviour and social traditions' (The History Channel). Social conditions, realities, behaviour patterns and world views may remain meaningless to a given people of any age if not subjected to interpretation, explication and simplification through the modernization of a clearly understood linguistic vehicle.

Hermeneutics has known modifications as a socio-scientific tool of interpretation. The application has been extended to 'The study of the interpretation of human behaviour and social institutions, and in existentialist thought, the discussion of the purpose of life' (The History Channel). It would be right to indicate that Hermeneutics remains applicable to making clear what could be unclear by lack of proper contextualization and interpretation. A grip on this science is the main role of the philosophical enterprise (Immanuel Kant).

From the above, it is clear that hermeneutics is the science of interpretation, explanation, elucidation, understanding and critical approach to the meaning of either scriptural/literary texts; world views or human behaviour. It makes meaning and values in historical epochs present to the other by way of contextual rendering of meanings. Kant

has only emphasized that this methodology is so significant that philosophy can no longer afford to do away with it; thus, it remains an essential tool in philosophizing as need be.

### **Igbo socialism – elements of socio-economic values**

The elements of socioeconomic values are dimensions of Igbo socialism conceived of the poor and people that fall within the category of the needy on systemic or circumstantial accounts. Inherent in all socialisms is a philosophical reflection on social realities and the possibility of systems-inbuilt welfare. Are there such in-built factors for balance or fairness in traditional Igbo socialism? Any discourse on such provisions has to hinge on theories that highlight nature's tendency in this regard and man's attempt to replicate such tendencies in spheres of human existence. There are concretizations of these tendencies in Igbo thought. These find expressions in various genres – for instance in adages or proverbs and figures of speech. Instances can only be attempted here; and although these can lend weight to the research, there may be a need for complementation from plain illustrations both of the way nature acts and the logic of men follow up or modelling in this regard. Here are a few instantiations of these thought forms:

#### **Proverbs**

- (1) Akidi a maghi oke ala
- (2) Ohia na-aso nkata ha efule eru
- (3) Ugbogiri miaram miara nwunye dim
- (4) Eshiu na-enwegi odu, chi ya na-egburu ya ijiji
- (5) Onyishi a magi ihe o ga-eri ma chi efoghi
- (6) Onu akoro nwa ogbenye bu chi ya ka akoro

#### **Gwam gwam genre**

- (1) Gwam gwam gwam ihe kuru aka baa ohia
- (2) Gwam gwam gwam ihe muru nwa a na-apiwa onu

#### **Miscellaneous genres**

- (1) O ji ofo ga-ala
- (2) O ji nwayoo anaghi emeru ahu
- (3) Uwa bu nke onye?
- (4) Onye choo ighotacha ukpaka miri ya, o were isi kelee ala
- (5) Aka ajaja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu

### **Synthesizing the genres as paths to Igbo thought**

*Akidi a maghi oke ala* (As it grows, the Igbo black bean spreads wherever it pleases). This spread includes places where it was not (before). The nuance here is towards the principle of distribution, especially where there is a need. In reality, the growing black bean is tended such that it grows within the land boundary of the owner.

*Ohia na-aso nkata ya efule eru* (The bush that does not welcome the presence of the local Igbo basket should not grow mushroom). If mushroom germinates in such bush, then the locals would like to take their basket into it to harvest the mushroom. Nature gives freely especially the essentials of life: when and wherever nature chooses to do this, the people understand and go for these goods.

*Ugbogiri miaram miara nwunye dim*: (May my pumpkin grow: may my neighbor's grow too). Rather, may my farm do well; may my neighbor's do well too! This is all about this sense of justice: a psychological orientation that wishes one's neighbor the good that one had wished oneself: the disposition to realize where possible whatever good nature has to offer for the welfare of all. This reflects the socialist attitude of the mind which Nyerere taught with passion.

*Eshiu enweghi odu, chi ya na-egburu ya ijiji*: (The tailless cow's god chases away flies for it!) In proportion to need, unseen forces intervene positively in the affairs of men. Traditional Igbo socialism goes beyond material dialectics to emphasize relation to positive non-material personal forces. This is all in relation to socioeconomic forces and beyond it to the forces of life generally where the humanistic conscience must have to be brought to bear in the matrixes, webs and fabrics of Igbo existence.

*Onyishi a maghi ihe o ga-eri ma chi efoghi*: (The village head does not know the edible things that would come his way until day break). Each day comes with its peculiarities with reference to blessings. Rather than particularizing this to the village head, this is a general principle. Even the ordinary local lives on positive expectation. Each day unwraps its contents (what it has in store) for the person. The issue here is the need to live in faith, work, hope and, or positive expectation.

*Onu akoro nwa ogbenye, o bu chi ya ka akoro*: (To tell the poor off is to tell his or her chi off). The unseen force becomes a recurring theme in Traditional Igbo social relations. It is all about this anthropocentric sensitivity: the awareness to handle the plight of ordinary locals with care. The Igbo believes in dualisms, in the essence of the thing; the supporting force in the background. The poor or peasants are never alone – their chi (guarding spirit) is always in the background, watching over their affairs.

**The gwam gwam genre:** the form is that of conducting public and socio-culturally related quizzes with poetic rhythm: *gwam gwam gwam ihe kuru aka baa ohia*: (Tell me that which clapped hands and landed in the bush). Of course, the answer is ukpaka – oil bean (the mature and dry oil bean fruit which breaks noisily, especially in the heat of the dry season and scatters its seeds in the near and far-away open fields. This again captures this principle of distribution in the socialist system. Reaching out and touching the other positively remains a cardinal socialist feature in the worldview of pristine Igbo societies.

*Gwam gwam gwam ihe muru nwa a na-apiwa onu*: (Tell me the parent whose offspring's mouth is always being squeezed open). The answer is udara (the Igbo sweet apple). Why is this fruit being squeezed open all the time? This is because the tree fruits generously and falls for whoever is passing by. Some go beyond this and try to harvest the ripe fruits with strong sticks thrown high up the tree. This in most cases brings down the unripe ones. Even though we may be entitled to pick the ripe udara tree, it may not be in our best interest to do violence to it by forcing down the unripe fruit.

**Miscellaneous genres:** *Oji ofo ga-ala* (One is safe who holds onto the truth). *Oji nwayoo anaghi emeru ahu*: (One who threads softly/carefully does not sustain injury): These two sayings emphasize the need to imbibe truth, sobriety, patience and care. They are assuredly safe and cultivate these fundamental virtues as leavens to Igbo social and economic existence.

*Uwa bu nke onye?* (Whose is this world?) If this world does not belong specifically to any, it does not make sense to be too attached to the good in it. The call is for the development of an attitude of the mind that finds only a proper place for the goods of this world and no more. The emphasis is on non-attachment; the cultivation of the spirit of abandonment amid even quantity of material value. Nyerere captures this in his essentialization of an abiding socialist factor as a determinant of the socialist – the development of an attitude of mind. In a sense, one is a socialist who takes the dictum of 'uwa bu nke onye?' seriously in the positive sense of such an understanding.

*Onye choo ighotacha ukpaka miri ya, owere isi kelee ala*: (The attempt to harvest all of one's matured oil bean fruit may entail one greeting the ground below with one's head): This presupposes that the tree is tall and one climbs it in search of the fruits, up to the tail end of the branches thereby risking a bad fall! The question is: the leftover on-purpose post-harvest is for whom? The emphasis is on generosity and the need to sometimes forego a portion of one's possessions for others who might need much more.

*Aka ajaja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu*: (Soiled hands first; followed by well-oiled food that rubs off on the lips): In other words, hard work pays! Pleasure may only follow from this, not vice versa. It is a reminder that there is no substitute for hard work. Igbo

socialism revolves around industry without which there would not remain abundance to be shared with the other.

### **Further considerations from plain illustrations**

In pristine Igbo socialism, palliatives abound to take care of the ordinary run of men. People owned economic crops but this was not with the present-day heavy attachment and grip. The ripe udara (sweet apple), ube (local pear) or ujuru (plum) that falls to the ground can be freely taken by the next passerby. In the same way, the ukpaka or achi that breaks open and scatters on the fields can be picked up by interested locals. Children go all out in search of these stray useful seeds. Several ripe palm nuts can be harvested by any passerby even if in another's compound and eaten there and then without query – the quantity, in this case, is understandably limited only to a few. The un-harvested overripe palm whose nuts fall to the ground can be collected by children even if for economic or commercial purposes. Natural conservation was such that in the wide, bushes and forests; quite several ripe edible fruits abound. These are nature's goods which can be harvested at will.

On the human side, farmers do not comb the farms to ensure that every crop is taken home on harvest day. Particularly for yam and coco-yam farmers, several yams and, or coco-yams are knowingly or unknowingly left un-harvested. Some of these may be picked up earlier or allowed to germinate and provide seedlings for the locals during the next farming season. On harvest days, customarily farmers distributed part of the harvest to others who may need them – yams, corn, coco-yams, etc. The circumstantial cushioning effects of these distributive activities were parts of social existential realities.

### **Igbo socialism and the contemporary Nigerian society**

All socio-political theories, in the main, have as their end the re-ordering of the society for the good of the citizenry. These theories may apply to any society but can be specific to a given society as well. In which way can Nigerian society be served by such theories? Are there specific ways in which the Nigerian polity can be called upon for re-ordering to quantify the values expected of it by the people? Can there be paths to quality value appreciation for the locals or the masses? The appropriate response to the above questions calls for a re-interpretation of the values laden in Traditional socialism for appreciation in contemporary times. The principles below, deriving from Traditional socialism, would undoubtedly tend towards significant remediation of Nigeria's existential, socioeconomic and political situations in the areas of stability, peace, value-amplitude and development.

*The Principle of Diffusion of Values:* This principle operates in contra-distinction to material-value concentration in few hands especially those in governance. The observed trajectories in behaviour consistent with the Igbo black bean (akidi), oil-bean (ukpaka or akpaka) and sweet apple (udara), lend weight to this principle. In national economic issues, one would envisage policy matters whereby palliatives to the plight of the locals or citizenry are central. Policy on natural resources is yet to favour the people. The concentration of oil blocks – the mainstay national revenue spinner – in the hands of the few, does not respect this principle. The socialization of natural resources-values that ensures that the masses directly own royalties (for instance in form of bond coupons) from the proceeds of these resources would go a long way to cushion and add value to the material conditions of the people. This process must have fully replicated the traditional values if the government procures these at its own expense for the citizenry. The feasibility of the project can be guaranteed with government preparedness to sanitise the culture of waste and channel the balance towards mass welfare.

*The Principle of Positive Neutrality:* This is a meta-theory of confidence building. Positive neutrality engenders faith in the polity and enervates the government to perform. For Positive neutrality to fully apply, Nigerian needs a data bank of the poor, needy and unemployed to ameliorate their socioeconomic conditions. Any stipends, grants, benefits and programs for their welfare must have to be across-board, transparent and sustainable. Apart from the aged and the infirm, others in the bracket must be prepared to work hard such that from this modest economic resource, the achievement of economic self-reliance with a tendency to multiplier effects becomes a near-future possibility. This derives from the socialist understanding: *aka aja aja na-ebuta onu mmanu mmanu* (Soiled hands first; followed by well-oiled food that rubs off on the lips).

*The Principle of the Conservation of Values:* This principle applies fundamentally to the highest conservable value to which lower values are subsumed. The propertisation of values places man at the zenith of the hierarchization since man is a propertied being. Man is property par excellence, the confluence at the existential level of the purely material and non-material values. The conservation of this premium property becomes realizable in a policy of fundamental value safeguards. The security of human life defines the concept in the true sense. The security of material property becomes meaningful in the context of the higher value of human security. The conscionable devaluation of this prime value or the inability to guarantee its conservation for whatever reasons undermines national resources at the peak, with factorial and multiplier forces that work against national development. *Ohia na-aso nkata, ya efule eru* (The bush that does not welcome the Igbo basket should not grow mushroom) is the ‘if p then q’ type of logic form: the hypothetical statement is such that one necessarily follows from the other. Beyond

nature's goodies, the saying applies to the negatives that are deliberately allowed to obtain. The people tend to respond or react as appropriate. Prime-value conservation vis-à-vis development is a natural undercurrent of a concatenation of values that humanize the polity, dignify persons and create material prosperity and abundant society.

*The principle of Existential Value Paradigm Shift:* If society imbibes values that do not promise to deliver on the foremost aspirations of the citizenry or that feeds the influence of the few or makes an El-dorado possible for only a caucus, that society *ipso facto* – by that very fact – must need an existential value paradigm shift. Value revaluation becomes a necessary co-factor for further strides towards progress in the spatiotemporal reality of traditional Igbo socialism. The vast mobility of the present times explains the speed with which the baggage that characterizes current value orientations permeates and suffuses the Nigerian socio-cultural and politico-economic realities. When this baggage is emptied of its contents, the society sees itself in the grips of such negations of meaningful existence as corruption, greed, nepotism, tribalism, terrorism, banditry, the culture of moral decay and the new violence of moral degradation being consistently and heinously unleashed on the society. *Oji ofo ga-ala* (One who holds onto the truth is safe); *O ji nwayoo anaghi emeru ahu* (One who threads softly/carefully does not sustain injury). The question is: 'Where is the *ofo* in the baggage?' *Ofo*, the symbol of truth and clean hands in Igbo cosmology are absent in contemporary Nigeria's distributive arrangement of infrastructure, economic palliatives, security assurance and other such stabilizing political and socioeconomic architectural wares. It cannot be said that the people involved have threaded softly or carefully to avoid injury or the negative consequences therein. Here, human freedom is in chains. A nation engrossed in all these is indeed poor for poverty is partially defined severely by the absence of morally humanizing values; some of which are subject to commensurable redress.

## **Conclusion**

Scholars have at various times advocated that pristine values be re-interpreted in the context of the present if such promise to offer a better alternative. Edmund Husserl, the father of western phenomenology, shuddered that western scientific exploits tended to do away with the course or trajectory of philosophy as envisaged by the preceding great minds and traditions of the west. Philosophy in his understanding 'has departed from its true goal, which is to provide the best possible answers to human concerns, to deal rigorously with our quest for the highest values ...' (Stumpf & Fieser 2003:447 – 448) The present research can be seen in the above light. The end of re-education in the Nigerian context is the movement away from the complexities and complications of

present value definitions. The baggage referred to above cannot have been fully undone until replaced by antithetical values that can usher in true human freedom. *Uwa bu nke onye?* (Whose is this world?). As an ideological postulate of this socialist pedagogy, *Uwa bu nke onye* emphasizes the transitory intermediation sphere of a contextualized existence. The task is to re-educate the citizenry towards the positives in the antithesis of the baggage that slows progress. The re-education process, in its informal and formal modes, should be as consistent or enduring as it is thorough. The true freedom that accrues therefrom; must of necessity re-launch the nation to the heights of civilized existence and material prosperity.

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