THE AFRICAN: ON BEING TOTALLY LIBERATED

Joachim Ireruke Ukutsemuya, PhD
Directorate of General Studies Federal University of Petroleum Resources,
Effurun
Ukutsemuya@gmail.com

Abstract
Colonization of African nations commenced in 1884. Decolonization of African nations took place about thirty-three years ago. One major consequences of colonization is the two unblending cultures of tradition and modernity, as colonization, apart from being a forceful taking of the rein of power from Africans, it also involves the introduction of the culture of the invading powers. Through analytical and deductive methods of Philosophy, this discourse identifies the disorientation of the African arising from two unblending cultures of tradition and modernity. For the African to reclaim his/her true self, there is need of simplification of culture involving evidential provision of supports for our beliefs and convictions in order to be free and authentic, as well as to engage in actions that will guarantee the good life for the African.
Keywords: The African, Colonization, two unblending cultures, disorientation and liberation

Introduction
It is not contestable that the human capital is fundamental to development of a society. If the human capital of a society is not well, it impacts on the state of things in the environment. Consequently, to have the environment for all other things to ensure the good life for the human person, there is the need to focus on the state of the human person in the environment. Studies have shown that the cultural environment of the African is sick because of the two unblending condition brought in by colonialism. We have the cultural condition of unblending traditional and modern ways of living because the contact of these two cultures was not through dialogue but imposition. And by cultural socialization, Africans of today have been formed by this disoriented culture known as the African culture of today. Meaning the African will be disoriented having been socialized by a disoriented culture. As culture in its falsified state like we are currently having, determines the identity of the human person and his/her performance in terms of activities in his/her environment, it will imply that there will be wrong definition of the African with its attendant negative consequences. There is a need for the normalization of the African culture which will liberate the African in

identity and orientation and also make possible engagements with the environment as to bring about development that ensures the good life for the African.

Conceptualizing the African Cultural Disorientation

It is pertinent to note that the concept of culture that is operational here, is the concept of culture as a people`s response to the challenge of existence; the concept of culture as the material and immaterial inventions by a people to confront their problem of existence in order to live the good life. This concept of culture appreciates life as a task and culture becomes the human person`s invention to handle this task of existence that the human person may experience life as good as opposed to a miserable and toilsome existence.

Africans from traditional time had their culture to confront the task of their existence. The culture was successful in the sense of the organization of living in traditional time where life was held to be sacred and institutions were invented to carter for needs of Africans. Kwame Gyekye has credited traditional African community to be democratic as kings could be deposed if they go contrary to reign for the good of their citizens. Traditional African society have also been credited as one that cares for the need of citizens. Some not having is a big concern to the entire community because living was basically communalistic and not individualistic. However, with the invading of the African culture by western nations, there was the forceful taking of the rein of power from Africans and foreign way of living was imposed on Africans. It is this situation that is explained when C. B. N Ogbogbo says that when change is imposed forcefully from outside with little or no room given for appropriate adaptation, it will necessarily result in retrogression rather than development.[1] For him, this is because budding local initiative is halted and taken off-course while the new initiative without any traditional basis is unable to develop any taproot in the new environment. Consequently, as he thinks, neither the new nor the old can make any meaningful progress. Indeed, he advances that, there is a collusion and developmental confusion which manifests as the current African problematic.

 Kolawole Owolabi, still reiterating the above point, says:
> The problem with our previous cultural interaction is that such an interaction is involuntary. Foreign ideas were merely forced down our throats in the bid to make us conform to the whims and caprices of the foreign colonizers.[2]

Thus, with the presence of the foreign culture in the African community, we have two cultures in a community at the same time. This is an abnormal situation. It is supposed to be one culture that has the focus to tackle the challenges in a specific environment for the benefit of those who live in the environment. However, with the introduction of the foreign social system, we have the traditional social system in addition to the New western one. As there was no opportunity for the African to integrate the new culture into his/her own, we have a situation of disorientation arising from two different solutions to the problem of existence that are not reconciled. Life of course will not stop being a task that has to be confronted in order to tame it in a desired direction. The long stay of this situation of unblending culture that is supposed to be focused on all challenges to living resulted to loss of focus on the right nature of culture and life. Through the phenomenon of cultural socialization, the disoriented idea of culture and life has been transmitted from one generation to the other in the African continent. What is worse is that, as culture colors ones`s life, this disorientated concept of culture has colored the orientation of the African to life. Kwame Gyekye[3] describing the pitiful resulting situation expresses it is a matter of common knowledge that since the euphoric early days of post-colonial rule, the politics of many an African nation has been blighted in several ways. The political institutions that were bequeathed to the African people by their colonial rulers, modeled, as they invariably were, on those of the colonial rulers, did not function properly. He holds that the democratic constitutions that were fashioned by the Africans themselves suffered the same fate. For him, this constitutional failure to rule in accordance with formerly established procedures may be explained in several ways. In his thinking, one explanation may be that the African people simply did not have the ability effectively to operate institutions of government that were entirely alien to them. These institutions had not taken root in – and so had not become part of –their political culture and, consequently, failed to elicit cultural understanding and legitimacy. Thus, because the Africans lack emotional, ideological, or intellectual attachments to these institutions whose nuances could not be fully appreciated, there is an easy subversion of them. Gyekye, in addition to the above explanation, gives two other possible reasons for the failure of African states. He opines that another explanation might be that the African people lacked certain moral or dispositional virtues or attitudes (such as patience, tolerance, moderation, incorruptibility) indispensable to the successful operation of those alien institutions. Continuing, he explains that another reason may be that the political institutions – whether created by the colonial government or by the postcolonial African governments would - have worked well but for the disruptions of the constitutional process by the military. Gyekye concludes that however we may explain the inability of the African to run the African state in

accordance with constitution, its consequence of political confusion, instability, uncertainty, and frustration for most African nations is sure.[4]

The African needs aid to escape his/her quagmire of two unblending cultures in him/her that first and foremost has the potential to cause disorientation that imprisons one. Indeed, culture has the potential of swallowing the entire being of the human person. It is this that Ortega y Gasset was referring to when he was talking about the human person that has been socialized out of him/herself, with another person running his/her life:

> As soon as we find ourselves living, we find ourselves not only among things but also among men, not only on earth but also in society. And those men, that society into which we have fallen by the process of being alive, already has its own interpretation of life, its repertory of ideas, of ruling convictions about the universe. So that what we can call "the thought of our time" enters to form part of our surroundings; it envelops us, it penetrates into us, it carries us…. Without realizing it, we find ourselves installed in that network of ready-made solutions for the problems of our lives.[5]

Also, the African needs to have the kind of culture/orientation that both puts him/her at peace with himself/herself and at the same time that is capable of tackling challenges of existence in his/her environment to make possible the good life.

Towards a solution in the African Dilemma

It is important to mention that there are previous attempts by philosophers at resolving the problem of disorientation of the African and its consequences. In the first instance, we have the solution of the traditionalists.[6] The traditionalists ask that we return to the traditional past.[7]They believe a return to the past where we can imagine the inventions of Africans, material and spiritual will bring an end to the disorientation of the African culture. Leopold Senghor is a good representative of this position. But this position has been queried on the ground that it assumes that there is a concrete past waiting somewhere that we can return to. However, it is argued that there is no concrete past to return to because modernity has grievously eroded traditional culture. In addition, this position has also been attacked on the ground that not everything in the past was glorious. So, do we return to the past with the mixture of good and bad entirely?[8]

There is also the position of the professionals, that is, the modernist orientation.[9] The professionals propose in the midst of the disorientation of the African that we embark on selection from our cultural inheritance. That whatever is good in our cultural inheritance should be preserved. And whatever we find not useful should be jettisoned.[10] This position has raised the question of the parameter[11] to adopt to determine which element of our past cultural heritage is to be considered good and which is to be considered bad. It is this idea Bartolome refers to when he says:

> In general, they suggest as a solution to keep the "best" of the traditional culture and to incorporate the "best" of the scientific-technological culture of the west. No further precision is given of what the "best" of these cultures are apart from some vague criteria of selection such as: "abandon the archaic elements of African culture which prevent progress" or "we shall integrate western technology on our own terms."[12]

Olusegun Oladipo, also observing the problem of the parameter to be adopted, expresses that we need to develop useful parameter that will help us to determine the parts of other cultures that we need to accept or jettison and the elements of our own that will still prove useful in our quest for a better coordination of our society.[13]

From the foregoing, we see that there are limitations in previous attempts at resolving the problem of disorientation of the African and its consequences and these limitations have rendered the previous attempts not better option at resolving the problem. With the traditionalists position we see that there is the problem of the precise past to return to. With the professional position, we see that there is the problem of the parameter to adopt that will determine which elements of our culture are to be preserved and which are not worth preserving. It is the argument of this discourse that the method of evidential provision of justification for our beliefs and convictions provides a solution that avoids the pitfalls of the traditionalists and the professionals, reconciles the unblending cultural situation of Africa, reclaims the identity of the African and launches a possibility of new era of better sustenance of human life which meets up the challenge of transformation in the continent.

At this point, it could then be asked, what is the evidential provision of justification for our beliefs and convictions all about? How does it resolve the problem of disorientation of the African and at the same time meet up to the challenge of tackling poverty, want, and natural hazards, indeed the challenge of transformation in the continent?

The perspective of evidential provision of justification is called the method of simplification.[14] This method presupposes the conception of life as insecurity and culture as the security that man launches in order that life may be secured, comfortable and worth living.[20] We have culture in its moments of genuineness.[15] By this we mean the moment where the creators of the culture are also those living by it. They understand the solution that the culture provides to the problem of human existence in their environment. Now, there is also the idea of falsification of culture or cultural complication.[16] Here we talk about those who have inherited culture. These do not understand the solution that the culture provides to the problem of human existence in their environment. They simply inherited the culture from their ancestors. They go on living by the culture whether they understand the solution that the culture provides or not. Having no contact with this felt need but must go on living by the culture, is a situation of cultural complication.[17]

In the event of cultural complication, man usually aspires to simplification[18] which is, trying to return to the state that led to the creation of culture. It involves trying to reduce complicated culture to a simple culture,[19] culture in its live and authentic state; the state of the creators understanding how the created culture is a solution to the problem of human existence. In this regard, Gasset in simplification of culture in the event of complication, recommends that we only accept as our culture only convictions that we can provide evidence for.[20] It is reviewing our inherited culture to find out which is to be continued with in the light that they prove useful in making life secured, comfortable and worth living. It is no longer the case of going on with culture because it is what we have inherited but because we found it useful in making life secured, comfortable and worth living. This is what Gasset calls living culture[21] as opposed to inauthentic culture that falsifies human life, dislodging the real person in a man.[22]

One essential characteristic of culture as above is the fact that it has the function of providing security for the human person. It is the reaction to his/her environment of insecurity. It is the life jacket in the shipwreck of life that is insecurity.[23] In this regard, culture will be self -defeating if it does not provide security, comfort for the human person in life.

The question is, how does the above evidential justification of our beliefs and convictions resolve the problem of disorientation of the African? The disorientation of the African as earlier said is the co-existence in the African of two non-synthesized cultures, the traditional culture and the modern culture. The traditional culture consists of nothing but the inventions of Africans, material and

spiritual to tackle the problem of human existence in his environment. The modern culture is the foreign culture introduced into the African environment through the forces of colonialism. The traditional is the authentic creation of the African, while the foreign is "other" to the African because it came into Africa not through dialogue but by imposition.[24]

The Evidential provision of justification for our beliefs and convictions does indeed resolve the problem of disorientation of the African because in the first instance, the African traditional and modern cultures proceeded as well from it when they were first created since every creator of culture created on the basis of what will sustain them better in existence.

The justification method simply urge that we put the human person, the sustenance of the human person at the centre. With the human person at the centre, we are to embark on selection from pool of traditional and modern cultures that constitute the African cultural heritage, what we think by demonstration, that will sustain the human person better in the African environment. The argument is that, in selecting from the pool of traditional and modern cultures, values on the basis of how they justify how they will sustain the human person better, we shall end up assembling only values that will be effective in delivering the good life to the African. Not only that, as the values are selected on the basis of what sustains the human person better, they shall be consistent, blended and well reconciled unlike the disoriented that was not put together on any basis. Finally, the culture that shall be formed on the basis of its ability to sustain the African better in the African space shall also be effective and adequate in tackling and confronting challenges to living in the African environment.

Above all, the African shall be both psychologically and emotionally be committed to this culture, because, having invented it himself/herself, the African will understand how it solves his/her problems of existence and ensure the good life, the renaissance Africans have been clamouring for. In a special way, it installs the identity and authenticity of the African because, the African created it in touch with nature in himself/herself and in touch with nature outside, the environment. The African, to crown it is thus liberated from the shackles of disoriented culture inherited.

Endnotes

1. Ogbogbo, C.B.C. 1999, *Of History, Culture and the African Crisis*, 15
2. Owolabi,K. African philosophy and the African Crisis *Quest,* 40
3. Gyekye, K. 1997, *Tradition and Modernity* ,115

4. Ukutsemuya, J.I. 2007. *Ortega Y Gasset`s Philosophy and the Crisis of Culture in Africa* (being Doctoral dissertation in department of Philosophy submitted to the faculty of Arts in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

5. Gasset, y. O. 1958. *Man and Crisis,* 26

6. Martinez, B. B. Africa's cultures in some contemporary African philosophical
    writers (renewal or stagnation?). Retrieved from hhtp://www3. planalfa. es/cidaf/noticias/tesing. Htm, 8

7. *Africa`s Cultures*

8. *Africa`s Cultures*

9. *African philosophy and the African Crisis*, 34-35

10. *Philosophy and the African Experience,* 81-82

11. *Philosophy and the African experience,* 90

12. *Africa`s Cultures*, 16

13. *Philosophy and the African Experience,* 90

14. *Man and Crisis,* 142

15. *Man and Crisis,* 98-99

16. *Man and Crisis,* 98-99

17. *Man and crisis,* 98-99

18. *Man and Crisis,* 142

19. *Man and Crisis,* 143

20. *Man and Crisis, 90*-91

21. Sanchez, J. Jose Ortega Y Gasset 1883-1955, Retrieved from http://www.piedraverde.com/ortega/crono/ortegae.pdf, 8

22. *Man and Crisis,* 91-93

23. Mora F. The Expository Philosopher: Ortega y Gasset: Introduction. Retrieved from http//www.Ferrater Mora Org? expo-ort-intro.html, p. 5

24. *African Philosophy and the African Crisis,* 40