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GLOBAL JUSTICE AND THE *BRAIN DRAIN* SYNDROME

Peter Osimiri

Abstract

*That the world we live in today is characterized by gross injustice is substantiated by the radical inequality and the massive disparities of wealth within and between nations. This inequality is, however, compounded by the phenomenon of **medical brain drains**. The already fragile healthcare systems of the global South are losing a substantial percentage of their skilled medical professionals as they emigrate in droves to the global North in search of better opportunities. Migration to the global North generally improves the incomes and life chances of health workers. It also contributes positively to the healthcare systems in the developed world. For the émigrés and the receiving countries of the North, therefore, **brain drain** in the medical sector is a win-win situation. It, however, imposes significant social, economic, and human costs on the sending countries of the South. Thus, in the light of the conventionally recognised right to freedom of movement and the right of communities to defend themselves from harm, the normative question arises as to whether states in the global South can justifiably prevent the emigration of their skilled medical professionals. The paper argues with due attention to the requirements of global justice, the communitarian character of African traditions as well the critical role that effective healthcare delivery might play in ensuring human flourishing, developing states do have a limited right to temporarily restrict the emigration of medical professionals.*

Keywords: Brain Drain, Global Justice, Justice.

Introduction

That the world we live in today is characterised by gross injustice is reflected in the radical inequality and the massive disparities of wealth within and between nations of the world. The inequality between nations is compounded by the phenomenon colloquially referred to as medical **brain drain**, which portrays the large-scale movement of medical professionals across borders that results in net losses for source countries

and has global distributional consequences.¹ One of the unfortunate consequences of this development is that the already fragile healthcare systems of the global South are currently experiencing dramatic shortages in the critical mass of skilled medical professionals.² The brain drain phenomenon is particularly worrisome given that the direction of emigration of skilled health workers is primarily from the regions with the greatest global disease burden to regions with the least scale of disease. Thus, medical brain drain unjustly distributes health professionals away from the areas of highest need to areas of lowest need, that is, from the developing to developed countries. In the words of Gish and Godfrey, the truth is “that medical skills are not distributed in keeping with need...but rather in accordance with the workings of the marketplace in a world of sharp income equalities...”³

On one reading, brain drain is nothing but the outcome of the morally neutral workings of capitalism whereby human capital simply moves to areas where it would attract the highest returns. Contrary to the moral neutrality thesis, there is a broad consensus that brain drain is a morally unacceptable phenomenon, since it is one of the deleterious outcomes of deepening global inequalities occasioned by a skewed global economic system which reproduces poverty in the global South.⁴ Paraphrasing Kollar and Buyx, the brain drain describes a situation where the poor countries of the global South are subsidizing medical training for the rich

¹ Eszter Kollar, “‘Brain Drain’ in Hugh LaFollette” (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2020) p.1.

² See Karan Abraar, DeUgarte Daniel and Barry Michele, “Medical ‘Brain Drain’ and Health Care Worker Shortages: How Should International Training Programs Respond”? *AMA Journal of Ethics*, 18(7), (2016), pp. 665-675; Oduola Victoria, “Medical Brain Drain and Healthcare Delivery in Africa: Beyond Restrictive Migration” in Okyere-Manu, B., Morgan, S. N and Nwosimiri, O. K. (eds) *Contemporary Development Ethics from an African Perspective: A Reader* (New York: Springer, 2023) pp.183-196.

³ Gish Oscar and Godfrey Martin, “A Reappraisal of the ‘Brain Drain’-With Special Reference to the Medical Profession”, *Social Science and Medicine*, 13C, (1979), p. 4.

⁴ Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights. Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008).

countries of the global North, what has been described by some scholars as reverse aid.

Facts and Figures

A cursory examination of the statistics detailing the current distribution healthcare workers and the level of emigration of medical professionals from developing countries indicates that brain drain is a global justice problem which would only “perpetuate the inequality in life chances between developing and developed nations”.⁵ According to Koller and Buyx, while the doctor-patient ratio in many African countries stands at 0.2 or less doctors to 10000 people, it is 24 doctors to 10000 people in OECD countries.⁶ Similarly, there are 1.1 doctors to 10000 people in a country like Somalia compared to 101 doctors to 10000 people in the US.⁷ Clearly, the doctor-patient ratio in virtually all African countries is a far cry from the WHO sufficiency criterion which recommends 23 healthcare workers per 10000 people. On top of these critical shortage of trained medical personnel, Africa shoulders 24 % of the global burden of disease with a mere 3 % of the world’s health workforce.⁸ Africa for instance has the highest incidence of HIV, accounting for 70 percent of the world’s HIV patients.⁹

In the context of a disproportionate share of the global burden of disease and acute shortage of healthcare workers, locally trained medical personnel are massively emigrating to developed countries. WHO estimates that 25 percent of doctors and 10 percent of nurses trained in Africa now work in OECD countries.¹⁰ In some parts of Africa and the

⁵ Gillian Brock and Michael Blake, *Debating Brain Drain: May Government Restrict Emigrations?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 4.

⁶ Eszter Kollar and Alena Buyx, “Ethics and Policy of Medical Brain Drain: A Review”, *Swiss Medical Weekly*, w.143, (2013), p.1.

⁷ *Ibid.* p.1.

⁸ WHO, *The World Health Report 2006 – Working Together for Health* (Geneva: WHO Press; 2006).

⁹ Ayesha Kharsany and Quarraisha Karim, “HIV Infection and AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa: Current Status, Challenges and Opportunities”, *Open AIDS Journal*, 8(10), (April 2016) p. 35.

¹⁰ WHO, (2006), *op. cit.*

Caribbean, over half of trained health workers emigrate to advanced industrialised economies: for Guyana, the figure is as high as 72 percent; Mozambique, 65 percent, while for Sierra Leone and Liberia it is 58 and 55 respectively.¹¹

Reasons behind the massive outflow of medical workforce from the global South to the Global North are usually classified as push and pull factors. Push factors refer to conditions internal to donor countries that tend to mount the pressure on trained medical personnel to emigrate. These typically includes low wages, high unemployment, poor infrastructure, lack of professional opportunities and in extreme cases, the threat of political instability and the onset of civil war. The pull factors are those conditions that make recipient nations attractive to the medical professionals. Such features include better wages and remuneration, low unemployment rate, state-of-the-art infrastructure, better working conditions and good career prospects.

In addition to the pull factors highlighted, there is the increasing demand for, and active recruitment of medical professionals trained in the global South. In 2012 for instance, medical schools in the US churned out 17000 graduates and offered 24,0000 residency opportunities. Apparently, the balance of 7000 must be sourced from the pool of foreign-trained medical personnel around the world, most of which will be supplied by resource-poor countries that are already struggling to improve their fragile healthcare systems. The fact that developing countries invest so much of their resources on training medical personnel only to lose them to wealthier nations of the North is widely considered to be unjust.¹² In the words of Groenhout, medical brain drain exemplifies “one of the ways global capitalism sets up dynamics of surplus extractions from the periphery to global wealthy centers”.¹³ One estimate claim that Sub-

¹¹ Kollar and Buyx, 2013, p.2

¹² Ruth Groenhout, “The ‘Brain Drain’ Problem: Migrating Medical Professionals and Global Health Care”, *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, 5(1), (2012), p. 2.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 1-24.

Saharan Africa, one of the poorest regions in the world, loses as much as 2.17 billion dollars annually due to the exodus of locally trained medical workforce from the sub-region.¹⁴

The Ethical Issues

A host of normative and ethical issues have been raised about the phenomenon of brain drain. Interestingly, these ethical issues revolve around the three major agents that are implicated in the brain drain palaver namely; the donor nations of the global South, the recipient nations of the global North and the skilled medical professional emigrating from the former to the latter. With respect to the donor countries, the argument is that such countries are responsible for creating the harsh environment that partly motivates the emigration of medical professional to countries that offer better opportunities. Poor working conditions, inadequate remuneration, dilapidated or non-existent infrastructure, political instability, and corruption could dissuade medical professionals from practicing in their country of origin and training.¹⁵ Undoubtedly, many donor countries share a part of the moral responsibility for failing to provide the opportunity that may reduce the outmigration of locally trained medical personnel. It needs to be pointed out however, that inherent in the distinction between push and pull factors for emigration is the idea of explanatory nationalism, which assumes that the push factors are solely created by the inefficiencies of leadership in the source countries of the global south.¹⁶ Michael Blake, for instance, implicitly assumes explanatory nationalism when he proposed that the most important measure that could stem the brain drain is for developed countries to stop “underinvesting in their own medical and nursing educational capacity”.¹⁷

In essence, Blake assumes that the matter of medical brain drain exclusively results from domestic politics.

¹⁴ Karan Abraar, DeUgarte Daniel and Barry Michele, op. cit., p.668.

¹⁵ See Eszter and Kollar, 2013 and Karan *et al*, 2016.

¹⁶ Thomas Pogge, op. cit.

¹⁷ Brock and Blake, op. cit., p. 223.

Blake's assumption is clearly incorrect. Several push factors are in some way intricately connected to the operations of the global economic system which effectively disadvantages the developing countries in the global South. For instance, the neoliberal prescriptions of the IMF require that developing countries roll back from the provisioning of social welfare in order to access badly needed financial aid. This is partly responsible for the underfunding of the health and the education sectors, and by extension the poor salaries and the abject working conditions that ultimately push medical practitioners and skilled professionals in the direction of High-Income Countries.¹⁸ The situation is compounded when the countries of the global South heed the IMF's advice to eliminate subsidies and devalue their currencies. In the process, the value of the already inadequate remuneration is completely eroded, fueling a mass exodus of skilled professionals from the economically distressed countries. The workings of the global capitalist system in many other ways continue to perpetuate and deepen the inequalities between nations, and as long as there are differentials of opportunities between nations, the resource-abundant countries will remain attractive to physicians and medical experts in developing nations.

If donor countries are partly responsible for medical brain drain, there is a near-universal consensus that recipient countries bear a larger moral responsibility for this phenomenon.¹⁹ First, the fact that the OECD countries, which are the choice destination of medical professionals, possess the wherewithal to address the primary healthcare shortages in their respective countries, but deliberately chose not to do so is one major factor contributing to the brain drain syndrome. Instead, they depend on the recruitment of foreign-trained medical professionals. Second, active recruitment of doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel from poor countries already suffering from acute shortage of health workers, further

¹⁸ See Daniels Norman, *Just Health: Meeting Health Needs Fairly*, (New York: Cambridge University Press. 2007).

¹⁹ See Ypi Lea, "Sharing the Burdens of the Brain Drain", *Moral Philosophy and Politics*, 3(1), (2016)), pp. 37–43 and Reglitz Merten, "Medical Brain Drain: Free-Riding, Exploitation, and Global Justice", *Moral Philosophy and Politics*, 3(1), (2016), pp. 67-82.

jeopardises the fragile healthcare system of these poor countries. Consider, for instance, that the US with a doctor-patient ratio of 101 to 10000 people is massively recruiting health workers from Nigeria whose doctor-patient ratio is less than 2 to 10000.²⁰ Clearly, there is something morally perverse about this arrangement. Thirdly, the fact that these poor countries are losing their investment in healthcare to brain drain suggests that the destination countries have not demonstrated sensitivity to the plight of poor countries who typically eke funds out of their scarce resources for the training of desperately needed medical personnel. For instance, it has been estimated that in a country like Kenya it takes nearly \$66,000 USD to train an individual from primary school to the point of earning a medical degree. In the event of the emigration of the so trained medical personnel, the loss incurred multiplies to an alarming rate of 517,000 USD dollars on return investment.²¹

On the Question of Restricting the Emigration of Healthcare Workers

In the brain drain triangular connection, the ethical responsibility of the individual medical personnel is highly controversial, presumably because the matter could be viewed from a diversity of moral lenses which includes liberalism and communitarianism.²² One basic normative question here has to do with the relative weight of the well-established right of the physician to the freedom of movement vis a vis the not so clearly defined right of national communities to protect themselves from harm.

In their 2015 book titled *Debating Brain Drain: May Government Restrict Emigrations?* Gillian Brock and Michael Blake, two well-known global justice theorists, critically examine what measures states could justifiably enforce to stem the tide of medical brain drain.²³ Both thinkers operate within the moral framework of liberalism and therefore agree on a few points. The duo subscribes, for instance, to the principle of individual

²⁰See Eszter Kollar, 2020; Nicholas Aderinto, et al. "A Call for Reform in Nigerian Medical Doctors' Work Hours", *The Lancet*, Vol. 403, Issue 1042, (2024), pp. 726-727.

²¹Karan et al., op. cit., p. 668.

²²Brock and Blake, 2015 and Metz, 2017.

²³ Brock and Blake, op. cit.

liberty and the basic right to the freedom of movement, not necessarily as an absolute right but one that could be overridden by higher moral considerations. They also agree that medical brain drain is bad in terms of its effect on developing countries. However, they disagree on whether governments of resource-poor countries suffering from the brain drain may justifiably impose restrictions on the emigration of locally trained healthcare workers as a stopgap for tackling the problem. This disagreement between Brock and Blake is particularly interesting because both thinkers developed their arguments for and against restricted emigrations from within the framework of moral liberalism, which, by extension, suggests that both subscribe to the principle of the moral equality of all human beings. As a basic assumption of the liberal philosophy, moral equality implies that humans should be treated with dignity, and ought to be accorded equal consideration, irrespective of geographical location or nationality. On the account of this consideration and a host of arguments, Brock submits that the impoverished but legitimate state may defensibly regulate workers- directly or indirectly-when certain conditions obtain.²⁴ In opposition to Brock, Blake argues that the restrictive emigration of medical personnel by a state runs contrary to a basic liberal moral intuition since restrictions on the right of exit violates the freedom of movement. A liberal state, simply, put cannot justifiably restrict emigration from its territory.

Brock's Account

Brock was very specific about the conditions under which a state could be justified in restricting the emigration of locally trained skilled professionals. She describes the case of a responsible government of a poor country that seeks to improve its healthcare sector and realises it needs to increase the number of its healthcare workers. With very scant revenue base, the government set aside some funding to subsidise the training of a limited number of healthcare workers on an annual basis. The government therefore states that a condition for being admitted into the training is that those who successfully complete it will provide a short

²⁴ Ibid. p.101

mandatory service to the country before they emigrate, alternatively, they will be required to pay an exit tax.²⁵ In the context of ongoing massive brain drain, is the emigration restriction in the form short mandatory service morally defensible? Brock answers the question in the affirmative and provides several arguments to justify emigrations restrictions by poor responsible states whose healthcare delivery systems are threatened by brain drain. I will highlight three of her arguments in no particular order.

First, Brock argues that the uncompensated emigration of locally trained skilled professionals in the context of an acute shortage of such skills amount to some form of harm. Not only because it amounts to an exploitation of society but also because it creates disadvantages and burdens for colleagues that are left behind. The emigrating skilled worker exploits society by taking advantage of citizen's contributions such as taxes to acquire skills and expertise which subsequently make them attractive to the international labour market. In addition, the emigrating professional creates disadvantages for colleagues back at home who are compelled to work harder to cover the portion of work usually allotted to the emigrating colleague. Those left behind also suffer the impact of loss of revenue allocable to public services as well as the loss of critical human capital requisite for the development and the sustenance of institutions.

A second argument for emigration restrictions according to Brock relates to the principles of fairness and reciprocity. Fairness and reciprocity demand that where one has benefited from the sacrifices of fellow citizens, one incurs a duty of fidelity to "assume a fair share of burdens or make some fitting response in virtue of the requirements of reciprocity, fair play, or general considerations of fairness".²⁶ When a skilled worker who has acquired valuable expertise through a mutually beneficial scheme emigrates without giving something back, she breaches the principle of reciprocity by free-riding and taking undue advantage of others. A third argument from Brock is that governments have the right to expect fair

²⁵ Ibid., p.61.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 65

returns on their investment. With the objective of reducing the shortage of medical workers, a responsible government decides to devote a part of scarce public resources to training more doctors. The same government is entitled to expect that the beneficiaries of that training would make some contribution to healthcare delivery in that society, even if they will ultimately emigrate. In the event that such beneficiaries decide to emigrate immediately upon graduation to put the locally acquired medical skills and expertise at the service of a society abroad, the government may be justified in exacting a compensation.²⁷

With these arguments and host of others, Brock concludes that sending states in the developing world could impose emigration restriction on locally trained medical workers. On the contrary, Blake objects to Brock's conclusion on the ground that emigration restriction is antithetical to the modern liberal philosophy which stresses the core value of individual autonomy and the basic right of the freedom of movement. To the extent that restriction of emigrations violates the principle of autonomy and the right of exit, such measures cannot be justifiably employed by a liberal state to mitigate the negative effects of brain drain. In his words, "Managed migration", therefore, "is as unavailable to liberal societies".²⁸ But managed migration is indeed a widespread conventional practice among liberal states. The requirement to obtain a visa before migration is one major way by which countries around the world, including the liberal ones, seek to exclude **undesirable elements** from their territories. With the visa process, liberal countries and their illiberal counterparts are, for instance, able to prevent criminal elements such as terrorists, drug barons and gangsters from entering their societies. The rationale for such denial of entry is so clear that even the most trenchant advocate of open borders will agree that these exclusions are justified exceptions to the rule. The crucial question therefore is; if liberal societies are morally permitted to restrict the right of immigration in order to protect their societies from harm, why is the same logic not applicable to developing countries who

²⁷ Ibid. p. 68

²⁸ Ibid., p.112

want to temporarily restrict the emigration of locally indigenous medical personnel in order to stave off a significant harm, namely, the collapse of their healthcare systems? The actual point here is that if the protection of the population in the liberal states provides the moral basis for denying entry to some persons, the same consideration may justify the restriction of the exit of medical personnel from developing countries.

The debate between Brock and Blake over the permissibility of emigration restrictions demonstrate that the liberal framework may fail to provide appropriate guidance in the face of certain dilemmas. Nor does it exhaust the possible limits of our moral imagination. In fact, according to Groenhout, the liberal framework tends to operate on the assumption of an oppositional ontology which pits the individual against the state.²⁹ That opposition, however, dissolves if we adopt a communitarian framework which assumes a cooperative ontology between the state and the individual in which the state is essentially a cooperative network of relationships that bring individuals together in the pursuit of the common good. This completely changes our outlook on the legitimacy of compulsory service. In fact, compulsory service to the state ceases to be an imposition meant to curtail the freedom of the locally trained medical talents. Instead, compulsory service becomes a categorical imperative or a duty of fidelity which dictates that we play our role in a cooperative venture.

I will explore the issue of temporary emigration restrictions from a non-liberal framework, namely, Afro-communitarianism to demonstrate that Brock's conclusions on emigration restrictions could be reached through a completely different route. To provide a non-liberal justification for a temporal restriction of the locally trained health worker, a little elaboration of the Afro-communitarian ethic is necessary. Drawing from African values and worldview, Afro-communitarian ethics have been variously

²⁹ Ruth Groenhout, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-24.

developed by several scholars.³⁰ But in the ongoing discussion here, I will stick to Thaddeus Metz's Relational account of Afro-communitarian ethics. According to this account, central to the idea of morality is the nurturing of harmonious communal relationships, and only when individuals engage their capacity for harmonious communing with others can they exhibit their full human excellence. Hence, Augustine Shutte reminds us that "our deepest moral obligations is to become more fully human. And this means entering more deeply into community with others".³¹ But what, in practical terms, does the capacity to commune harmoniously with others entail? According to Metz, community involves the combination of identity and solidarity, and not one without the other. He describes identity as "considering the self as part of the whole ...participating, sharing a way of life, belonging, and thinking of oneself as bound to others".³² He refers to solidarity as a commitment to "achieving the good of all, being sympathetic, sharing, promoting the common good, engaging in service and being committed to other's goods".³³ In fact, Metz highlights a major distinction between Afro-communitarianism and ethical framework founded on the liberal philosophy. In his words:

While the Afro-communal ethics is relational, taking our capacity to be other- regarding to be what is morally significant about us. In contrast autonomy and related foundational concepts in the liberal tradition are usually

³⁰ Kwameh Gyekye, "Person and Community in African Thought", *The African Philosophy Reader*, (Eds. P. H. Coetzee P. H and Roux, A. P), (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 348–366; Benezet Bujo, "Differentiations in African Ethics", *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, (Ed. Schweiker Williams), (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 423–437; Thaddeus Metz, "The Ethics and Politics of the Brain Drain: A Communal Alternative to Liberal Perspectives", *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 36(1), (2017), pp. 101–114.

³¹ Augustine Shutte cited in Thaddeus Metz, "The Ethics and Politics of the Brain Drain: A Communal Alternative to Liberal Perspectives", *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 36(1), (2017), pp. 101–114.

³² Thaddeus Metz, *A Relational Moral Theory: African Ethics in and Beyond the Continent*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), p.128.

³³ Ibid.

construed individualistically in the sense of not making any essential reference to anyone but with the one with such a capacity ... instead of being the capacity for self-governance being when matters, by the present African ethics it is more or less our capacity for coordinating with and helping others.³⁴

Thus, in contrast to autonomy and related concepts such self-determination, self-governance which underwrites the idea of dignity and moral considerations in the liberal moral framework, in the Afro-communal model, relationality or the capacity for other-regarding disposition, which is expressed in identifying and solidarising with others is what ultimately counts. From the characterisation of the Afro-communitarian ethics, it is very clear that its point of emphasis differs substantially from that of moral liberalism. While Afro-communal ethics does not completely discount concerns about autonomy, it seems to emphasise the need to identify and solidarize with others. From the perspective of Afro-communal ethics, therefore, the supreme moral obligation is the cultivation of cohesive or harmonious relation. Individuals, therefore, violate a basic moral obligation when they fail to honor relationship in which there is the hallmark African morality. Obviously, a locally trained medical worker who benefited from community resources and upon qualification seeks to leave immediately to serve another population, has regrettably failed to demonstrate a sense of duty.

Coming from the perspective of Afro-communitarianism therefore, a community or society has the duty to create a legal framework that makes it mandatory for locally trained medical personnel to serve the people for a period of time before considering emigrating to greener pastures. In essence, in the context of the communally oriented societies in Africa and Asia, the enforcement of temporal restrictions of locally trained medical professionals will not appear morally outrageous. Rather, such action will

³⁴ Thaddeus Metz, 2017, p. 105

be in synch with the pervasive moral intuitions in such societies. However, Blake might object that what the Afro-communitarian framework establishes is the duty of virtue and not a duty of justice, making non-enforceable.³⁵ But I will insist that it is not simply the case that all duties of virtue are enforceable. The distinction could be made between duties of virtue that are enforceable and those that are not. To relate harmoniously with neighbours and to refrain from not defrauding them are both duties of virtue within the Afro-communitarian moral framework. While we cannot enforce the former, we can certainly enforce the latter. The temporal emigration of locally trained healthcare professionals by sending nations may be justifiably enforced to mitigate the harmful consequences of mass emigration to their respective healthcare systems. In any case, when we combine perspectives of the moral liberalism with Afro-communitarianism, we see a conflation of justifications as the duty to prevent terrible harm, the duty of reciprocity and the duty of virtue. A conflation of these three duties certainly strengthens the case for temporary restriction of the emigration of badly needed medical workers.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have sought to side with Brocks' position contra Blake's, that developing states have a limited right to temporally restrict the emigration of locally trained medical professionals to forestall the collapse of their respective healthcare systems. Although Brock reached her conclusion by invoking principles such as non-harm, reciprocity, and fairness within the liberal moral framework, I argued that the same conclusion is supported by the principles of identity and solidarity that inform the Afro-communal framework. Blake of course remained unpersuaded by Brock arguments in favor of restricting emigration of locally trained medical works. As far as Blake is concerned, denying any group of professionals the privilege of exit is illiberal since it violates a right as basic as the freedom of movement. He maintains that liberal states cannot adopt such a measure to control brain drain. The reality that Blake probably never contemplates, is that decision makers in developing

³⁵ Brock and Blake, *op. cit.*, p.141

countries are faced with the dilemma of temporary emigration restriction and the loss of tens of thousands of lives which will result from the collapse of a healthcare system. Blake is of the opinion that such restrictions unduly burden medical professionals who are denied the right of exit. But for clarity's sake, it is important to emphasize the fact that the restriction in question is temporary, which is not too much a price to pay for individuals who have enjoyed subsidized medical training. More importantly, the temporal denial of the right of exit to locally trained medical workers is meant to be a temporary stop gap measure to manage the brain drain syndrome. Medical brain drain and other forms of brain drain should draw our attention to the all-important question of global justice. As long the radical inequalities between nations exists, brain drain will continue, which will further deepen the inequalities between them. Therefore, addressing the root cause of brain drain requires a global cooperative arrangement aimed at reducing the inequalities at the heart of the bifurcation of the world into developed and developing nation.

PROPOSITIONS AS TRUTH BEARERS

Edwin E. Etieyibo

Abstract

*The concept of truth is one of the most fundamental philosophical notions that intersect epistemology, metaphysics, logic, and language. As an issue with increasing philosophical concerns, the concept is multidimensional with several deep questions and implications. At the core of these deep questions and implications, are further enquiries that border on the sorts of things or entities that can be true as well as the nature and the criterion of truth. In this paper, I am interested in the question: **Is truth a property of sentences, beliefs or propositions?** I show that propositions, at least in the context of a bivalent logical system, finely discriminate among utterances or sentences and beliefs and that they are more robust in capturing our commonsense everyday practice of belief ascription and folk psychology. I conclude that propositions are bipolar categories that can be taken as bearers of truth.*

Keywords: Propositions, Truth Bearers.

Introduction

Philosophers are as divided on the question of the nature and criterion of truth as they are generally on the question of what truth bearers are or what sorts of things or entities can be true. Regarding the latter, three classes of things can be taken to be bearers of truth.¹ These are sentences, beliefs, and propositions.

Sentences are the utterances that are made on particular occasions, while beliefs are mental states that have propositions as objects, and propositions are the meanings of sentences or contents of beliefs.² Specifying what the bearers of truth are is important because any overarching

¹ Truth-bearers here refers to the concept of bipolarity of either being true or false.

² Although I limit myself to propositions, sentences and beliefs in this paper it must be emphasized that there are other candidates that are generally described in the literature as truth bearers. These include sentence-tokens, sentence-types, doctrines, judgments, utterances, opinions, facts, assertions, theories, claims.

theory of truth depends on the truth bearers to tease out the truth relation and truth maker. I shall argue that because propositions finely discriminate among utterances or sentences and beliefs, they are more robust in capturing our commonsense everyday practice of belief ascription and folk psychology, and in virtue of this priority they are better candidates as truth bearers than say sentences or beliefs.

Before I proceed, I would like to delimit the scope of what I shall be doing here. Part of that requires my circumscribing what I would and would not be doing in this paper. I will start by providing a couple of riders regarding what I would not be doing. Following this, I then give the reader a snapshot of the organizational layout of the paper.

First, I would not be attempting a comparative discussion of the most important theories of truth, namely, the deflationary theories and non-deflationary theories. Non-deflationary accounts of truth, one must note, include the correspondence theory of truth, the coherence theory of truth, the semantic theory of truth (proposed by Alfred Tarski), and the pragmatic theory of truth (defended primarily by Charles Sander Peirce and William James). What these theories of truth have in common is that they take a proposition to be true insofar as the proposition has some property or other. For correspondence theory of truth, the property is correspondence with facts, for coherence theory of truth, it is coherence with some beliefs, for semantic theory of truth it is satisfaction, i.e. a truth-predicate satisfying property, and for pragmatic theory of truth, it is utility, namely the utility of the proposition.³ And by contrast, deflationary

³ The literature shows that the *correspondence theory* is historically the most popular theory of truth. In the main, it takes truth to be a relationship that holds between a proposition and its corresponding fact. For this account of truth, a proposition is true insofar as there exist a fact corresponding to it. The *coherence theory* maintains that a proposition is true if and only if it coheres with *p*, where *p* refers to any of the following (a) “one’s own beliefs,” (b) “the beliefs of some intellectuals in one’s society,” (c) “the beliefs of the majority of persons in one’s community.” The *semantic theory* claims that a proposition is true if and only if what the proposition asserts is so. So, the proposition “snow is white” is true if and only if “snow is white.” The *pragmatic theory* takes utility as the essential mark and characteristic of truth. A proposition is true, for it, if it is useful to believe in that proposition.

theories deny the assumption that a proposition is true just in case the proposition has some property. Some of the deflationary accounts include redundancy theory of truth, the performative theory of truth (advocated by Peter Frederick Strawson), and the prosentential theory of truth.⁴

Second, I would not examine particular advancement by these theories regarding the sort of entities that are bearers of truth. The fact that my paper takes the position that propositions are the sorts of things that can be true, or truth bearers suggests generally that I am committed to the view that truth is not a subjective thing. On this understanding whether it is snowing or not, or whether dinosaurs exist is not so much or seldom a purely subjective matter. Also, whether someone believes it or not that it is now snowing or that dinosaurs did exist is not a matter of whether it is true or not true for that person, for me, for you, or for them. Rather, it is a matter of whether what one asserts or is asserted by the proposition is what the proposition truly asserts—more or less an objective matter.

⁴ The *redundancy theory* holds that adding truth to a proposition adds nothing to it. So, the proposition “I believe that dinosaurs exist” has the same content as the sentence “It is true that I believe that dinosaurs exist.” Adding truth to the latter proposition adds nothing here because the two propositions have the same meaning. The *performative theory* claims that ascribing truth to a proposition is “neither characterizing the proposition itself nor saying something redundant” (Dowden and Swartz, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Rather, when truth is ascribed to a proposition it is to say something about the speaker’s intentions, namely, commending others to accept or believe the proposition in virtue of the speaker’s accepting it, endorsing it, agreeing with it, or praising it (Dowden and Swartz, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy). So, when one says, “it is true that dinosaurs exist” one is simply expressing one’s intentional state such as “I embrace or endorse the claim that dinosaurs exist” or “I recommend the proposition that dinosaurs exist to you.” The *prosentential theory* claims that all uses of “is true” in a proposition are prosentential uses (Dowden and Swartz, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Asserting that “it is true that dinosaurs exist” is to do two things: firstly, to ask the hearer to consider the sentence “dinosaurs exist” and secondly, to get him or her to take the sentence (“dinosaurs exist”) that she just considered or is considering to be true. On this account, the phrase, “That is true” or referring to the sentence (or that proposition that dinosaurs exist is true) serves as a prosentence analogous to pronouns in a sentence. Simply, “That is true” as a prosentence is a function word or expression used instead of a full sentence or which substitutes for a whole sentence whereby the content is recoverable from the context.

Regarding what I would be doing in the paper, this is how I will proceed. I begin by examining the question as to whether sentences are truth bearers. My motivation is to defend the claim that sentences cannot be bearers of truth. Following this, I examine the question of whether beliefs are truth bearers, and subsequently make the case that they are not. Finally, I discuss why propositions are the right candidates as bearers of truth.

Before I conclude these introductory remarks, let me briefly say something about the focus of the paper. Given that what I aim to do here is to make the case that propositions are truth bearers, the paper assumes first and foremost a bivalent logical system. In that sense, it does not weigh in on the debate regarding the legitimacy or priority of a bivalent logical system over a trivalent or multivalent logical system, and vice versa. On the former (a bivalent logical system), a proposition is either true or false, whereas on the latter (a trivalent or multivalent logical system), a proposition has more than true and false values. My not engaging or weighing in on the debate is inconsequential for my purposes and does not obviate the importance of my focus. This is because, ultimately, what I am interested in is to make the case that among the following candidates: sentences, beliefs, and propositions, only propositions are bearers of truth.

Sentences as Bearers of Truth?

Sentences are linguistic entities in some language or other. A **sentence** refers to a group of words which are put together to mean something. Or simply put, a **sentence** constitutes the basic unit of any language which expresses a complete thought or means something. Typically, a sentence is a set of words that is complete in itself, and which contains a subject and predicate and can be used to convey a statement, question, exclamation, or command. Thus, the following can be said to be sentences even though they are in different languages.

1. Edwin takes a bottle of water to school every day (English)
2. Edwin anachukua chupa ya maji shuleni kila siku (Swahili)
3. Edwin apporte une bouteille d'eau à l'école tous les jours (French)

4. Edwin gba igo omi kan si ile-iwe lojoojumọ (Yoruba)
5. Edwin lleva una botella de agua a la escuela todos los días (Spanish)
6. Edwin yakan kai kwalbar ruwa zuwa makaranta kowace rana (Hausa)
7. Edwin nimmt jeden Tag eine Flasche Wasser mit zur Schule (German)
8. Edwin na-eburu otu karama mmiri aga ụlọ akwụkwọ kwa ụbọchị (Igbo)
9. U-Edwin uthatha ibhodlela lamanzi esikoleni nsuku zonke (Zulu)

All nine sentences are sentences in virtue of their structure. But is truth a property of sentences?

A fundamental motivation, I think, for philosophers who take sentences (and not beliefs and propositions) as bearers of truth has to do with what is believed to be their **primitive status** as that which speakers in any form of discourse, actually utter. So, for example, beliefs and propositions, whatever their status, are essentially cashed or teased out in sentences.⁵ To say that Ese believes that **snow is white** is to utter a sentence in English. Or to take the example: **Edwin always takes a bottle of water to school every day**. If we state this as a cognitive state of Ese as in Ese believes that: **Edwin always takes a bottle of water to school every day**, we will say that we are simply making an utterance in English that Ese believes something about Edwin, namely that he (Edwin) always takes a bottle of water to school every day). In this sense, sentences have primitive status to belief. Sentences also have a primitive status to propositions. This is because propositions in this sense, insofar as they are about sentences, supervene on the latter.

⁵ Belief, here, is used in a broad sense to be definitive of psychological or mental states such as judgments, opinions and conjectures.

The idea here is that the view that sentences express beliefs and propositions has been taken by philosophers who take sentences (and not beliefs and propositions) as bearers of truth to be a basic way of understanding the former (sentences). The sentence **snow is white** is a sentence type, while each of its utterances by different people is a sentence token. Therefore, to believe that **snow is white** and to utter the words **snow is white** is to have as the content of one's belief the sentence **snow is white**, i.e. the belief being about the sentence **snow is white**. Similarly, since propositions are about sentence meaning, their content or aboutness is *ipso facto* sentences. So, to talk about the meaning of **snow is white** in propositional terms is to talk about the sentence itself.

Why Sentences cannot be Bearers of Truth

One problem with taking sentences as bearers of truth is that a sentence type can have different sentence tokens not similar or identical with it. Take the example of the following sentences in English, which are different **forms** of the sentence above (Edwin always takes a bottle of water to school every day):

- A. The bottled liquid that Edwin takes to school every day is water.
- B. A bottle of water is taken to school every day by Edwin.
- C. Every day, Edwin takes a bottle of water to school.

Sentences A-C are plainly different sentences, different from sentences 1-9 both in form and shape, i.e. they contain different numbers of words, which are arranged differently, and yet all sentences above (1-9 and A-C) have the same meaning.

Secondly, if we take sentences as bearers of truth, we would be hostage to the relativity of human or social conventions. So, take the following nine sentences in different languages.

- i. Venus is the second planet from the Sun (English)
- ii. Zuhura ni sayari ya pili kutoka kwenye Jua (Swahili)

- iii. Vénus est la deuxième planète à partir du soleil (French)
- iv. Venus jẹ aye keji lati Oorun (Yoruba)
- v. Venus es el segundo planeta del sistema solar (Spanish)
- vi. Venus ita ce duniya ta biyu daga rana (Hausa)
- vii. Venus ist der zweite Planet von der Sonne (German)
- viii. Venus bụ mbara ala nke abụọ sitere na anyanwụ (Igbo)
- ix. I Venus i yi planethi yesibili evela eLangeni (Zulu)

Had speakers in any of these languages chosen to adopt the word **Venus** as the name of a different planet, say, **Jupiter**, each of the above sentences would have expressed something false. But as will be shown later because propositions are not hostage to the relativity of human conventions, adopting the word **Jupiter** rather than **Venus** would not affect their truth-values or render them false.

A third problem with taking sentences as the bearers of truth is that sentences vacillate and are contextual, i.e. can be used in different contexts to make very different statements, such that what was true yesterday could be false today. So, the sentence: **The Prime Minister of Canada is in Nigeria**, is true yesterday when he *was* in Nigeria (assuming that he was in Nigeria yesterday) but false today (when he was no longer in Nigeria). Some philosophers, like Willard Van Orman Quine, have tried to dissipate this concern by grounding ascription of truth-values to sentences on various contextual features, such that the truth of each sentence token of the sentence type is stabilized or “immobilized”, in Quine’s phraseology.⁶ Immobilizing the truth-value of particular sentences by reference to contextual features, such as replacing sentence tenses with dates, just as is usually done with indexicals,⁷ yields what Quine calls *eternal sentences*. So, the sentence: **The Prime Minister of Canada is in Nigeria**, would be **The Prime Minister was in**

⁶ Willard Van Orman Quine, “Truth”, *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, (Ed. Michael P. Lynch), (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), p. 474.

⁷ The indexical “I”, “here”, “now”, etc. are usually replaced with identifying particulars to make much sense of them, or in a sense fix or immobilize them.

Nigeria on so and so day and time. But as it turns out Quine's eternal sentences, I believe, is no more than fundamentally identical with propositions. This is because the moment contextual features individuate sentences by paraphrasing, removing ambiguities and vagueness, as is done in logic, what one does in a large sense is to infuse meanings into them, meanings that were not formerly present in the sentence type.

Beliefs as Bearers of Truth?

The second class of things that have been taken to be bearers of truth are beliefs. But is truth a property of belief? Simplistically, a belief is said to be an acceptance that something exists or is the case, especially one (necessarily) without proof. Generally, a belief is defined as "the attitude we have, roughly, whenever we take something to be the case or regard it as true".⁸ Beliefs or their contents could be true or false. On this view, one is said to have a true belief if that person is justified in holding that belief. That is, that person's belief is the case if the belief is what its content asserts.⁹ So take the following beliefs:

1. X believes that God exist
2. X beliefs that $2+2 = 4$
3. X believes that the Grand Canyon is in Australia.
4. X believes that the best composer of classical music is Mozart.

In all of these beliefs it is said that they describe X's attitude with regards to some state of the world, and the person holding them could be mistaken in these beliefs in virtue of their content or what they assert.

Speaking about the content of belief is to say something about their reference. As Ramsey has indicated, a belief has an **aboutness**, (about

⁸ Eric Schwitzgebel, "Belief", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/belief/> Accessed March 2025.

⁹ David Armstrong, *Belief, Truth and Knowledge*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 3-6).

them), that is a propositional reference.¹⁰ So the utterance or sentence: **Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio**, is according to this view nothing over and above the view that Othello has a belief about so and so. Or stated differently, it is the view about some mental content that Othello has (and the mental content is about some relationship or state of affairs involving Desdemona and Cassio).

Why Beliefs cannot be Bearers of Truth

Roughly speaking, there are two reasons why truth cannot be a property of belief. Firstly, our commonsense everyday practice of belief ascription vis-à-vis truth is about the belief content rather than the belief. That is to say, when we talk about belief we are simply talking about some content or what Ramsey has called the aboutness of belief or propositional reference. Secondly, ascribing truth to belief commits us, contrary to Ramsey's view, to explaining truth-values in terms of the psychological states of the person holding the belief.¹¹ In Ramsey's view, predicating truth to a belief depends only on its propositional reference; hence if a "man's belief that the earth is round," according to him, "is true so is anyone else's belief that the earth is round, however little reason he may have for thinking so".¹² I talk more about these reasons in the next section.

¹⁰ Frank Plumpton Ramsey, "Truth and Probability", *Philosophical Papers*, (Ed. David Hugh Mellor), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926/1990), pp. 52-109; See also Frank Plumpton Ramsey, *On Truth: Original Manuscript Materials (1927-1929) from the Ramsey Collection*, (Eds. Nicholas Rescher and Ulrich Majer), (The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, DOI: 10.1007/978-94-011-3738, (1990); Frank Plumpton Ramsey, "The Nature of Truth", *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, (Ed. Michael P. Lynch), (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001, 2001), p. 434.

¹¹ By psychological states of belief, one means the state of a belief in relation to the believer's other beliefs, i.e. the mental state of the belief, which may include the degree of conviction of the particular belief, the states of other beliefs etc.

¹² Frank Plumpton Ramsey, "The Nature of Truth", *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, (Ed. Michael P. Lynch), (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001, 2001), p. 436.

Propositions and not Beliefs as Bearers of Truth

What seems to be suggested from our discussion so far is that the candidates for truth bearers are propositions and not beliefs. I aim to establish this through two lines of thought. By propositions, we simply mean nonlinguistic, abstract, and timeless entities. More on the nature of proposition in the next section.

On the first line of thought, I'll begin by saying something about beliefs in relationship to propositions. It seems obvious that to talk of a belief is to say that the belief is about something or is so and so, but that seems to me to be just our common way of talking when we say someone is in a mental state; mental states being intentional. This, however, does not make beliefs the subject of truth. In our everyday commonsense practice when we say two or more people have the same belief, what we are saying is that they have the same belief-content. For instance, the belief that: **The Prime Minister of Canada is in Nigeria**, is the content of the belief of anyone that holds the belief that; **The Prime Minister of Canada is in Nigeria**, and what we do when we ask if this belief is true is that we are asking if it is the case that the belief-content is as it is. That truth depends on the belief-content seems intuitive from the following example. Supposing that before heading to Nigeria the Prime Minister of Canada tells two of his friends, Rick Buba and Kugbe Oghenovo that he will go to Nigeria for a fortnight. Then presumably the belief-content would be: **The Prime Minister will go to Nigeria for a fortnight**, notwithstanding the language this is expressed in. If Buba and Oghenovo believe that: **The Prime Minister will go to Nigeria for a fortnight**, given the account (which I am defending) that propositions and not beliefs, are truth bearers we would ascribe to both Buba and Oghenovo the same belief-content or proposition that so and so, i.e. **The Prime Minister will go to Nigeria for a fortnight**. We were able to do this because in predicating truth to propositions and not simply beliefs we take the propositions or belief-content is as timeless.

Now to the second line of thought. Suppose that we take the view that:

(X^x) beliefs depend on psychological states of beliefs, rather than
(X^y) beliefs are independent of psychological states of beliefs

The problem here seems to be that once we hold (X^y), it is only by committing ourselves to (X^x) that we can, on the one hand, discriminate between Buba's belief and that of Oghenovo, and on the other hand, make sense of Buba's behavior in the light of any talk of his belief that: **The Prime Minister will go to Nigeria for a fortnight.** Although Ramsey rejects (X^x), with the account I am offering he is committed to accepting (X^x) given that he asserts (X^y). And once we buy into (X^y) and (X^x) any talk of whether Buba's belief is true or not would become somewhat circular and vacuous.

Let us suppose that Buba, unlike Oghenovo, misunderstands a fortnight to be ten days, and now utters the words: **The Prime Minister will go to Nigeria for a fortnight.** Let us further assume that both Buba and Oghenovo were expected to meet the Prime Minister at the airport after a fortnight. It seems commonsensical to assume that Buba is mistaken and won't be able to meet the Prime Minister at the airport given his belief that he would go to the airport after ten days. This highlights the broader worry of circularity and vacuousness mentioned above. Given my earlier attack on our commonsensical way of truth ascription, the Buba case highlights something fundamental about the view that beliefs are truth bearers. And in view of the commitment to (X^y) and (X^x) we would, in the Buba example, have to appeal to some other sets of antecedent beliefs he has to make sense of his belief. And this process would go on *ad infinitum* as we have to appeal to a new set of beliefs to explain the previous sets of beliefs. We would for example, have to understand Buba's belief about what a fortnight is, his belief about ten days making a fortnight and so on.

What Propositions Are

In the preceding section we said that propositions are nonlinguistic, abstract and timeless entities. What does that mean? Simply it means that propositions are not concrete (or material) objects. Although they are not concrete or material objects or entities it doesn't mean that they are mental

entities or **thoughts**. Propositions are abstract entities in the sense that they do not exist in space and time. Being described as **timeless** entities means that propositions are **eternal** or **omnitemporal** entities. This way of thinking of propositions as **timeless** entities also then suggests that in whatever language they are expressed in, they have a universal structure that convey a universal message and since they are transcultural, they are necessarily universal.¹³

Although propositions are nonlinguistic, abstract and timeless entities they are generally expressed in sentences.¹⁴ Consider again our example above of the nine sentences of Venus being the second planet from the Sun. Although these are different sentences, they all are typically used to express the same proposition or statement. In this way then the way we make utterances in different languages to express our beliefs or what may be called belief ascription and folk psychology can be said to be better captured if we take the view that propositions are bearers of truth.

For the truth of the proposition that Venus is the second planet from the Sun depends not on our beliefs or the language with which the proposition is expressed in but on one basic fact: on the physics of the solar system, which can be captured in different forms and languages. For as long as the solar system is the way it is the proposition expressed in these sentences is true. The truth of the proposition does not depend on the sentence in

¹³ I thank one of the reviewers of the paper for helping me think through this idea.

¹⁴ One may raise the question of how this notion of proposition addresses the concern about the truth-bearer status of certain extant propositions, namely, some propositions that we may not know their truth or false status, and which do not fall under the rubric of human or social convention. So, for example, the proposition: "There is life on some other planet in our galaxy." Whether there is such an extra-terrestrial life or not, is not yet objectively known. It does seem that we cannot take this as a proposition on the account that I am defending or if we take it as a proposition, then my account seems misguided. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for drawing my attention to this worry. My preliminary response to this worry will be to say that given that on a bivalent logical system a proposition is either true or false, the sentence "There is life on some other planet in our galaxy" is not a proposition if we take it not to be either true or false. And if we take it to be true or false, then it is a proposition, and its truth-bearer status will simply be that on the current available science it is false. It is possible that in the future science may prove it to be true.

which it is expressed and neither in any obvious way does it depend on human or social convention the way sentences are (as we discussed above). Because propositions are abstract and timeless entities it removes them from the relativity of human convention. And removing them from the relativity of human conventions makes them suitable candidates as bearers of truth.

Conclusion

The sort of things or entities that can be true is the central focus of this paper. I have highlighted a couple of things about sentences, beliefs, and propositions and their connection to truth. Four things have emerged from my discussion about truth bearers. First, sentences, beliefs, and propositions are among the things or entities that philosophers generally take to be bearers of truth. Second, sentences and beliefs cannot be truth bearers because sentences vacillate, and beliefs commit us to explain truth in terms of psychological states of beliefs. Third, propositions are better candidates as bearers of truth, and their **primitive status** is supported by their robust role in enabling us to finely discriminate among utterances and beliefs that are true and those that are not. Fourth propositions capture better our commonsense everyday practice of belief ascription and folk psychology, for although the variance between people's belief and their behavior seems to be cashed or teased out in terms of the psychological states of their beliefs, it is in virtue of the belief-content, namely, proposition that we say if they are true or not.

BEYOND THEORY: A PRAGMATIC VISION FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Pat Agboro

Abstract

This paper explores the implications of pragmatism, a philosophical movement emphasizing experience and consequences, for education. Drawing on thinkers like Dewey and James, pragmatism posits that knowledge is not merely abstract but arises from active engagement with the world. It rejects fixed truths, emphasizing the dynamic nature of knowledge and its constant refinement through experience. In education, this translates to learner-centered approaches that prioritize active inquiry, problem-solving, and real-world application. Pragmatism advocates for a system of education that equips students with the capacity for critical thinking and problem-solving skills, necessary for navigating a complex and ever-changing world, fostering a deeper understanding of knowledge and its relevance to human existence.

Keywords: Educational Reform, Pragmatic Vision, Theory.

Introduction

Pragmatism is a philosophical movement that emphasizes practical consequences and real-world applications in determining meaning, truth, and value. Pragmatists believe that truths are not absolute or fixed. Truths are constantly being tested and refined through experience and experimentation. Pragmatists believe that the meaning and truth of ideas are determined by their practical consequences. In other words, an idea is valuable if it leads to useful and practical outcomes in the real world.

Richard Rorty acknowledges that pragmatism is a somewhat “vague, ambiguous, and overworked word”, he ‘sees pragmatism as a central tenet of America’s unique intellectual tradition’’.¹ Similarly, Rusk and Scotland observe that while pragmatism resonated with the common people in England, it was not until it reached American shores that it

solidified into a recognised school of philosophy.¹ Pragmatism was initiated by Charles Sanders Peirce, as a logical method whereby the meaning of abstract concepts could be ascertained from its practical effects. William James significantly popularized pragmatism, particularly the notion that the truth of an idea can be evaluated by the practical consequences of the actions it inspires.

While Immanuel Kant used the term pragmatic in his *Critique of Practical Reason* to distinguish experience-based practices from those based on pure reason, it was Charles Sanders Peirce who developed the concept of pragmatism. Peirce, a prominent physicist, argued in the 1870s that meaning is fundamentally linked to action. He believed that the clarification of an idea's meaning could be achieved by examining the practical consequences of acting upon that idea. Thus, for Peirce, meaning is derived from the practical consequences of an idea. Once an idea is subjected to an experimental test and the consequence is observed, then the meaning of the idea can best be discovered. According to Charles Sanders Peirce, the meaning of a concept is inseparable from the experimental results it generates. He argued that when a hypothesis based on a concept is tested, it should produce a specific type of experience. This emphasis on practical consequences led Peirce to develop his philosophy, which he initially called **pragmatism**. Later, he differentiated his approach by renaming it **pragmaticism**² to avoid confusion with other emerging pragmatic philosophies.

For William James, pragmatism served a dual purpose. It provided a method for analysing philosophical problems and also functioned as a theory of truth. In fact, he was said to have given *pragmatism a new and*

¹ Robert Rusk and James Scotland, *Doctrines of the Great Educators*. (London: Macmillan Education Ltd. 1979), p. 218.

² See Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, (Eds. C. Hartshorne, P. Weiss), Vols. 1-6) and A. Burks (Vols. 7-8). (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press), 1931-58.

enduring meaning.³ William James' concept of pragmatism, explored in works like *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (1907) and *The Meaning of Truth: A Sequel to Pragmatism* (1909), can be seen as an extension of empiricism. Like empiricists, James emphasised the importance of concrete experiences and practical consequences. Pragmatism, in his view, rejected the pursuit of abstract theories and absolute truths, favouring instead an approach grounded in observable facts, actions, and relative principles. William James viewed theories as tools, not answers. He believed their worth lay in their ability to solve problems and guide human action. Therefore, the **cash value** of a theory, or its practical consequences for human behaviour, became the primary criterion for judging its validity. Truth for him is a useful lead that changes as human experiences change. According to James, the morality of an action or the truth of an idea should be dependent on their outcomes.

James also explored the concept of belief in works like *The Will to Believe* (1897) and *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). In these works, he argued that for certain area perspective such as religious faith, belief itself can shape reality through the positive experiences it creates for the believer. James suggested that belief in God could be pragmatically justified if it led to a more fulfilling and meaningful life for the believer. William James rejected the notion of a fixed, external reality waiting to be passively discovered by the mind. Instead, he saw the universe as a dynamic and ever-changing process. Through our experiences, we actively participate in giving the universe meaning and order. James opposed the idea of a single, underlying substance that defines everything. For him, the universe was inherently fluid and constantly evolving. In his *Principles of Psychology*, James argues that reasoning involves problem-solving and the ideas reasoned are ideo-motor dispositions that tend to discharge themselves in action.⁴ What this means is that the human mind

³ Andrew F. Uduigwomen and Alloy S. Ihuah, "Pragmatism, Naturalism and Education", *Philosophy and Education: An Analytic Approach*, (Eds. Uduigwomen, A. F. & Karo, O. M.), (Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers, 2011), p. 105.

⁴ Ibid.

is not an independent entity but an active participant evolving, relating, and coping with the world. Uduigwomen and Ihuah pointed out that James' pragmatism differs from that of Peirce. Meaning was thought of in terms of its practical uses by James while Pierce though employing the word practical, thought of meaning from the perspective of disinterested experimental clarification.⁵ For William James, the ultimate test of a theory, belief, or doctrine lay in its practical consequences. This famous statement, often simplified to **whatever works is true**, captures the essence of his pragmatism. James believed knowledge served a practical purpose, acting as a tool for navigating life. True ideas were those that could be assimilated, validated, and verified through experience. In this way, James argued that truth and usefulness were intertwined: an idea is useful because it is true, and its truth is ultimately confirmed by its practical utility.

The Pragmatic Method

The pragmatic method, as developed by philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, is a way of clarifying the meaning of concepts by considering their practical consequences. So, instead of getting bogged down in abstract debates about the nature of reality, the pragmatic method focuses on how ideas and beliefs actually affect actions and experiences in the world. It considers the practical effects of concepts and focusses on actionable implications of ideas. It also emphasizes that the meaning of a concept is not fixed but rather evolves as we experience its practical consequences. We can refine our understanding based on how our ideas work in the real world. In essence, the pragmatic method encourages us to:

- i. shift emphasis from abstract theorizing to concrete, actionable outcomes.
- ii. experiment with ideas and see how they work in practice.

⁵ Ibid., p. 106.

- iii. recognize that our understanding of the world is constantly evolving and should be adjusted based on our experiences.

The pragmatic method has had a profound impact on various fields, including philosophy, science, education, and social and political thoughts. It encourages us to be practical, to focus on what works, and to constantly refine our understanding of the world based on our experiences.

Dewey was strongly influenced by Peirce's emphasis on the importance of cooperative inquiry. Peirce believed that scientific progress relied heavily on building upon past discoveries. He argued that a strong hypothesis should be rooted in the existing body of scientific knowledge. Additionally, such knowledge should be falsifiable, meaning future observations or experiments could potentially disprove it. The emphasis on testability underscores Peirce's view that humans excel at solving intellectual challenges through cooperative efforts. By sharing and scrutinising ideas, we collectively refine our understanding of the world. Building on the concept of ongoing inquiry established by Peirce, John Dewey defined truth as the ideal outcome of an infinitely continuing process of investigation. Unlike traditional philosophies that prioritised the ends (goals), Dewey emphasised the means (the process). He argued that what we perceive as the **end** is simply a future stage in a series of actions, and the **means** are the earlier stages of that same series.⁶ Dewey's emphasis on on-going inquiry extends to his philosophy of education. This implies that education is not about achieving a fixed endpoint, but rather a continuous process of growth that fuels further development. Knowledge, in his view, is not a final destination but a tool for on-going exploration and learning. It serves as an instrument for navigating the world and fostering further intellectual curiosity. For Dewey, pragmatism could be equated with instrumentalism. Nevertheless, Dewey criticized James for subordinating thoughts to deeds. Dewey, on his part, conceives

⁶ Rusk and Scotland, op. cit., p. 218.

thoughts and deeds as being complimentary. For him, thoughts and deeds or knowledge and practice are in constant interaction.

Dewey's stance against James notwithstanding, there are areas of agreement between both of them. Rusk and Scotland point out several places where Dewey concurred with James' ideas on the relationship between thoughts and actions. For instance, in *Democracy and Education*, dealing with the development of the Experimental method, he says:

It means that we have no right to call anything knowledge except where our activity has actually produced certain physical changes in things, which agree with and confirm the conception entertained' in human nature and conduct. He maintains that the act comes before the thought, and that a motive does not exist prior to an act that produced it. In the quest for certainty, he declares that the experimental procedure is one that installs doing at the heart of the consequences of the operations which define the object of thought: and he repeats the test of ideas, of thinking generally, is found in the consequences of the acts to which the ideas lead.⁷

Consequently, the pragmatic criterion of test of ideas is related to the outcome of the reflective process. Ideas that are successful in solving problems are true, whereas those that do not lead to satisfactory adjustments are false, making truth to be relative for the pragmatists. This pragmatists' temperament clearly resonates with the principles of science. In science, principles are tentative solutions to concrete problems, which is why such principles are regarded as **hypotheses** that act as basic axioms for scientific research.

⁷ Ibid., p. 222.

Dewey posits that change is fundamental to life. He stated that every living organism is subject to the law of change. His reason for espousing such view is that no single organism can remain in a permanent state. Since it is obvious that life is in phases, every organism must go through the scale of change. It is on this ground that he rejected metaphysical and esoteric positions. Ironically, Dewey ended up embracing metaphysics through the back door when he acknowledged that human knowledge continues to evolve even after death.⁸ Ironical as this statement of Dewey might seem, the implication is that knowledge is an on-going phenomenon. This means that knowledge is not a fixed set of assumptions or beliefs.

William James was also strongly influenced by C. S. Pierce. Gerald Myers in making comparison between Pierce and William James states thus: “whereas the former made the consensus of a scientific community the standard of what it is rational to believe, the latter permitted the individual to consult his own experience in deciding.”⁹ James sees pragmatism primarily as a method for resolving seemingly endless metaphysical debates. Such debates concern the nature of reality that further connect the recurrent nature of metaphysical problems as freedom and determinism, appearance and reality, the mind-body problem and many others. According to James, the pragmatic method emphasises analysing the practical implications of various viewpoints to resolve disputes.¹⁰ James argues that experimentation is key to revealing these practical differences. He highlights that the pragmatic method is not new, citing Socrates, Aristotle, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume as prominent historical figures who employed the experimental method effectively. In essence, the pragmatic method is a problem-solving approach that emphasises investigation and utility. By analysing the potential outcomes of each viewpoint, we can

⁸ Raymond D. Boisvert, *Dewey's Metaphysics: Form and Being in the Philosophy of John Dewey*. Fordham University Press, (1988, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh4zdf5>).

⁹ Gerald E. Myers, *The spirit of American philosophy*, (New York: Capricorn Books, 1971), p. 176.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

gain a better understanding of the situation and make more informed decisions.

While pragmatism shares roots with empiricism, James' view takes a more radical stance. He rejects abstract ideas, solutions based solely on words, and preconceived notions. He also shuns rigid principles, closed philosophical systems, and absolute truths. He embraces the possibilities of nature and sees theories as instruments and not answers to mysteries that have a tone of finality. James makes reference to the Italian pragmatist Papini who explained that Pragmatism could be likened to a corridor in a hotel that could lead anywhere:

Innumerable chambers open out of it. In one you may find a man writing an atheistic volume, in the next someone on his knees prays for faith and strength, in the third a Chemist investigating a body's properties. In a fourth system, of idealistic metaphysics is being excogitated; in a fifth, the impossibility of metaphysics is being shown. But they all own the corridor, and all must pass through it if they want a practicable way of getting into or out of their respective rooms.¹¹

From the above, it can be inferred that pragmatism privileges processes to the end results as well as the end results or consequences. In essence, despite its emphasis on facts, pragmatism does not favour materialism. It does not reject the pursuit of abstract ideas, as long as those ideas have practical applications and lead to concrete results, implying that pragmatism sees abstractions as tools, instruments or means to certain ends. This means that a tool is valuable insofar it helps you navigate the complexities of the real world. James equally points out that if in any way, religion makes theological ideas valuable to concrete life, then such ideas can be said to be pragmatic. In other words, the truthfulness of such

¹¹ Myers, op. cit., p. 201.

theological ideas is dependent on their relation to other truths that must be acknowledged.¹²

Pragmatism as a Philosophy of Education

In John Dewey, the results of technical, philosophical studies are applied more specifically to social and educational issues. He was more of an active reformist who was committed to specifically applying ideas to practical life. Like his fellow Pragmatist, Dewey attacked traditional theories that failed to emphasise the evolutionary nature of life, change and novelty. This position led many to the extremes of progressivism which advocated unlimited freedom of the student in determining the Teaching-Learning process. However, the later Dewey never called for an outright replacement of old traditional methods of teaching. In his work *Experience and Education*, Dewey noted that it is like human beings to view things in terms of extremes: hot or cold, big or small, etc. The problem with maintaining one extreme view over another is that one is liable of being guilty of the same offense allegedly committed by the opposing view.¹³

The influence of Pragmatism on education is far-reaching. However, in discussing pragmatism's influence on education, we must be very careful not to make the general mistake that several scholars have made. Such mistake has resulted in what is termed the excesses of progressivism, which is an offshoot of pragmatism. It is such a mistake that made Dewey to set the record straight in his essay entitled: "A Contrast between Traditional and Progressive Education". In the said essay, he warns against the exaggerations and excesses of outrightly turning away from traditional education. His argument can be summed up in the following words:

¹² Ibid.

¹³ John Dewey, *Experience and education*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1938), p. 20.

When external control is rejected, the problem becomes that of finding factors of control that are inherent within experience. When external authority is rejected, it does not follow that all authority is rejected, but rather that there is need to search for a more affective source of authority. Because the older education imposed the knowledge, methods and the rules of conduct of the mature person upon the young, it does not follow, except upon the basis of the extreme either. Or philosophy, that the knowledge and skill of the mature person has no directive value for the experience of the immature. On the contrary, basing Education upon personal experiences may mean more multiplied and more intimate contacts between the mature and the immature than ever existed in the traditional school, and consequently, more rather than less, guidance by others.¹⁴

Dewey's central challenge lies in reconciling the importance of personal experience in learning with the need to make practical connections with the world. He emphasises learning through direct engagement. The question however, is about how individuals are able to establish the said connections without relying on pre-existing knowledge or bypassing the process of personal discovery? Dewey might argue that resolving this tension requires a robust social philosophy. This philosophy would explain how social elements like culture, education, and relationships influence the way we learn through personal experience. A critical consideration of the foregoing pragmatist thinking shall reveal several implications for education over which Dewey has remained silent. The point to note in all of this is that pragmatists acknowledge the reality of change as the fundamental stuff upon which learning should be anchored.

¹⁴ Myers, op. cit., p. 223.

Sharma and Hyland agree with John Dewey that reality, which forms the anchor for human experience, is constantly undergoing change.¹⁵ It is on this ground that Dewey privileges experimentalism or instrumentalism as the foundation of education. For Dewey, pragmatism and experimentalism are synonymous. This stance is a reflection of the pragmatist epistemology built on the scientific method. Thinking arises from problematic situations. These situations themselves elicit certain scientific patterns that can be outlined as follows:

- i. Recognising the state of confusion that has evolved into a problem demanding a solution we actively seek the answer to this question.
- ii. We then form educated guesses, called hypotheses, to guide our observations and data-gathering.
- iii. Developing this initial idea or guess through logical thinking.
- iv. Putting the hypothesis to test.¹⁶

The process of inquiry usually begins with a situation that sparks up curiosity that creates a problem. At the beginning of the inquiry, we feel unsure or confused, which portrays signs of uncertainty. To resolve this uncertainty, Dewey recommends active engagement with the situation, through which we gather information, make observations, proceed upon experiment, and reflect on our findings. This process helps us refine our understanding and develop potential solutions. Through inquiry, we move towards a clearer and more unified understanding. The confusion or problem is resolved, at least to a satisfactory degree. Dewey's view highlights inquiry as an ongoing process driven by a desire to understand and improve our experience in the world.

¹⁵ A. P. Sharma and J. T. Hyland, *Philosophy of education for Nigeria*, (Ibadan: Gbabeke Publishers Ltd, 1981), p. 52.

¹⁶ E. M. Nwabuisi, *Philosophy of Nigeria education in modern times*, (Etutokwu Publishers Ltd. 1987), p. 73.

Since the pragmatists see the individual as an organism who should adapt to his/her environment. From the foregoing statement, we infer that with regards to the issue of education, pragmatism insists that the learner cannot be separated from the learning environment. This apart, it should be realised that all learners do not have the same capacity. Hence, Dewey espoused the view that while exposing children to experiences is crucial for genuine education, caution should be taken to sift the correct experience to the right audience in order to maximise learning. It is in this sense that Sharma and Hyland state that a better and fuller satisfaction of individual human needs mean a healthier society. Since the development of the individual is inseparably linked to holistic development of the society, education becomes the instrument for acquainting learners with knowledge of the past for the common good.

It is for the above reason, that pragmatism as a principle of education frowns against the compartmentalization of knowledge. Pragmatists argue that life presents experience as a wholesome lesson and not in parts, implying that learning should be organised around general topics and themes. This would give the learner the necessary practical experience needed to handle whatever problem he/she faces in life. Nevertheless, pragmatists also make room for specialisation in certain subject areas at the mature stage of primary and secondary education all with a view to encouraging spontaneous and individual freedom.¹⁷

From all that has been said so far, we can say that the pragmatic educational system is quite distinct from the traditional educational approach. Dewey summarised these distinctions by arguing that progressive education emphasises the freedom of the students, cultivation of individuality, learning through experience, and awareness of a changing world. On the other hand, traditional approach to education is characterised by imposition of ideas from above (that is teacher and school), external discipline, rote memorisation, and preparation for an

¹⁷ Sharma and Hyland, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

abstract future. Above all, the traditional approach to education, perceives the world as a static entity.¹⁸ Listed below are the significance of pragmatism as a principle of education.

- i. Its learner centred approach focusses on the individual student's experiences and needs. This in itself encourages active learning and self-directed inquiry in the students.
- ii. Since pragmatism encourages real world application, classroom learning is connected to real life situations, emphasizing problem solving, critical thinking and application of knowledge in order to address challenges within the environment.

The Experiential Learning approach of pragmatism encourages the development talents through the acquisition of practical skills. Practical skills are developed through the processes of hands-on learning, field trips, and real-world projects to enhance understanding. In addition, pragmatism also encourages students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills to navigate complex challenges and adapt to the dynamics of the changing world. An indispensable feature of pragmatism is that it rejects rote memorization. In contrast, it encourages deep understanding and the ability to apply knowledge in meaningful ways. The individual is regarded as an active participant in the teaching learning experience. In essence, pragmatism advocates for an education that is:

- i. Relevant: Connected to students' lives and the challenges they face.
- ii. Meaningful: Engaging and purposeful, with

¹⁸ Myers, op. cit., p. 176.

- iii. clear connections to real-world applications.
- iv. Transformative: Equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in a complex and ever-changing world.

By embracing these principles, education can become more engaging, effective, and empowering for all learners.

COSMOLOGICAL DUALITY AS A METAPHYSICAL CONSTRUCT FOR ACHIEVING HARMONY AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN TRADITIONAL IGBO SOCIETY

Bernard Nnamdi Adinuba

Abstract

This discourse analyzes the multidimensionality of metaphysical realities on which traditional Igbo philosophy is founded. In the people's ideology, the world exists not on two opposing planes called dualism on which the European philosophy is founded which makes it to perceive everything in the prism of polarized opposites. This is contrary to the Igbo concept of existence otherwise called duality in which opposites are seen to be in complementarity or symbiosis. This is the fulcrum on which the traditional Igbo society rested and which promotes order and balance of the forces of nature and ultimately establishes orderliness, tranquility, cooperation and peaceful coexistence among the people. The study relies on oral tradition, on the insights offered by literature and from ideas generated from myths, ethnography, archeology and linguistics. The conclusion as well as findings derived therefrom is that in its over 6000 years of existence, the Igbo culture in spite of intrusion and pollution emanating from the wider world has by its dualistic cosmology been able to maintain equilibrium of the spiritual and natural forces to attain peaceful coexistence of its variegated elements. It recommends that African contemporary leaders of all hues should appreciate this basic metaphysical phenomenon, infuse and inject it in their dealings with their followers both in their private and official duties and policies.

Keywords: Duality, Polarity, Peace and Harmony, Complementarity, Equity and Justice.

Introduction

In the binoculars of the uninformed, especially one not conversant with the ethos of traditional Igbo system, there exists two forms of existential reality which are broadly grouped between the good and the bad. This sort of perception results into the bifurcation of reality into parallel and

irreconcilable contraries. This is quite contrary to the Igbo African purview of symbiotic co-existence in which opposites or contraries are conceived to be interdependent or complementary. It is a world in which good and evil are interconnected. Evil is not purely evil nor is good completely good, except the by the equilibrium of the two. A notorious thief for instance can be rehabilitated by assigning him with the crucial post of chief security officer in the community under severe oath. This way of moderation between good and evil is what has been described as cosmological duality in this study.

The aim of this paper is to examine this crucial aspect of Igbo culture and tradition which rests on duality. Duality recognizes and captures the complementarity of opposite forces for the achievement of societal peace, order, and harmony. It is through such balancing of the forces of nature that the society ultimately establishes orderliness, tranquility, cooperation and peaceful coexistence. For instance, it is good and encouraging for a young man who had migrated abroad to arrive home with stupendous wealth, however the society (including the young man's parents and extended family) do not just accept it on its face value. Some questions must be asked to determine its genuineness for as the people say, the fowl does not just swallow anything it sees; it must first examine its propriety to ensure it is *anu oriri* – venison worth eating. This is to prevent *rie taa, nwuo echi* – eat today, die tomorrow. It could also prevent *o biara nike, nwuo nike* – early death of such young man as well as other beneficiaries of the questionable wealth.

Duality as Opposed to Dualism

The dualist philosophy which features in all aspects of the Igbo culture operates in opposite of dualism, which is the variant of the European philosophy, in which reality is polarized or bifurcated thereby creating room for a monistic, reductionistic and absolutist world outlook.¹ In other words, to the European, a thing deemed bad is bad and unacceptable. It is

¹ Chiedozie Okoro, "The Notion of Integrative Metaphysics and its Relevance to Contemporary World Order", *Integrative Humanism Journal-Ghana*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (September, 2011), p. 6.

rejected in its entirety no matter how valuable it could prove. It is on this premise that the European or Western societies run into extremities that encourages the of the sharp divide between conqueror and the conquered, the elect and the victim etc.

It is important to note that the principle of duality permeates the existence of the Igbo people in their daily commerce. The dualistic understanding of the world, does not mean that the Igbo do not understand or recognize when an issue is good or bad or when an evil is committed, or the need to reward good actions such as honesty, what is rather implied is that because of the principle of duality, the Igbo promote the mentality of moderation. This paper uses the differing thematic areas of life to illustrate this traditional Igbo philosophical perspective. The term traditional in this context refers to Igbo autochthonous belief system comprising of *ntoala/ntoani* (Igbo spirituality), *odinala/odinani* (Igbo traditional science) and *Omenala/omenani* (Igbo customs, mores, morals and traditions). These three were interwoven to form the foundation of traditional Igbo people.

Raison D'état for the Study

The problems that prompt this study are as follows:

- (i) Neglect of the cherished cultural heritage bequeathed by the Igbo forefathers,
- (ii) Enthronement of the culture of impunity, corruption, glaring injustice, brutality and intimidation of the underdog by the rich, which are legacies of colonial rule,
- (iii) Long military dictatorship, and lopsided application of the ethos of democracy and federalism since 1999 - has witnessed in recent times, the reign of impunity to the extent that insurgents and criminal elements have sacked the traditional institutions and leadership of many towns who together with a good number of their citizenry, have taken to self-exile to different places outside their homelands and to overseas.

- (iv) Absence of the lofty philosophy of cosmological duality in the management of the corporate affairs of the communities and extended family relations (i.e. *Umunna*) in Igbo land. The disharmony in Igbo communities is so rife that an estimated 95 per cent of police and court cases in many Igbo towns, villages, churches and cherished institutions involve blood relations. Friends and non-indigenes make up the remaining 5 per cent.²

This raises the questions, why and how have the people turned the cherished Igbo system into an arena for mutual and mortal enmity in the fashion of the Hobbesian fable of the state of nature? And why is Igboland increasingly serving as a push factor in the export of talented young men and women to other parts of the world? Even in Nigerian cities Ndigbo are serially discriminated and emasculated and their properties utterly destroyed.

Answers to these posers are testimonies to the effects of relegating the principle of duality, which constitutes the fulcrum of Igbo culture, to the background. The ruination of the worthwhile traditions is encompassing and in all its ramifications. Matters are made worst by the Nigerian-Biafran war which reduced the Igbo to slave status in Nigeria. Chinweizu succinctly captures the current Igbo situation in Nigeria as follows:

The cumulative result is that Ndi-Igbo today show symptoms of being a people who have almost lost their culture, whose society is disintegrating, and who, for lack of a firm anchor in their ancestral culture, are adapting haphazardly to bewildering circumstances.³

² Mr Nweke, senior police officer, aged 45, in oral Interview with author over the nature of cases reported at Ihiala Police station between complainants and defendants, Date: 17 July, 2004 at Ihiala Police Station.

³ Chinweizu, *Aku Agwu na Aku Mma: The Responsibilities of Wealth, Perspectives on Ndi-Igbo in Contemporary Nigeria*, (Ed. Laz. E.N. Ekwueme), (Lagos: Lenaus Publishing Ltd. 1999), p. 22.

In spite of this anomalous situation, the fine ingredients of Igbo cosmological duality have not been extirpated. It continues to find expression in the life and culture of the generality of the people.

Essential Features of Duality

It will be imperative at this juncture to examine the features on which duality as a worthy cultural metaphysical worldview stands. First, as already emphasized, Ndi-Igbo are not averse to perceiving their world as composed of two opposing forms; nevertheless, they believe that there could be a meeting point because in every bad circumstance, there must be some good embedded in it. Duality in this sense implies the balancing of the tensions and tussles between negative and positive forces. As the Igbo common saying goes: *ihe niile di abuo abuo, he kwuru, ihe di ichie akwuso ya*, which translates thus; *everything coexists in pairs, when one thing stands, another thing stands by it*.

Second, duality is the basis for mutuality, inclusiveness and symbiotic reciprocity, which in turn form the foundation for communalism. Duality is responsible for the dynamism, pragmatism and amenability to change by the Igbo, which Nwala described as: “Igbo complex of beliefs, habits, customs and traditions of resilience”.⁴

Third, duality is the foundation of complementarity which in turn is the basis for interdependence or interconnectivity in Igbo culture. Complementarity is quite the opposite of antagonism. Where the classical European sees antagonism of the opposites, the traditional Igbo sees complementarity, which is illustrated with the allegory of the dove called *nduru* in Igbo. *Nduru* flock in pair. By observation, each time a pair of *nduru* perch, they always backed each other fixing their eyes on opposite directions. Igbo natives concluded that the mannerism of the *nduru* is meant to complement each other in keenly observing the opposite directions in a complex and competitive world. What this implies is application of critical thinking, rationality and cooperation in the approach

⁴ T. U. Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy*, (Lagos: Lantern Books, 1985), p. 5.

to issues, especially innovations that task human intelligence and wisdom. Like the *nduru*, humans must cooperate with and complement each other in all ramification for a healthy and fulfilled coexistence. Tackling challenges through the instrumentality of complementarity is the very factor that makes the Igbo metaphysical existence a complex phenomenon. Afigbo correctly analyzed this when he observed that “the Igbo application of ethical complementarity is reflected not only on the society and its segments but also in individual’s morals and lifestyles”.⁵

Fourth, duality, operating on the principle of complementarity, is the basis for seniority. In a family, the roles of husband and wife are complementary, but the man is a senior partner (i. e. the head); this is in spite of the fact that the woman may be higher in status than the man (i.e. more educated than the man, come from rich family background and/or earn higher income). Again, we see this issue of seniority in the reverence paid to *Ndi Mbu na Ndi Egede*. Granted that both are forebears who are believed to still play some roles in the life of the living and unborn populations, *Ndi Egede* are considered to be higher in status than *Ndi Mbu*. Whereas *Ndi Egede* are the founding fathers of the community who established the customs, traditions and spiritual covenants of the society. *Ndi Mbu* are ancestors who came after *Ndi Egede*, they include those well-known to us who died only lately. In similar vein, the *Okpara* as the oldest man in the extended family or the village is senior to the *Ogbuehi* who is the cultural custodian of authority and the *Ichie* who is the political custodian of authority in the community. In this instance, money or political status does not determine seniority.

Breaking of Kolanut

Seniority is also manifested in the breaking of kolanut. The sacrosanctity embedded in this sacred item called *Kola nitida* (i.e. traditional *Oji Igbo*) makes it a rule that the senior partner in a group or a relationship, no matter how low his social status, must break the kolanut in consecration of

⁵ Adiele Eberechuku Afigbo, *Igbo Experience: A Prolegomenon*, (Okigwe Imo State Nigeria: Whytem Publishers, 2001), p. 6.

prayers and the pouring of libation. Traditionally, it is the right of the oldest man in the family (*okpara*), or the family head (*di we ilu*), or the oldest man in the village or the community has the right to break the kola in the gathering of people. In the relationship between a father-in-law and his son-in-law, the senior partner (the father of the girl or his relatives) breaks the kola. The junior partner (the son-in-law and his relatives) cannot be deemed to be breaking two things – breaking the girl (i.e. perceived in sexual intercourse) and also breaking the sacred kolanut.

The fifth and last feature of duality is captured in the philosophical concept of *Echi di ime*, which translates as – tomorrow is pregnant with uncertainties. Ndi-Igbo are not given to one-way traffic reasoning. Ndi Igbo believe that tomorrow is unfathomable and so they apply dynamism and wisdom when dealing with issues concerning the future because *uwa na eme ntughari*, meaning that the world is ever changing. However, Ndi Igbo also believe that the world rotates on a dynamism of moderated change and moderated permanence. The dynamic or moderated interdependence of change and permanence is illustrated with the story of Nze Ifubuzo. Nze Ifubuzo was a devout traditionalist who refused to accept Christianity. He nonetheless allowed the missionaries to preach to his wives and children on the ground that they might listen to the missionaries. Nze Ifubuzo is noted to have declared thus: *onu a m ji ekwe ahaa, a ga ghi m eji ya kwee amen*, meaning that as for him – he will not use the mouth with which he answers *ahaa*, to answer *amen*.

Cosmological Duality in Igbo Culture

To appreciate and properly situate the role of duality and its associated principle of complementarity in the Igbo culture, it may be imperative to discuss some issues and concepts in Igbo metaphysics.

***Chi na Agu*:** This refers to the siamese relationship between *Chi-Ukwu* - the Almighty God and Creator (abbreviated as *Chi*) and *Agu* (Guardian Spirit) assigned by *Chi* to guard and guide each person throughout his/her sojourn on earth. *Agu* is in Igbo metaphysics place the same role in a person's life as what the Catholic Church call Guardian Angel or what the

Pentecostalists refer to as the Spirit Man. *Chi na Agu* complement each other in determining one's destiny.

Ofo and Ikenga: *Ikenga* in Igbo metaphysics signifies ones the principle of one's individualism and one's essence of prosperity. *Ikenga*, symbolically located in a man's right shoulder and represented with the emblem of the sturdy ram, illustrates man's strength, doggedness, reliability and resilience. Like the ram which does not cry even when being slaughtered; a man is a defender of his household; he does not cry or display effusions of emotion like a woman but bears his travails with fortitude. This is rendered in the ponderous idiom *ebili na eri na ude*, meaning that - a man is like the (sacrificial) ram that does not cry, but the tremor of pain down its throat (when being slaughtered) tells of its suffering. This sturdiness contrasts with and also works in tandem with the communal *Ofo*, which gives stamp of authority to worthy elders. In duality, the individual is one amongst others who cooperate to form cohesion in the society. Thus, in spite of one's unique qualities exhibited through professional calling, one is subject to the will of the community. While holding unto his/her individualism (symbolized by his/her strength, prowess and accomplishments), he/she must recognize the boundaries imposed on him/her by the group to which he/she is subject to. The group could be the kindred (*obu*), or extended family (*umunna*), or village community (*ogbe*) or *obodo* (town/clan) to which he belongs.

Chinweizu uses the antithesis of the individualist *Ikenga* and the ritualist authority of the family and lineage *Ofo* as example to illustrate the duality of existence which according to him counterbalances each other to achieve harmony of existence.⁶

Ogu na Ofo: One could often hear the Igbo say, *ejimri m gi ugu na ofo*, which meanings – I stand on the principles of justice, equity, fairness and religious sanctity. While *Ogu* refers to justice, fairness and equity

⁶ Chinweizu, 2011, op. cit., p. 22.

expected in one's dealings with others, *Ofo* is the traditional, customary or religious sanctity. *Ofo* is the stamp of authority and fulcrum on which the society as established by the forefathers and by implication, expression of one's honesty, fairness and sense of justice to another. It is another way of saying that as far as a particular issue or matter is concerned, one is at peace with the heavens and so expects reciprocity from one's adversaries.

Ako na Uche: This refers to the comingling of intelligence and wisdom. *Uche* is the native sharp wittedness which endows humans with the ability to reason and perform cognitive activities like mathematical calculations, academic rigour and other related matters. *Ako* is wisdom and sense of maturity. Intelligence without wisdom is next to nothing. It explains why King Solomon saw the need to request for the gift of wisdom which overrides every other attribute. This is what the Igbo mean when they say; **passing six is not passing sense**. *Ako* is further illustrated in the ponderous *Ebili Ako*; the sharp witted and wise packed young ram who would recognize and deal decisively with potential challenges like the conspiracy or threat of an enemy even before the enemy thinks of his/her evil plan. It also explains why one with a high level of educational attainment (say a professor) may lack the ability for the management of human beings, while a trader would possess high a great degree of managerial ability.

Man and Woman: Gender relationship for the Igbo African is between male and female for the purpose of procreation and the sustainability of the human race. For the Igbo, none of the genders can be reduced to the other. Society is defined in terms of the relationship between male and female. It is in this sense that Chiedozie Okoro stated that "in spite of its oriented patriarchy, the Igbo world view does not create a hiatus between theory and practice, action and reaction and therefore between man and woman, boy and girl".⁷ This apart, a complete home is one with father and mother for the proper upbringing of the child. It is in this sense that the

⁷ Ibid.

Igbo say – when a father beats a child, the mother soothes, consoles, and draws the child closer. Chinweizu captures this better in the following words:

whereas male power tends to be crude, confrontational and direct, female power tends to be subtle, manipulative, and indirect. He maintains that whereas aggressiveness is the hallmark of male power, maneuver and alluring is the hallmark of female power. And where man is the great physical aggressor, woman is the great psychological maneuverer.⁸

The organization of traditional Igbo community is based on the duality and complementarity of the male and female genders. Male institutions are headed by men while female institutions are headed by women. The *Okpara*, the oldest man in the community wield authority over the menfolk. In similar vein, the *Isi Nwanyị*, the oldest woman exercised control over the women. Everything that concerns the womenfolk must pass through her office and her consent must be sought on almost all-important matters that concern the community.⁹

Legal Adjudication: One spectacular area of human life where duality illustrates itself clearly is in adjudication of cases between disputing parties in Igboland. The Igbo judicial system follows the two principles of *akamkwumoto* and *ikpemkwumoto*. The two concepts which etymologically and metaphorically derived from the practice during demarcation of farm land boundaries or resolving of land disputes between brothers or neighbors implied that justice must be transparent. This is illustrated by straight hand *aka kwu oto*, implying one that does not cheat anyone. Thus, the first concept *akamkwumoto* denotes that the virtues of

⁸ Chinweizu, *Anatomy of Female Power*, (Lagos: Pedro Press, 1990), p. 23.

⁹ N. Azogu, *Oguta Cultural Heritage and Practice: A Handbook for the New Generations*. Owerri: Peace Enterprise, 1993, p. 174; cited in Uche Uwaezuoke Okonkwo, Women's Access to Power in a Matrilineal Igbo Society: A Historical Study of Oguta in the twentieth Century. *Women and Power in Africa in the Twentieth and Twenty First Centuries*. (Ed. Blankson Ikpe), (Lagos: Fragrance Communications Publishers, 2009), p. 222.

justice, equity, and fairness are to be expectedly observed by the litigants angling for equity or demanding justice. Igbo culture demands that anyone who must come to equity must do so with clean hands, meaning that such individual must be armed with *Ogu* (i.e. the principle of truth, transparency and fairness).¹⁰

The second concept premised on *Ikpenkwumoto* (also called *ikpeziriezi*) is an expression of the virtues expected of the judges usually composed of a Council of Elders who in the practical setting of adjudication must seem to display not only the *Ofo*, but also *Ogu*. It implies the application of the virtues of truthfulness, fairness, honesty, transparency etc, to be displayed by the judges who must stamp their decision with spiritual sanctity of *Ofo*. In these regards, justice is based on the customs (*omenala*) of the land. It requires that both the disputing parties and the judges to keep strictly to the injunctions of *omenala* in the administration of justice, outside which any decision reached becomes null and void.¹¹

In any case, beyond these, the Igbo believe that a good judgment is one which does not produce rancor, bitterness and spirit of revenge. In the words of Nwaike and Onwiliri, emphasis is laid on the well-known Igbo sociological philosophy of live-and-let-live, harmony, peaceful coexistence and consideration of the needs of the others, including the disputing parties.¹² This makes judicial settlements in all its ramifications, including penal justice system, to be premised on the virtues of reconciliation, peacemaking and peace-building. In this regard, judgment is not based on the hard-core principle of **winner takes all** but on the principle of **no victor, no vanquished**. The aim is to avoid situations where the winning party goes home with fanfare, amidst booming of canons and merriment in an atmosphere of *okommei! okommei! Ifere mee ha*, meaning we have won them, shame on them. Such situations with

¹⁰ Emma C. Nwaike and Joshua Okechukwu Onwiliri, *African Traditional Religion and Sociocultural Heritage*, (Owerri: Mega Atlas Projects Ltd. 2017), p. 175.

¹¹ F. C. Ogbalu, *Igbo Institutions and Customs*, (Onitsha: University Publishing Co. 1978), p. 9.

¹² Emma C. Nwaike and Joshua Okechukwu Onwiliri, op. cit.

intemperate vituperations that go with them sooner or later provoke more serious bad blood and retaliations and/or even armed conflicts far more vindictive than the original conflict. In the case of family disputes, it leads to *iro ulo* (household enmity), which could degenerate into *agha ulo* (household warfare) which is the worst form of enmity.¹³

Oru na Igbo: This represents two broad entities in Igboland playing complementary functions. *Oru* (*Olu* in some dialects) – refers to the Riverine Igbo communities (mainly alleged descents of Igala and Benin) and those occupying the riverine areas of Onitsha such as Egbema, Oguta, the entire Ogbahu LGA as well as the contiguous Anam communities of Aguleri-Umuleri clan, and their Igala affiliated neighbors of Ogurugu, Igga living on the riverine corridor of Omombala (Anambra) River among others. Their distinctive features make them different from the Mainland Igbo who live in the hinterland. High degree of complementarity exists between the two entities based on their cultural endowments. While the former are prolific food producers including copious fish and bush meat, the latter (Igbo) faced with herculean challenges of poor soils are mainly traders, artisans, technologists and indeed, the brain-box of Igbo socio-political development.

Eze-Muo na Okpara: Refers to symbiotic relationship between the communal priest and community's oldest man, which represents the relationship between spiritual and temporal powers in traditional Igbo community. Related to this is the cordial relationship between the highest traditional ruler, Eze or Igwe and his Council of Chiefs styled Ndi-Ogbuehi or Ndi-Ichie in some Igbo communities.

¹³ Oral discussion with the Elders: Chiefs Pius Ujubonu (Alias Ozodimiru, aged 60), Stephen Onwuasoanya (Ijeziriezi, 72), Gabriel Umekiti (Alias Akaraugo, 55), Daniel Nwanya (Aluba Aluba, 75) – all businessmen at Izu Umunna Social Club Forum, 5 Anifowoshe Street, Ilasamaja, Mushin Lagos, date: 23/11/23, at 5pm.

Cosmological Duality Embedded in Names and Proverbs

Litany of proverbs, idioms and titular names or names given to children at birth – are illustrative of duality and its peaceful existence as well as restoration of peace after conflict. For want of space, only a few examples will suffice here. These include:

- (i) *Egbe bere ugo bere, nke si ibe ya ebena, nku kwapu ya* – let the kite perch and let the eagle also perch, whichever denies the other its perching right, let its wings break off,
- (ii) *onye ji akwu tupuru nchi makana nchi adighi ari elu* – he/she that has palm nut, let him/her drop some for the grass-cutter (cane cutter) because it does not climb the palm tree,
- (iii) *aka nri kwoo aka epke, aka ekpe kwoo aka nri* – let the right hand wash the left hand and let the left hand wash the right hand (for both to be clean),
- (iv) *onye anwuna, ma ibe ya efuna* – let nobody die, and let his/her neighbor not get lost,
- (v) *okerekwu amana uma takaa akpa nwa dibia, ma nwa dibia amana uma buo okerekwu onu* – let the bush rat not gnaw (destroy through furrows) into the bag of the Dibia and let the Dibia not curse the rat on flimsy reasons,
- (vi) *o biara be onye abiagbuna ya, ma o naba, mkpum mkpum epuna ya na azu* – let the visitor not harm his/her host so that the host does not become impoverished upon the departure of the stranger, and on his departure, let him not develop hunchback (meaning let no harm be done to both), and
- (vii) *Ofe mmiri di ihu n'abo* – A river frontage (where people fetch water) is of two sides, ditto - a coin.¹⁴

¹⁴ Oral discussion with the Elders, 23/11/23, at 5pm.

Despite the egalitarian nature of the Igbo culture, respect is accorded to the chiefs, elders and titled men. This set of persons enjoy certain levels of moderated immunity. Duality expects that treating the cases of such elders who serve as role models, their offences could be waved off because pronouncement of guilt against them might incur more damages than the rightness being sought for. For instance, a father might be proved wrong in a matter between him and his son. In this case, he would be cautioned privately by fellow elders because pronouncing judgment against him openly might not sound proper. It can kill the moral of his children and younger dependents. For this type of cases, the idiom *ikpe amaeze*; which translates as – the king cannot be wrong, is literarily applied.¹⁵

In the light of the above, some names are employed in adjudication of cases to express duality of relationships, the need for forgiveness, reconciliation and non-recourse to retaliation. Examples are *Abokalia*, which is a short version for *Abokalia ife*, *atunye isi*, meaning that – revenge is dangerous as it is capable of killing or hurting the revenger. Another example is the name *Ofodile*; which translates as – retributive justice does not harm or kill. Other examples are *Ofoma* – justice knows better, *Ofoka* – justice is superior, and *Chukwujiofor* – God is the holder of justice and equity.¹⁶

Conclusion

That cosmological duality is the foundation of the Igbo tradition is a truism. It occupies a spectacular role in everything the Ndi Igbo do. This world view which is at the cornerstone of Igbo existence is succinctly captured in the expression *ibu anyị danda*, meaning – no task is insurmountable for the *danda*.¹⁷ *Danda* are round-shaped specie of insects called Dung or Scarab Beetles that are reputed to roll and push loads much bigger and heavier than their sizes. Often seen working in pairs, they mold

¹⁵ Oral discussion with the Elders, 23/11/23, at 5pm.

¹⁶ Emma C. Nwaike and Joshua Okechukwu Onwiliri, op. cit.

¹⁷ Innocent I. Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda: New Complementary Ontology*, (Berlin: Lit Verlag Dr. Hopf, 2007).

debris consisting of dung or feces, which they push into dark holes to form food for their larvae. This implies that for the Igbo, no legitimate task is too big to be surmounted provided the executors, like *danda*, are mutually dependent on one another in complementarity. In other words, household, group or societal responsibilities could appear enormous; but with cooperation and coordination, obstacles will be surpassed. It is on this note that Chieke Ifemesia states that:

In Igbo cosmology, nothing is absolute. Everything, everybody, however apparently independent, depends upon something else. Interdependence, exhibited now as duality or reciprocity, now as ambivalence or complementarities, has always been the functional principle of the Igbo philosophy of life.¹⁸

It goes without saying that a people's cosmology is the foundation of their total existence.

¹⁸ Ifemesia Chieke, *Traditional Human Living among the Igbo: A Historical Perspective*. (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1979), pp. 67-68.

ON THE FEASIBILITY OF AFRICAN SOCIALISM

Eromosele Eric Usifoh and Joe Dukeson

Abstract

*The history of socialism in Africa has been a subject of great debate since the middle of the twentieth century when the end of the Second World War ushered in the era of independence and foundational movements to overthrow European colonialism on the African continent. It is a history of material and spiritual struggles shaped by theorists like Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Obafemi Awolowo etc. Historically, most political and economic theories have roots in classical scholarship, and as such Socialism, Communism, or Anarchism are no different. Some scholars of political science and political philosophy trace the history of socialism to pre-historic polities. However, to avoid any ahistorical analysis, the feasibility of African Socialism will be discussed with a historical and philosophical view of the Anarchistic/Communitistic/Socialistic theories and praxis from Antiquity, The Middle Ages, and The Modern Period. The point delineated in this essay is that socialism is a universal idea for liberation that needs little particularisation and that it is unnecessary to assign to it a racial or regional category. Thus, as Nkrumah argued in *African Socialism Revisited*., there is no need to prefix Socialism with adjectives such as Black or **Africa**.¹ Consequently, the essay defends the view of **world communism**, which is seen as a feasible option for Africa. Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' proposition that socialism can only take root in advance capitalist country through a revolution led by the proletariat is taken to be substantive for African countries. Thus, Socialism, Communism, and Anarchy will be used interchangeably to denote a*

¹ Kwame Nkrumah, "African Socialism Revisited", *Africa: National and Social Revolution: Collection of Papers Read at the Cairo Seminar*, (Prague: Peace and Socialism Publishers, 1967, pp. 86-92.

*classless, stateless, and insolvent society. Furthermore, the term Ideology will be used in its original materialist conception as **false consciousness**.*¹

Keywords: Anarchism, African Socialism, Communism, Socialism, Capitalocene.

Introduction

In *African Socialism Revisited*, Kwame Nkrumah stated thus: “To suppose that there are tribal, national, or racial socialisms is to abandon objectivity in favour of chauvinism”.² In the light of the foregoing, to write about African Socialism, one must acknowledge the historicity and ontology of this subject. The conception of socialism or communism as a theory for the revolutionary organisation of society has been a political project for the past one hundred and fifty years; as such it should not be surprising for there to be problems concerning its theory and praxis.

In *Africa and her Writers*, Achebe points to a certain obscurantism that surrounds the concept of socialism. He argues that the vagueness surrounding the term socialism stems from the bourgeois reactionism frozen in the fear that socialism brings with it a just redistribution of wealth that threatens the licentious accumulation of socially produced wealth as profit by the rich in Africa. Hence, the refrain of the indigenous aristocrat and bourgeois was that socialism was un-African.³ This brings us to the nomenclature of African Socialism which directs us towards the racial and colonial questions at the heart of the ontology and historicity of this discourse.

The classical theoreticians of socialism based their arguments for socialism on the philosophical and scientific method of the materialist conception of history otherwise known as Marxism. This method applies

¹ Tom Bottomore, (Ed.), *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Second (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 247-252.

² Nkrumah, op. cit.

³ Chinua Achebe, “Africa and Her Writers”. *Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 14, (1973), pp. 617-629.

the dialectical method of reasoning to historical man rooted in real material relations in the material world as opposed to Hegels' method, which is rooted in metaphysical idealism. Dialectic was a Greco-Roman way of philosophising, popularised within the classical Platonic dialogues with Socrates as the main character engaged in discussion with others aimed at the collective discovery of truth. However, it was through the Idealist philosophers of the early modern period namely, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel that dialectic developed into a systematic method – by way of the philosophical contribution and influence of Fichte's famous triad: *Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis*, and Hegel's world-historical analysis.⁴ Marx's and Engels' contributions to the dialectical method via its application to materialism as an active force in real-world relations have been the most influential usage yet – with its application to the various branches of science – from the natural sciences to the social sciences.⁵

In *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Engels described the method as follows:

The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders, is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in man's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and

⁴ Robert C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel: A Study of G. W. F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Oxford University Press, 1985), p.1-29.

⁵ Alan Woods, *The History of Philosophy: A Marxist Perspective*, (Wellred Books, 2021),

exchange. They are to be sought, not in the philosophy, but in the economics of each particular epoch.⁶

These are the core features of the materialist dialectic and throughout the independence and foundational struggles in the 19th century, the likes of Nkrumah, Senghor, and Nyerere employed many of its tendencies with some modifications in theory and praxis situated within the political economy, history, culture, and geography of the diverse groups of people on the continent of Africa.

The Problem of Theory: African Socialism

Senghor postulated that the materialistic dialectic and the socialism of Marx and Engels should not be imposed monolithically on the African continent. He argued that Africa had peculiar realities that were different from European realities referencing the fact that Marx himself wrote that his theory of capital was only applicable to Western Europe's political economy. This viewpoint of Senghor is shared by many of the proponents of African Socialism. Senghor denied the existence of classes in Africa prior to European colonization.⁷ By contrast, in Kwame Nkrumah's critique of African Socialism in *African Socialism Revisited*, he described the view that pre-colonial Africa was a classless society as a *facile simplification* on the basis that no historical or anthropological evidence could support the claim and pointed out that slave and feudal relations existed in Africa before European colonisation of the continent.⁸

The ahistorical view that precolonial Africa was an idyllic whole is still used by many people in Africa and people of African descent to conjure supposed cultural expressions of this false consciousness. Many of these

⁶ Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, (Paris: Foreign Languages Press, 2020), p. 65.

⁷ Leopold Sedar Senghor, *Prose and Poetry*, (Trans. Jan Reed and C. Wake), (London: Oxford University Press), 1965, pp. 57-62.

⁸ Kwame Nkrumah, "African Socialism Revisited", *Africa: National and Social Revolution: Collection of Papers Read at the Cairo Seminar*, (Prague: Peace and Socialism Publishers, 1967), p. 88.

anti-culture commodities reference the theocracies of ancient Africa as benevolent forms of power. This appeal to pathos has been employed by celebrated influencers of critical and popular acclaim including Bob Marley, Kendrick Lamar, Jay-Z, Beyonce, Nas etc. A quintessential example can be found in *I Can* by Nas in which he raps about ancient empires of Africa as bastions of enlightenment. Contrary to this nostalgia of an African ideal state of things, this essay follows the line of Karl Marx's argument that philosophy must be applied in tandem with history to reveal and resolve historical and ontological contradictions within human relations.⁹

The Problem of Race

In *Voices from within the veil*, W. E. B. Du Bois noted that: "The discovery of personal whiteness among the world's peoples is a very modern thing — a nineteenth and twentieth century matter, indeed. The ancient world would have laughed at such a distinction."¹⁰ The foregoing point of Du Bois is collaborated by Kwame Anthony Appiah, the acclaimed British American philosopher of Ghanaian descent, who in a 2016 interview proclaimed that racial identity was a *biological nonsense* used to create fatal conflicts.¹¹ The subject is given detailed attention in *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identities* where he writes about the origins of race and the pseudoscience that gave rise to racism connecting the experience of Anton Wilhelm Amo among others.¹² The view that race is a social construct has been around for over a century. Jonathan M. Marks wrote

⁹ Karl Marx, *Cambridge studies in the history and theory of politics: Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, (Trans. Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.132.

¹⁰ William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), pp.29-30.

¹¹ Hannah Ellis-Petersen, "Racial identity is a biological nonsense, says Reith lecturer", *The Guardian*, (October 18, 2016; November 20, 2024), <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/oct/18/racial-identity-is-a-biological-nonsense-says-reith-lecturer>.

¹² Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identities*, (New York: Liverlight Publishing, 2018).

about it in *Human Biodiversity: Genes, Race, and History*.¹³ The ideation of race based on skin pigmentation is often universally accepted as a natural product of climate and biology. However, the history of the word race shows that it was used for something more antagonistic than merely as a mode of classification.

Audrey Smedley points out that the term race made entrance into European languages between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries around the same period that marked the emergence of the Scientific Revolution and the Age of Discovery. These events, occurred simultaneously with the birth of the capitalist mode of production and distribution, the triangular slave trade, European aristocratic-bourgeois imperialism and the colonialization of Africa, Asia, and the Americas in **The Early Modern Period**.¹⁴ The race problem cannot be merely looked at as a physical category. It is easy to point out that people have different skin colours, hair texture etc. The question that needs to be answered is: why do these things matter? This question can be best answered ideologically, which amounts to examining the basis on which it was constructed with a view to exposing why it came into being and who benefits from it.

John Locke, the philosopher of liberty invested, £600 in the transatlantic slave trade through his dealings with the English slave-trading Royal Africa Company whose main station in Africa was in Cape Coast.¹⁵ It is interesting to note that this father of liberalism did more than just invest capital in the business of slave trade. In *Philosophical Tales*, Cohen wrote that Locke applied his hypocritical philosophy to the administration of the Carolina colony by assisting in the drafting of an authoritarian constitution under which a hereditary nobility, including his patron, the First Earl of Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, would exercise absolute control

¹³ Jonathan Marks, *Human Biodiversity: Genes, Race, and History*, (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1995), pp. 99-113.

¹⁴ Audrey Smedley and Brian D. Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*, 4th Edition, (Westview Press, 2012), pp. 11-70.

¹⁵ Hilary McDougal Beckles, *Slave Voyages: The Transatlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans*, (UNESCO, 2002), p. 123.

over negro slaves. Other than Locke, David Hume was another philosopher who expressed racist views.¹⁶ Hume wrote in a footnote that blacks were inferior to whites, and that this was natural as even the most inferior of the whites were skilled in some form of human endeavour.¹⁷ Thus, Hume invested £400 in the business and advised his patron, Lord Hertford to buy a slave plantation.¹⁸ On the origins of race and racism, Kwame Nkrumah argued in *Africa Must Unite* that:

Before slavery was practised in the New World, there was no special denigration of Africans. Travelers to this continent described the inhabitants in their records with natural curiosity and examination to be expected of individuals coming from different environments. It was when slave trade and slavery began to develop ghastly proportions that made them the base of that capital accumulation which assisted the rise of Western industrialism that a new attitude towards Africans emerged.¹⁹

Nkrumah's view was based on Eric Williams' studies in racial capitalism published in *Capitalism and Slavery* in which Williams argued that race and racism were the historical corollaries of the dehumanising methods of the triangular slave trade, not that slavery itself was innately racist. Slavery has existed for millennia in many parts of the world. Still, it was always

¹⁶ Martin Cohen, *Philosophical Tales: Being an Alternative History Revealing the Characters, the Plots, and the Hidden Scenes that Make up the True Story of Philosophy*, (1st Edition), (Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp. 99-106.

¹⁷ David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, (Edited by Eugene F. Miller, Revised), (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), p. 208.

¹⁸ Gianamar Giovannetti-Singh, "Racial Capitalism in Voltaire's Enlightenment", *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 94, (2022), pp. 22-41.

¹⁹ Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1963), p. 1.

an economic category, and as history shows, there was no concrete metaphysics of race prior to the early modern period.²⁰

Snowden wrote in *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman experience* that throughout history, the many tribes and ethnic groups that occupied the land mass now known as Europe interacted with peoples with differing physical characteristics. For example, the people of the ancient Greco-Roman civilisations interacted with individuals from Africa and Asia, and some of the works of classical Greco-Roman luminaries show that these exchanges were mutual. Both Herodotus' *Histories* and Homer's *Iliad* exhibit this.²¹

Snowden goes on in *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks* that skin colour identification was not meant to create a racial hierarchy as was done at the start of the modern era. It is clear from the history that wars, colonisation, and ethnocentrism existed, and people may have been identified by skin colour and so on, however, it was not used as justification for colonisation and enslavement.²²

Marx wrote about the relations of racial slavery, modern colonialism, and capitalism in the following passage:

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of Blackskins, are all things which characterize the dawn of

²⁰ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 1944), pp. 3-50.

²¹ Frank Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970.

²² Frank Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983).

the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation.²³

The triangular slave trade and modern colonialism with its racial characteristic is the origin of the contradiction of race. In service of their aristocratic and bourgeois patrons, Europe's intellectuals developed many of the racist beliefs about people from Africa, Asia, the Americas, and other places. Since the dominant ideals of any given era are always those of the ruling class, race and racism became laws via the **political state**, influencing both European and African social consciousness in ways that now seem like a *fait accompli*.

In *Anarchism and The Black Revolution*, Ervin pointed out that in the early colonial period (1619–1776), the European underclass had been exploited together with African slaves in the Americas. As a result, exploited Europeans joined the Africans in revolting against the capitalists, and the response of the capitalist slavers was to create the **white race** and **whiteness** as a constituent of the ruling apparatus. Lower-class Europeans were raised to the category of **white citizens**, which came with incentives such as better living conditions than those of the African slaves, which still fell short of the living standard of the capitalist slavers. This was done to enforce the racial slave system. Though still exploited by white elite, lower-class Europeans were persuaded into loathing enslaved Africans and other peoples of colour in a classic case of divide and conquer. This status has remained one of the hurdles against the establishment of a united working-class front in the worldwide class struggle against capitalism to this day.²⁴ The technique was utilised in new the colonies where European and African workers had bonded together to entrench and sustain European imperialism in places as Carolina colony established by John

²³ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, (Trans. Ben Fowkes), Vol. 1., (Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1990), p. 915.

²⁴ Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, *Anarchism and The Black Revolution*, (London: Pluto Press, 2021), pp. 79-91.

Locke and his patron. Lorenzo K'ombo Ervin, who was a member of the Black Panther Party demands that we must:

Never lose sight of the fact the capitalists didn't want white labor united with Blacks or other oppressed non-white peoples against their rule and the system of exploitation of labor. The invention of the "white race" was just a scam to facilitate this exploitation. White workers were bought off to allow their own wage slavery and Africans' super-exploitation; they struck a deal with the devil, which has hampered all efforts at class unity for the last four centuries.²⁵

The historical and philosophical accounts demonstrate that race is one of capitalism's contradictions, purposefully designed to divide the world's working classes into parallel boundaries, which is intended to stifle universal workers' revolt against capitalism.

Racial Alienation

Africans of the postcolonial period are plagued by two forms of racial alienation. These can be labelled **internal racial alienation** and **external racial alienation**. Alienation here is not in the strict Marxian sense, it rather refers to the expression of cultural separation and estrangement leading to the material and spiritual manifestations of meaninglessness and powerlessness as well as violent behaviour towards the oppressed being and the being of the oppressor.

Internally, racial alienation produces a crisis of identity and self-esteem. In *Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-esteem*, the African American feminist philosopher and cultural critic bell hooks, points to an inferiority complex that creates a generation of people who are uncomfortable in their skin. She argues that this inferiority complex is the result of centuries of

²⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

hegemonic beauty standards shaped by the capitalist beauty industry in which advertising promotes European features as the beauty standard. Cosmetic products are geared towards that ideology, and this has led to many people using cosmetic products to achieve this supposed beauty standard, from skin lightening to wigs and rhinoplasties.²⁶

Externally, racial alienation has produced a false consciousness in epic proportions within cultural expression. The metaphysical conceptions for spiritual healing such as *Negritude* that Senghor²⁷ theorised about as a response to the racial alienation and dehumanization, have all proven to be reactionary. Today, many young people in Africa have become disillusioned by their political and economic conditions, thereby creating a false nostalgia about a glorious Africa's past. Such false sense of nostalgia is displayed in Eddie Murphy's *Coming to America*, Marvel's *Black Panther* superhero films, and Beyonce's musical film, *Black is King* released in 2020.

Teju Cole criticised the backward narrative default of portraying Africa through the polity of monarchies in Hollywood. For Cole, the material and spiritual expressions of kings and queens must be decapitated for the realisation of the liberty of the people. Culture-makers must pursue more liberatory politics instead of the erstwhile oppressive and exploitative African aristocracies depicted in reactionary efforts at culture-making activities.²⁸ Many young people have fallen for this narrative default and address each other by using the word **king** as a term of endearment because they are alienated from the history that indicts the African kings and merchants who profited from slavery even before the triangular slave trade. And for this, hooks warn that:

²⁶ bell hooks, *Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-Esteem*, (New York: Atria Books, 2003).

²⁷ Leopold Sedar Senghor, *Prose and Poetry*, (Trans. Jan Reed and C. Wake), (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 96-100.

²⁸ Teju Cole, "On the Blackness of the Panther", *LEVEL Man*, (6 Mar. 2018, 21 Nov. 2024), www.levelman.com/on-the-blackness-of-the-panther-f76d771b0e80/.

Any black person who clings to the misguided notion that white people represent the embodiment of all that is evil and black people all that is good remains wedded to the very logic of Western metaphysical dualism that is the heart of racist binary thinking. Such thinking is not liberatory. Like the racist educational ideology, it mirrors and imitates, it invites a closing of the mind. Hence it can never promote the critical thinking that is essential for the maintenance of healthy self-esteem. A black person with healthy self-esteem can maintain the integrity of their being whether they are in a racially segregated or integrated context.²⁹

It is important to note that racial alienation as theorised here is also applicable to the experiences of the people conditioned as owners of the dominant material and spiritual relations. The relation of alienation as Marx postulated is a double-edged sword. Just as the bourgeois-proletariat dialectic produces alienating experiences for both the rich and the poor, the black-white racial dialectic produces alienating experiences for both people identified as **whites** and those identified as **blacks**. The bourgeois experience alienation as domination and the power to dehumanise the proletariat, while the proletariat experience alienation as powerlessness. Black racial alienation is experienced as cultural separation and estrangement, and white racial alienation is experienced as European cultural hegemony and domination, all of which produce historical and ontological effects.

The problem of race, though historical, has however, created ontological effects, which must be radically tackled headlong. In consequence of the foregoing, in *Class Struggle in Africa* Nkrumah postulates thus:

²⁹ bell hooks, *Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-Esteem*, (New York: Atria Books, 2003), p. 55.

A non-racial society can only be achieved by socialist revolutionary action of the masses. It will never come as a gift from the minority ruling class. For it is impossible to separate race relations from the capitalist class relationships in which they have their roots.³⁰

This brings us to another problem: the problem of theory and praxis within the various tendencies aimed at a classless society. However, this problem demands that capitalism itself be properly problematised.

The Problem of Theory: What is Capitalism?

Writing in 1887, Albert R. Parsons in *On Anarchy*, noted that: **The existing economic system has placed on the markets for sale man's natural rights ... A freeman is not for sale or for hire.**³¹ Markets have existed much longer than money itself. The capitalist system is defined by three main features: private property, wage labour, and profit or surplus value, all of which are undergirded by money and markets. Market facilitates commercial activities, where money acts as the universal medium for the exchange of goods and services. Human labour is also commodified within the market system; such that in capitalism, the job market replaces the slave market. Market, as the sphere of the circulation of goods and services, implies competition for profit and wages.³²

This commodification of human labour was made possible by the Enclosure of The Commons which proletarianized self-sufficient commoners and peasants. The centuries-long Enclosures supported by Enclosure Acts commodified both the material world and human labour, which signified the creation of private property or what is now known as the private sector. The enclosures privatised land, the chief means of

³⁰ Kwame Nkrumah, *Class Struggle in Africa*, (New York: International Publishers, 1972), pp. 28-29.

³¹ Albert R. Parsons, *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific basis as Defined by its Apostles*, Accessed 05/02/2025, 2.30 pm.

³² Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, (Trans. Ben Fowkes), Vol. 1, (Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1990), pp. 125-306.

production into the hands of a minority thereby creating the bourgeois or employer class. Simultaneously, privatisation dispossessed the majority of commoners leading to the historical creation of the modern proletariat or the employee class. Thus, the employer class or bourgeois and the employee class or proletariat are both a product of private property. This is the original sin of capitalism, and when this history is told, the ahistorical logical justification for profit loses its moral grounds. The bourgeois revolutions that gave birth to the capitalist mode of production occurred in absolute monarchies that later became constitutional monarchies. Some states oscillated between absolutism and constitutionalism for the better parts of the 15th and 19th centuries. There were no democracies in Europe in that period. The emergence of state capitalism meant the fierce competition for resources to sustain the capitalist markets, which inevitably gave birth to the earliest World Wars between the capitalists.³³ Wherever there is oppression and exploitation there is resistance and struggle; thus, these Enclosures resulted in resistance movements in Europe and the Colonies beginning with Gerrard Winstanley and the Diggers.³⁴

The Problems and Effects of Capitalism

No doubt, the inherent problems of capitalism predate the capitalist system, only that the exploitative nature of capitalism compounded such problems. Poverty and class struggle had been present from the inception of society, but the capitalist system worsened such problems through unemployment, inequality and concentrations of wealth distribution, alienation, and environmental degradation to mention a few.

Class Struggle

Capitalism heightened the problem of class struggle by dichotomizing the employer and the employee. Lucy Eldine Gonzalez Parsons captures this

³³ Karl Marx, 1990, op. cit. pp. 644-761

³⁴ Ian Angus, *The War Against the Commons: Dispossession and Resistance in the Making of Capitalism*, (New York: Monthly Review Press), 2023.

sharp contradiction between the employer and the employee in the following words:

If there had been such a thing possible as the harmony of employer and employed (master and slave) would there, to be consistent, could there ever have been such a thing as a **strike**, which means a resistance on the part of the oppressed toward the oppressor—a protest, as it were?³⁵

The profit motive of capitalism means exploitation is its lifeblood. The quest for profit is antagonistic, and the antagonism is manifested in the competition for profit and wages between the bourgeois or employers and the proletariat or employees. This antagonism is the class struggle that workers engage by going on strike. This employer/employee antagonism is similar to the *Secessio Plebis* of the Plebeians of ancient Rome against the Patricians during the centuries-long class war known as the **Conflict of the Orders**.³⁶ Modern class war is waged by the rich against the poor, through exploitation, tax avoidance via tax havens and other loopholes in the laws of taxation, inflating prices of goods and services all the while lowering wages, thereby impoverishing workers. When workers are impoverished, the necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, health care and leisure become inadequate or are utterly lacking, necessitating industrial action or strike towards the improvement of their conditions.

Unemployment

The crux of the matter concerning capitalism in connection to unemployment is expressed by Robert Tressell as follows:

³⁵ Lucy E. G. Parsons, *On the Harmony between Capital & Labour: The Robber and the Robbed*, (1878), Accessed 05/02/2025, 05:22 pm.

³⁶ Kurt A. Raaflaub, (Ed.), *Social Struggles in Archaic Rome: New Perspectives on the Conflict of the Orders*, (Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

Money is the cause of poverty... poverty consists in being short of the necessities of life: the necessities of life are all produced by labour applied to the raw materials: the raw materials exist in abundance and there are plenty of people able and willing to work; but under present conditions no work can be done without money; and so we have the spectacle of a great army of people compelled to stand idle and starve by the side of the raw materials from which their labour could produce abundance of all the things they need – they are rendered helpless by the power of Money! Those who possess all the money say that the necessities of life shall not be produced except for their profit.³⁷

Unemployment is a direct consequence of employment. The history of the phenomenon of unemployment is tied to the proletarianisation that occurred when the commons was privatized via the Enclosure Acts. The emergence of the bourgeois and the proletariat via the creation of private property, simultaneously resulted in unemployment. In other words, unemployment is the historical product of work being tied to profit within the capitalist mode of production. The State of England prescribed brutal punishments for those who had been rendered unemployed and driven into beggarhood, vagabondage, and banditry. Punishments for these perceived criminals included bloody whippings at the cart's tail, imprisonment, cutting off part of the ear, executions, branding the body, and enslavement.³⁸

Today, millions of proletarians are rendered unemployed by capitalism, and this creates several problems in modern society just as the late Medieval Enclosures turned self-sufficient commoners into beggars, vagabonds, and robbers. Today's criminalised poor are offered a similar

³⁷ Tressell Robert, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 486.

³⁸ Karl Marx, 1990, op. cit., pp. 874-940.

fate. *Galamsey* or 'illegal mining' and *sakawa* or internet fraud are two of the problems unemployment has created for a country like Ghana; the former has steadily polluted agricultural land and water bodies across the country.

Karl Marx labelled the unemployed proletariat as **The Reserve Army of Labour** and the employed proletariat as the **Active Army of Labour**. The unemployed of the modern world are afflicted by hunger and homelessness, and thus, many become petty criminals as well as armed robbers – and this is one of the arguments that supports the concept of Criminogenic Capitalism. However, unemployment is profitable for the rich. The unemployed are strategic to exploitation because their presence in the job market, as part of capitalist competition, functions as a threat to the employed, and the employer class use this to keep wages low and profit high. The fear of the employed losing their jobs to the unemployed makes exploitation of the proletariat easy for the fish-blooded bourgeois.³⁹

Inequality: Generational Wealth and the Concentration of Wealth in the Hands of Few

Adams Smith captures the issue of inequality in the capitalist system thus: Wherever there is great property there is great inequality. For one very rich man there must be at least five hundred poor, and the affluence of the few supposes the indigence of the many.⁴⁰ This assertion of Adam Smith is corroborated by a study conducted by *Oxfam International* that showed that just twenty-six individuals own as much wealth as the poorest four billion people in the world and ten thousand people die every day because they cannot access healthcare.⁴¹

³⁹ Marx, *Ibid.*, pp. 781-802.

⁴⁰ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1776, Accessed 05/02/2025, 18:12 pm.

⁴¹ Larry Elliott, *World's 26 richest people own as much as poorest 50%, says Oxfam*, (21 January 2019. 21 November 2024). <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/jan/21/world-26-richest-people-own-as-much-as-poorest-50-per-cent-oxfam> report#:~:text=The%20growing%20concentration%20of%20the,half%20of%20the%20planet's%20population.

The past five centuries have been epochal in political economy of world. The privatisation of the commons in Europe, the colonisation of the rest of the world by the ruling elites of Europe, and the transatlantic slave trade led to an expansion of the world market. However, it simultaneously monopolised the market in the hands of the parasitic ruling class, from feudalism to capitalism. The capitalist market was structured against the poor in Europe, Africa, Asia, and The Americas. Colonialism in the modern sense meant the transfer of economic and political power from colonies to the colonisers, and a corollary effect of this was that the colonisation of Africa and other resource-rich geographies was a function of capitalist production. Colonialism as a function of capitalism gave birth to modern empires and imperialism. The profit system relies on cheap raw materials and cheap labour to work on the raw materials, and this enriched the propertied classes while impoverishing the proletariat and the colonised. The contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat was globalised via colonialism and the triangular slave trade. Many parts of the colonised world experienced privatisation of the commons similar to the Enclosures in Europe. Privatisation leads to monopolies and concentration of wealth, and concentration of wealth in a few hands leads to impoverishment of huge populations. Throughout the ages economic power has always translated to political power, and political power leads to the legitimisation of the means through which the economic power was gained. Thus, the world market became dominated by the European ruling classes, and they manipulated it to their benefit while the proletariat suffered. Modern poverty is thus, a product of capitalism and imperialism.⁴²

According to a recent report, one of the conditions for the abolition of slavery was the payment of compensation to the slave masters for losing their livelihoods while the slaves received nothing in the form of reparations. Historical records show that about twenty million pounds was

⁴² Dylan Sullivan and Jason Hickel, "Capitalism and Extreme Poverty: A Global Analysis of Real Wages, Human Height, and Mortality since the Long 16th Century", *World Development*, Vol. 161, No. 106026, (Jan. 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.106026>.

paid to slave owners.⁴³ These payments were made to about three thousand slavers in England, and the last payments were made in 2015 – former Prime Minister David Cameron, is related to one of the beneficiaries of these slave compensations. The twenty million pounds is now worth about three hundred billion pounds.⁴⁴ This is just one example that shows that the generational wealth of the rich is a product of centuries of theft, exploitation, and the legalisation of these morally reprehensible economic system.

In the modern period, factors such as deliberate scarcity, excessive profit and primitive accumulation of capital accumulation created a situation whereby wealth is distributed upwards. The upward distribution of wealth simply means that employees are paid poor wages while employers and shareholders turn in huge profits. This creates extreme wealth via millionaires and billionaires, on the one side and extreme poverty via a debt-ridden proletariat, on the other. According to recent studies, enough food is produced to feed everyone on earth; yet much of the food is wasted, either deliberately thrown away or left to expire because of its affordability. While much of the food produced is of low quality, the technological potential for producing high-quality food within ecological limits is available.⁴⁵

Economic and Political Crises: Dialectics of War

The history of capitalism is a history of economic and political crises. Political and economic crises are not peculiar to capitalism; they are historical products of class struggle. Quintessential examples are the crises

⁴³ Charles Read, *Calming the Storms: The Carry Trade, the Banking School and British Financial Crises since 1825*, (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), pp. 120-121.

⁴⁴ Kris Manjapra, “When will Britain face up to its crimes against humanity”? *The Guardian*, (29 March 2018. 21 November 2024). <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/29/slavery-abolition-compensation-when-will-britain-face-up-to-its-crimes-against-humanity>.

⁴⁵ Robert Albritton, *Let Them Eat Junk: How Capitalism Creates Hunger*, (London: Pluto Press, 2009).

that led to the creation of Athenian Democracy and the Conflict of the Orders resulting in the democratic reforms in the ancient Rome. However, since the capitalist system has worsened the gap between the haves and the have-nots, crises in capitalism are the most intense. The boom-and-bust cycles as they are known have been a part of capitalism since its **rosy dawn** since the period of the Industrial Revolution. Since the dawn of the industrial revolution, the capitalist system has been shrouded by a certain mystification. For the most part, governments are blame the economic woes within the polity, while ignoring the fact that the business elites of this bourgeois dystopia control governments. In the boom periods the economy is characterised by growth; this however only improves the wealth of the propertied class as the propertyless class struggles with the material and spiritual effects of exploitation. In the bust periods, the economy shrinks, businesses fail, poverty, and unemployment increase. Although intense during bust periods, these characteristics can also be observed during boom periods. There have been several economic crises in the last two centuries; the most infamous among them are The Great Depression, The Dot-Com Bubble, The Great Recession, and the current Cost-of-living crisis.

Karl Marx conceived a number of factors responsible for economic crises. They include the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, overproduction, and underconsumption.⁴⁶ That economics and politics are dialectically connected means that economic crises can lead to political crises. Furthermore, because capitalism is a global monster, economic and political crises also morph into international crises; the current cost-of-living crisis is proof of this. In *The Global Police State*, William I. Robinson argues that War-making has become essential to the survival of global capitalism. Firstly, wars contribute a crucial stimulus to the economy via the Military-Industrial Complex with huge capital investments in weapons manufacturing that lead to trillions of profits.

⁴⁶ Michael Robert, *The Long Depression: How It Happened, Why It Happened, and What Happens Next*, (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2016), pp. 9-29.

Global capitalism has created a significant war economy with an inherent push for wars, resulting in the demand and supply of weapons led by the United States of America. Weapon manufacturers like Raytheon and Lockheed Martin report gains in the value of their stocks whenever there is talk of war in the Middle East or any part of the world. However, this form of capital accumulation does not resolve the contradictions at the heart of capitalist crises because wars do not end poverty and inequality. Another aspect of militarisation takes place internally. In each Nation-State, economic crises exacerbate the contradictions within the capitalist system, which results into widespread poverty, social discontent, and political instability that necessitates state repression. This explains why many nation-states have resorted to equipping their security apparatus with more advanced weaponry.

The push for war across nations by the global capitalist cartel is intended to shift the focus of people away from the evils of capitalism. The repression of protests like America's Occupy Wall Street and others across the globe, from Nigeria and Ghana to Kenya are all examples of state repression in defense of capitalism's current crisis. The War on Terror, the Ukraine-Russia war, the Genocide of the people of Palestine by Israel with the support of the United States, the war in Sudan etc. are all sources of what Robinson calls militarised accumulation and accumulation by repression. These wars are responsible for millions of dead and maimed human beings and the current refugee crisis. Thus, instead of a redistribution of wealth, capitalists respond to poverty with wars and state repression.⁴⁷ Studies show that the military industry of the United States of America is the world's single largest polluter, and its impact on the climate crisis is colossal.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ William I Robinson, *The Global Police State*, (London: Pluto Press, 2020), pp. 71-111.

⁴⁸ Oliver Belcher, et al. "Hidden carbon costs of the "everywhere war": Logistics, geopolitical ecology, and the carbon boot-print of the US military", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 45, No. 1. (2019, pp. 65-80). <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12319>.

Dialectics of Nature, Climate Crises and The Capitalocene

As part of the theoretical developments of alienation or estranged labour in the *Manuscripts of 1844*, Karl Marx argued that man and nature are one, any harm visited on nature is harm visited on man.⁴⁹ This Spinozistic view of nature is repeated in the 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program* where Marx emphatically stated that nature is the source of all wealth, and that human labour is only a manifestation of this force of nature to correct the claim in the Gotha Program that proclaimed human labour to be the source of all wealth.⁵⁰ Furthermore, Marx noted in the first volume of *Capital* that capitalist production improves technology and other methods of production only to destroy the original and chief sources of all wealth, namely: nature and human labour.⁵¹

Environmental degradation and the current climate crisis are products of the alienation of humanity and the capitalist exploitation of nature, which is another contradiction specific to the capitalist mode of production. Bourgeois environmentalists blame the climate crisis on human activities, and thus, want this epoch to be named The Anthropocene. However, Jason Moore postulates that the Anthropocene argument fails to properly problematise the climate crisis. It is for this reason that Moore engaged the term Capitalocene in a critique of the Anthropocene. He situates environmental degradation and climate crises within the five centuries of the capitalist mode of production and distribution system. He specifically refers to the capitalist mercantilist attitude of commodification and unethical exploitation of nature aimed at the further empowerment of the propertied minority at the expense of the propertyless majority.⁵² The foregoing submission is corroborated by many scientific studies that put the blame of climate crises at the door step of capitalism. One of such

⁴⁹ Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, (Trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton), (Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1992), pp. 327-328.

⁵⁰ Karl Marx, *Critique of The Gotha Program*, (Trans. Kevin B. Anderson and Karel Ludenhoff), (Oakland: PM Press, 2023), pp. 51-54.

⁵¹ Karl Marx, 1990, op. cit., p.638.

⁵² Jason W. Moore, (Ed.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, (Oakland: PM Press, 2016), pp. 1-11.

studies compared the energy consumption patterns of the rich and the poor in eighty-six countries concluded that the rich with their private jets and so on are the main drivers of climate change.⁵³ One can conclude that the profit motive is the most destructive force considering that fossil fuel capitalists, such as ExxonMobil, financed studies more than 40 years ago that showed how their business affected the human ecology, yet they later funded climate denialism.

The Problem of Theory and Praxis: Anarchism, Socialism, Communism

Theory and Praxis of Socialism/Communism:

In *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1844), Karl Marx laid the foundation of the theory and praxis of socialism/communism thus:

The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism of the weapon, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses. Theory is capable of gripping the masses as soon as it demonstrates ad hominem, and it demonstrates ad hominem as soon as it becomes radical. To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter. But, for man, the root is man himself.⁵⁴

Socialism or communism can be defined as the dialectical processes that creates a society within which private property is replaced with common property. It indicates the negation of classes and class rule, oppression,

⁵³ Yannick Oswald, et al. "Large Inequality in International and Intranational Energy Footprints between Income Groups and across Consumption Categories", *Nature Energy*, Vol. 5, no. 3, Mar. 2020, pp. 231–39, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-020-0579-8>.

⁵⁴ Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, (Oxford University Press, 1970).

exploitation, and the transformation of the state to a stage of economic democracy and an inclusive political system that promotes human dignity.

The emergence of critical and radical socialist theory in the modern period of world history can only be a product of dialectics in spirit and matter manifested in the revolutions throughout Europe. Socialist theory cannot be completely understood without knowledge of the classics, philosophy, and history in general. The

Early Modern Period gave rise to some of the most brilliant minds in the history of philosophy and science. Ranging from Rene Descartes, Baruch de Spinoza, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel to the arguments about the nature of knowledge and reality within the frameworks of epistemology and metaphysics to ethics and political economy. The critical categorisations that occurred in this period have all had a great impact on socialist theory and praxis.

The great dialecticians have made it known that change is a product of conflict while conflict remains a product of history. The concern of this discourse has been located within the history of caste in society and its ideological implications. The historical development of caste in society has been a simultaneous progression towards both its perfection and demise, as evident in the inherent contradictions within capitalism. The classical theorists of anarchism, communism, and socialism had many disagreements about how to achieve proletarian emancipation. Marx and Engels rejected the arguments proffered by the socialist movement of the 19th century, including the views of Young Hegelians, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Mikhail Bakunin.

In *African Anarchism: The History of a Movement*, Sam Mbah and I. E. Igariwey acknowledge that Marx's critique of capitalism in *Das Kapital* is still as effective as when it was first written. However, they reproduce the infamous anarchist critique of the variations of Marx's misinterpreted theory and praxis of socialism/communism in Europe, Asia, South America, and Africa, on the basis of which they argue that the failings of

the socialist experiment in these places *resulted* from Marxism's *overt attachment to the state*.⁵⁵ Mbah and Igariwey define anarchism as a perspective that is opposed to both the state and capital and it is on this basis that anarchists advocate for direct action by the proletariat to overthrow the state-capital dialectic and replace it with voluntary associations of free individuals.⁵⁶ This description of anarchism also applies to communism. Indeed, Peter Kropotkin postulated that *anarchy leads to communism, and communism to anarchy*.⁵⁷

The terms communism and socialism have historically been shrouded in a plethora of misconceptions. One can state several causes for these misunderstandings, but generally, they fall under two reasons. The first concerns the failure to comprehensively understand the capitalist system due to the fact that bourgeois have through capitalist oriented education make the people to be apathetic towards socialism.⁵⁸ The second reason is much closer to home, and it is that most self-described socialists misread Marx and Engels. Two of the most widely repeated misconceptions are founded in the misreading of a short but powerful theoretical framework from Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, in which he states that:

Between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Sam Mbah and I. E. Igariwey, *African Anarchism: The History of a Movement*, (Tucson, Arizona: See Sharp Press, 1997), pp. 101-102

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2

⁵⁷ Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread and Other Writings*, (Ed.) (Marshall Shatz. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 31

⁵⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, (Prometheus Books, 1998), pp. 67-68.

⁵⁹ Karl Marx, *Critique of The Gotha Program*, (Trans. Kevin B. Anderson and Karel Ludenhoff), (Oakland: PM Press, 2023), pp. 68-69.

This short extract from the short polemic is possibly one of the most misunderstood couple of sentences in political philosophy and modern history. The first misconception is that communism means dictatorship. This misunderstanding is the reason for the earlier statement that to understand socialist theory one must understand classical history. The term dictator is of classical Roman origin and was the title of an official appointed by the Roman Consuls, mandated to manage crisis periods, and resign when the crisis was over. The original view was that consuls appointed these dictators to rule for six months even though some officials stayed in office after the six months elapsed. However, Wilson recently challenged the widely accepted six-month notion in his book *Dictator: The Evolution of the Roman Dictatorship*.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the widely accepted notion in Marx's time was that the dictatorship was originally meant to be a temporary and brief political office appointed in times of crisis. Thus, it was within this context that Marx theorised the polity of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. The critical differences between the classical Roman dictatorship and the Marxian dictatorship of the proletariat are that the former was meant to maintain the status quo of class rule in the Roman republic, while the latter was theorised to guide the abolition of classes and class rule. In other words, whereas the Roman type of dictatorship was meant to be occupied by one man as a dictator, Marx's type of dictatorship is meant to empower the proletariats who as the workforce are in the majority.

The second misconception is that socialism and communism are two different political philosophies. In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin falsely claimed that there was a scientific distinction between socialism and communism. He went on to narrate what this supposed distinction was in an unnecessary explanation of the phases of communist society described by Marx in *Critique of the Gotha Program*. According to Lenin, socialism is the first phase of communism and would be defined by the dictatorship

⁶⁰ Mark B. Wilson, *Dictator: The Evolution of the Roman Dictatorship*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021).

of the proletariat, while communism portrays an evolutionary stage of socialism when the state would dialectically be faced out.⁶¹

As stated earlier, Marx and Engels used the terms socialism and communism interchangeably. This position of Marx and Engels, makes Lenin's reading of Marx misleading. Regrettably, this is one of the most perplexing misconceptions about socialism, which most of the proponents of African socialism keyed into. Related to this problem is the misconception by many that democracy as a political philosophy. The Athenian experiment with democracy stood on contradictory foundations because Athenian political structures for democracy were rooted in patriarchy and slavery. In the contemporary period, the problems of democracy go beyond the contradictions of class, patriarchy, and race; to the false belief that representative democracy propagated by the tyranny of universal suffrage is the basis of true democracy.⁶² Marx was clear on this issue when he wrote the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* in 1843. He argued against Hegel's political philosophy and pointed out that democracy resolves every constitutional dilemma because in actual democracy the constitution is promulgated by the people. This means that in actual democracy legislation becomes the duty of every human being, and thus, real democracy is direct and participatory.⁶³ Marx pointed out that – in true democracy the political state disappears.⁶⁴

Society and state are two different entities. The state is a product of the class character of society, and class is rooted in hierarchical property relations just as property is the foundation of economics. The verticality of property relations means that some members of society become

⁶¹ Vladimir Ilich Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, (Trans. Robert Service. Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 82-92.

⁶² Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*, Revised Edition. (Black Rose Books, 1991), p. 37.

⁶³ Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, (Trans. Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 19-32.

⁶⁴ Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, (Trans. Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 31.

propertied and others propertyless. Historically, the propertied classes have always been the minority in diametric opposition to the propertyless majority. This means that the rich minority has always held power over the majority since the evolution of the state. This particular structure is in itself undemocratic since legislation will always be in the favour of the rich minority, which in turn forms the basis for political and economic alienation. Lenin's view on democracy seem clear. He is of the view that: *Democracy is a form of the state, one of its varieties.*⁶⁵ Unlike Lenin, Marx was clear on the origins of the state and capitalism when he wrote in 1844 that state and slavery are dialectically and historically interfused. He argued that in the modern period, slavery has been replaced with capitalism.⁶⁶ Marx and Engels equally understood that patriarchal relations and women's oppression were historically connected to the origins of the state and private property via the family. In the critique of *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels noted that the first form of property was invented in the family where the husband is patriarch and the wife and children are his slaves.⁶⁷ This historical dialectic of matter was further investigated by Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State*.

Another problem of theory and praxis that has bedeviled the socialist movement is leadership. Marx maintained that the proletariat are materially and spiritually capable of liberating themselves through the process of revolutionary. In 1864, he wrote that: *the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves, that the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and*

⁶⁵ Vladimir Ilich Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, (Trans. Robert Service. Penguin Books, 1992), p. 81

⁶⁶ Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, (Trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton), (Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1992), pp. 411-412.

⁶⁷ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, (Prometheus Books, 1998), pp. 51-52

*duties, and the abolition of all class rule.*⁶⁸ Marx thought of leadership as a collective function, which portrays true democracy. The question of where to start the revolution was also answered in the catechism written before the Manifesto when Engels postulated that it was prudent for the communist revolution to begin in advanced capitalist countries such as England, France, Germany, and the United States of America, citing the fact that these countries had a more organised proletariat, technology, and a more advanced polity.⁶⁹

The problem with the Russian project was that imperial Russia in 1917 was not an advanced capitalist country. The proletariat was outnumbered by the peasants making the political orientation crucial for a communist revolution inadequate, which in turn created a problem in theory and praxis. For instance, Lenin advocated vanguardism,⁷⁰ which contradicted Marx's theory of revolutionary leadership as the function of the majority, resulting in the distortion of the project of dictatorship of the proletariat. Since many of the proponents of African Socialism followed the Leninist distortion of Marx, their projects turned into one-party dictatorships far from Marx's projection of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Indeed, Rosa Luxemburg challenged Lenin's distortion of Marx thirteen years before the 1917 revolution in a 1904 article titled *Organisational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy*. The work was latter published with the title: *Leninism or Marxism*.⁷¹ The revolutionary anarchist, Emma Goldman declared in 1935 that the Russian project was the worst form of state capitalism in the article *There is No Communism in Russia*.⁷² In similar fashion, Leon Trotsky pointed out that the revolution had failed

⁶⁸ Association, International Workingmen's. *Documents of The First International 1866-1868*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1964, pp. 265-266

⁶⁹ Frederick Engels, *Principles of Communism*, (Paris: Foreign languages Press, 2021), pp. 10-20.

⁷⁰ Vladimir Ilich Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, (Trans. Robert Service), (Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 25-79.

⁷¹ Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1961).

⁷² Emma Goldman, *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, Third Edition, (Ed. Alix Kates Shulman), (New York: Humanity Books, 1998), pp. 405-420.

and more or less predicted its doom in *The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where is it Going?*⁷³

In addition, Bastani contends that the technology prerequisite for a socialist revolution was utterly lacking in the countries falsely associated with communism.⁷⁴ Jonathan Haslam in *Spectre of War: International Communism and the Origins of World War II*, observed that the destabilising effects of the First World War led to political and economic crisis, which acted as a catalyst for the communist revolutions. He noted that such communist revolution, in actual fact, represented a conservative-liberal alliance of bourgeois and aristocratic elements in Europe and America who financed fascist activities as counter-revolution to stabilise the crises-ridden capitalist status quo and prevent socialist revolutions.⁷⁵

World Communism, Human Nature and the Feasibility of African Socialism

The communist or socialist revolution that Marx and Engels advocated begins with the proletariat and ends with the abolition of all forms of classes. In *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, we find that what set Marx and Engels apart from the Utopian Socialists before them was that Utopians like Charles Fourier did not appreciate the class struggle and the proletariat as the class to actualise socialism. Hence, Engels argues that Marx's discoveries of capitalism's law of surplus value and the materialist conception of history are the factors that transform socialism into a science.⁷⁶

⁷³ Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where is it Going?* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1983).

⁷⁴ Aaron Bastani, *Fully Automated Luxury Communism: A Manifesto*, (London: Verso, 2019), p. 50.

⁷⁵ Jonathan Haslam, *Spectre of War: International Communism and the Origins of World War II*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2021).

⁷⁶ Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, (Paris: Foreign Languages Press, 2020), pp. 41-63

To write about socialism as a science requires that we segue from an apophatic analysis of capitalism to a cataphatic description of socialism. It is in the light of the foregoing that Kwame Nkrumah argued that the modern world possessed the material resources to create a society devoid of the class antagonisms between the rich and poor.⁷⁷ In like manner, Aaron Bastani argued that with the scientific and technological advances of the twenty-first century, we can negate the bourgeois-proletariat dialectic and liberate humanity from scarcity.⁷⁸ Bastani's projection might be labelled by some as being futuristic. However, research findings published in *World Development Perspectives* outlines measures that can immediately end global poverty. The study shows that living standards can be improved within ecological limits by; (a) decreasing the production of unnecessary goods such as fast fashion in developed countries, and (b) moving away from producing for private profit to producing for human needs via decommodification. It shows that the world needs only 30% of current resources and energy to satisfy the needs of 8.5 billion people. It also shows that the advances in science and technology can help improve manufacturing, promote autonomy, and centre production around the needs of developing countries.⁷⁹ Oscar Wilde seems to corroborate the above submission when he stated that: "With the abolition of private property, then, we shall have true, beautiful, healthy individualism. Nobody will waste his life in accumulating things, and the symbols for things. One will live. To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all".⁸⁰ The import of Oscar Wilde's statement is that socialism presents a structure that would enable us to work less and live more by comprehensively addressing the problem of mass unemployment inherent in capitalism.

⁷⁷ Kame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, (New York: International Publishers, 1966), p. 258.

⁷⁸ Aaron Bastani, 2019, op. cit., pp. 61-181.

⁷⁹ Jason Hickel and Dylan Sullivan, "How much growth is required to achieve good lives for all? Insights from needs-based analysis", *World Development Perspectives*, Vol. 35, No. 100612, 2024, p. 100612. 10.1016/j.wdp.2024.100612

⁸⁰ Oscar Wilde, "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" *The Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*. (Ed. Nicholas Frankel), (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2022), p. 149.

Contrary to the above submission, one of the fierce criticisms against socialism is that its very doctrine runs counter to the the conception that human beings are inherently greedy and competitive. This line of argument resonates with the view of psychological egoist like Thomas Hobbes who argues that human beings basically act from the point of view self-preservation. Contrary to this claim, Dacher Keltner, a professor of psychology, doggedly defends the position of altruism, stating that we are hard-wired to be good by nature.⁸¹ Marxist materialist conception of human being, on the other hand, shows that human nature is historically developing and in the process of evolution. On this basis, it can be argued that greed and cut-throat competition in the society are the results of class struggle. Within capitalism the object of greed is profit, and this only applies to the propertied classes, namely the aristocrats and bourgeois. To be emphatic, like Peter Kropotkin observed the human species could not have survived without cooperation, because as social beings, whatever we have achieved in history is through cooperation.⁸² It is the structure of the society that would either promote competition or cooperation. This very assertion coheres with Marx's claim that social consciousness determines individual consciousness. It is on this basis that Nkrumah stated thus: "It is only the ending of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism and neocolonialism and the attainment of world communism that can provide the conditions under which the race question can finally be abolished and eliminated".⁸³

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study is to expose the contradictions in theory and praxis that resulted from the misreading of Marx and Engels by those who claimed to be their most ardent adherents. Two contradictions were revealed in *The State and Revolution*. The first was Lenin's false claim

⁸¹ Dacher Keltner, *Born To Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2009).

⁸² Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Illuminated Factor of Evolution*, (Oakland: PM Press, 2021).

⁸³ Nkrumah, Kwame. *Class Struggle in Africa*. 1972, op. cit.

that the first phase of communism is socialism, while communism represents the second and final phase socialism, which actually depicts the withering away of the state. The second main factor is that Russia was not ready for a socialist revolution in 1917. These contradictions together with fascism and imperialism contributed immensely to the collapse of many of the socialistic experiments of the twentieth century.

In conclusion, the level of scientific and technological advancement in the world today, socialism is possible in Africa and anywhere else on the planet. It is on this basis that this study submits that the fate of the international proletariat is to develop class consciousness and struggle to transcend the capital-state order. Due to international capitalist monopoly, socialism cannot be survived in one country, except on international scale. This conclusion is derived from the historical developments of the struggles for socialism in the 20th century and the imperialist and fascist powers that prevented the realisation of a socialist society in the twentieth century. The purpose of socialism, as Albert Einstein put it, was for humanity to transcend the inhuman conditions of capitalism.⁸⁴ African socialism was theorised as a negation of European ideological hegemony. However, the metaphysical foundations of African socialism such as Negritude and the notion of an African personality, were more reactionary than revolutionary. It is on this basis that this study agrees with Nkrumah when he asserted that the contradictions thrown up by world capitalism can only be dialectically resolved through a socialist action towards world communism.

⁸⁴ Albert Einstein, "Why Socialism?" *Monthly Review*, (New York, N.Y.: 1949), vol. 61, no. 1, 2009, p. 55, https://doi.org/10.14452/mr-061-01-2009-05_7.