

Critical Individuality, Post-Coloniality, And The Future Of African State

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Abstract

The years following the independence of many African nations have been marked by gross misrule, thus making development a mirage. This is because African political actors at this time failed to envisage what governance would be like and thus misconstrued self-governance for good governance, thereby resulting in condition of impoverishment against which Pan-Africanists were initially united in their agitations for political independence.

In addressing this condition, scholarship has considered issues relating to emergence of inclusive institutions, recognition of African agency involving the perception of the self as Afrocentric, development of an African intellectual consciousness involving the deployment of philosophical consciencism, redefining cultural and racial boundaries for Africa's integration, dismantling the prevailing colonial structures, and many others.

However, in the pursuit of Africa's growth and good governance, minimal consideration is being given to the idea of an individual who, in his ontological separateness, is critical of his condition with the capability to interrogate his environment involving traditions, institutions, and orientations. This paper therefore provides a basis for extending this debate in a thesis referred to as "Critical Individuality" which describes an individual laced with the rationalist attitude, and capable of rational dialogue.

Critical and reconstructionist methods of philosophy will be employed.

Keywords: African State, Critical Individuality, Post-coloniality

Introduction

The historical trajectory of Africa, particularly in terms of European interventionist agenda, has revealed a strategic pursuit of Western interest rather than a genuine humanitarian concerns. This history is evidently disclosed in a continent whose socio-political climate has been overwhelmed by incessant ethnic strife, unprecedented level of unemployment or underemployment, poverty in its astronomical

proportion, illiteracy, collapsed infrastructure, political instability, dearth of technological knowledge, huge debt burden, disproportionate relations of exchange, the culture of dependency, gross human rights violations, unwarranted restrictions to individuals' freedom of association and expression, absence of a tradition of criticism as an essential ingredient for progress, failed and failing (extractive) institutions, leadership failures, etc. It is a history unobtrusively orchestrated by slave trade and colonialism. The crucial question in the minds of African intellectuals relate to the myth of development of the continent decades after most African states attained independence. It is referred to as a myth because Africa is yet to extricate itself from the bondage which would make development and growth possible. Regrettably, the years following the independence of many African nations have been marked by gross misrule, and distortion of political values thus making development a mirage. A part of the reason for the post-independent or postcolonial condition is that African political actors had misconstrued self-governance for good governance, thereby resulting in condition of impoverishment against which Pan-Africanists were initially united in their agitations for political independence.

Some scholars believe that postcolonial Africa is nothing more than a neo-colonized era in the history of Africa. This is to restate the dominant belief emanating from the postcolonial African experience that political independence is not to be adjudged as a genuine freedom from the imperialist control of Africa by the colonialists. Diverse responses have been offered as explanations for why Africa still remains impoverished despite all the efforts made by its founding fathers to place the continent in a path of progress and development. In addressing this condition, considerable scholarships have dwelt on issues relating to emergence of inclusive institutions, recognition of African agency involving the perception of the self as Afrocentric, development of an African intellectual consciousness involving the deployment of philosophical consciencism, redefining cultural and racial boundaries for Africa's integration, dismantling the prevailing colonial structures, a deliberate commitment to the production of Africa's indigenous knowledge while re-discovering those positive values available in its autochthonous practices and those of foreign categories. In spite of the huge scholarship rolled out toward addressing the challenges that Africa continues to face, it is evident that this condition persists which then makes further search for a solution an imperative. This paper identifies the foundation of the close nature of the African continent which is aptly located in an overbearing nature of African cultural values and practices. It is a debate between those who have remained consistently immersed in the blanket of collective identity and those who agitate for recognition of a space for the individual who constitutes the summation of the African community.

This paper, then, recognizes the previous attempts in addressing the challenges that have confronted Africa, but significantly identifies why

these efforts might be insufficient given the systemic ignoring of the sort of individual for whom development is sought. I do not intend to dwell more on Africa's predicaments which have inundated literature in recent times as much as I would wish to extend the frontiers of the debate concerning the future of African state in the atmosphere of postcoloniality. In doing this, I shall present a narrative of Africa prior to colonial incursion, particularly in terms of the sort of principles that informed its social arrangement, the postcolonial nature of Africa which is nothing more than a continent persistently characterized by imperialist subjugation, and lastly the unveiling of a novel thesis referred to as 'critical individuality' which is believed to possess the capacity to address the future of the postcolonial African state.

Africa Prior To The Colonial Incursion

The history of precolonial Africa is replete with some degree of rivalry among entities and empires, belief in common ancestry and traditions, and the idea of warfare and conquest. However, the survival of these entities was largely due to certain methods and procedures through which relations were harmonized in what can be described as 'diplomatic'. By this, conduct of businesses in terms of bi-lateral and multi-lateral relations assumed peaceful co-existence¹. Often, this was revealed in the manner treaties were negotiated, disputes were settled, and potential crises addressed in such a way as to mitigate the effects of diversity which characterize any pluralistic society. Precolonial Africa was equally characterized by complex political structures and advanced trade networks. Despite its diversity, Africa was united by commonality in terms of certain strong traditions, values, and practices; the majority of which have endured many centuries. In the sixteenth century and beyond, two major factors are taken to have shaped the socio-political and economic orientations of precolonial Africa thereby providing a ground for the attenuation of its unspoiled, unsoiled, and immaculate identity prior to the European incursion. These factors found expression in the eras of Atlantic slave trade and the imperialist domination of colonialist power. In the words of eminent historians such as Toyin Falola et. al., these two historical events marked the beginning of culture of exploitation and subjugation, "brute force, inequality, subservience, and instability"², thus making growth in Africa a mirage.

The attendant consequences of slave trade and colonialism in Africa are very visible and I do not intend to emphasize them beyond what literature has recorded. The concern of this paper, under this rubric, is to examine one of the areas in which Africa was united and perhaps a stance through

¹ Graham, I. 1975. "Precolonial African Diplomacy: The Example of Asante" in *The Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp 81-96

² Keneth, K. & Falola, T. 2019. *Exploitation and Misrule in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, P 2

which Africa, unintentionally, may continue to suffer the deficits of colonialism in a postcolonial era. African communalism, a distinct source of African principle of social arrangement, is taken as a hallmark of precolonial history of Africa. This principle is well entrenched in Africa's consciousness in some ways. According to John Mbiti and Kwame Nkrumah, African communities were structured in a pattern that gives priority to kinship groups, for through it, the idea of collective responsibility attains its fulfilment. Another is that the communal nature of precolonial Africa derives from the African Traditional Religions which emphasize common ancestry and communal responsibility. Following the experience of colonialism, commitment to communalism has also helped in shaping the African experience in areas related to African values, practices, orientations, and traditions, since these areas are often in contention with the colonial values and institutions which are imposed on Africa's consciousness. This is another way in which the principle finds expression the era of colonialism in Africa. Central to the idea of African communalism are the understanding of shared meaning and responsibility, and collectivism which provide adequate grounds for social cohesion and cooperation. In this equation, there may be no space for the individual other than his derivation within the commonwealth. No wonder Mbiti writes:

In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group.³

He continues to assert that

Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people. When he suffers, he does not suffer alone but with the corporate group; when he rejoices, he rejoices not alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbors and his relatives whether dead or living. When he gets married, he is not alone, neither does the wife 'belong' to him alone. So also, the children belong to the corporate body of kinsmen, even if they bear only their father's name. Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual⁴.

³ Mbiti, J. S. 1969. *African religions and philosophy*. London: Heinemann. 108.

⁴ Mbiti, J. S. 1969 108.

Very famous African writers whose writings have alluded to communalism as a defining principle of the precolonial Africa are Leopold Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Ifeanyi Menkiti, E. A. Ruch, Jomo Kenyatta, Kwasi Wiredu, Kwame Gyekye, amongst others. Menkiti, for instance, re-echoed the idea of the African community when he argues that the African communal universe is ontologically prior to the individual pointing to the ontological derivativeness of individuals. He maintains that,

as far as Africans are concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of the individual life histories, whatever these may be. [For him], it is the community which defines the person as person, not some isolated static quality of rationality, will, or memory...[this understanding implies that] the notion of personhood [is] acquired...[and as] far as African societies are concerned, personhood is something at which individuals could fail⁵.

These writings portend a strong affirmation of the African communitarian social arrangement which conceives of the self as embedded or constitutive of certain ends involving prefabricated projects and shared meaning. At the era of precolonial Africa therefore, it will not be implausible to infer that the idea of an individual, independent of social collectivism is considered as a social absurdity since such an individual is a suffocated entity. Recently, some African scholars have attempted to address the implication of such unrestricted communalism which suffocates the individual within a community. These critics argue that whereas crass communalism can promote social stability, it can also stifle the creativity and initiative of the individual as well as becoming a symbol of oppression and exploitation.

The Postcolonial Africa

Most African nations attained independence from the colonial lords in the middle of twentieth century and the decades following but this experience cannot be assumed to constitute a genuine liberation from colonial subjugation and exploitation. The Pan-Africanists had been united in their agitations for political independence deriving from the condition of impoverishment and expropriation of Africa, thinking that self-governance would translate to good governance. The experiences of African leaders in the following decades, however, were far from their intentions. In the words of Kalu and Falola,

Nationalist rhetoric suggested that political independence would bring an end to exploitation of the continent by

⁵ Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984), 171-180, discusses the reality of African communal experience and the idea of personhood as acquired. It is equally contained in Gyekye, K. 1997. 1997: 37.

foreigners, restore the dignity of the African, and chart a course for sustainable development for the benefit of Africans. In a way, colonialism was seen as the evil that must be eliminated in order to give Africa its rightful place in the global political economy. Guided by this mindset, political independence became an end to itself, rather than a means to an end. Consequently, Africans came together irrespective of ethnicity or religious beliefs to fight against the perceived common enemy of that era—European colonial masters⁶.

The supposed collapse of colonialism, heralded by the agitations for political independence in Africa, was to mark the beginning of a postcolonial era which would hopefully engender development thereby unleashing the huge potentials and capacity of the continent hitherto suppressed by the colonial rule. However, this was not to be since the subsisting colonial structures marked by its institutions, dispositions, orientations, traditions, and practices were yet to be dismantled. Africa, in the post-independent era grappled with issues relating but not limited to economic development, cultural reconstructionism, appropriate social and political structures and concerns beyond nationalism in terms of fulfilling its burden of global expectations⁷. However unintentional this might be, the postcolonial Africa is nothing but a neo colonized Africa bearing very many of the defining principles of the colonial era⁸. In spite of this vivid picture of Africa painted in our minds concerning various contentions, arguments and alternatives during its colonial period, Africa is still being trailed in the postcolonial era by catalogues of distractions involving separatist' and cessationist' agenda, military coups, social disorder, ethnic and civil conflicts, religious extremism, and many more which continue to make future of the African state an elliptical illusion. Some scholars have argued that the bane of postcolonial Africa is a factor that derives from the colonial legacies and its subsistence in form of neocolonialism resulting in poor governance, the classification of Africa into the tropical region as distinct from the temperate region of the world which is naturally endowed thereby placing tropical Africa at a less advantageous position in terms of development although this view now seems unpopular in literature⁹. In view of the contentions against, and loathing for the colonial exploitations and its ultimate condition of impoverishment of African continent, African leaders were united in a common frontier against the colonial administration to agitate for political independence. The Pan-Africanists had envisaged, though

⁶ Kenneth, K. & Falola, T. 2019, p.v

⁷ Margaret, Majumdar, 2007, *The Postcolonial State: Problems of development in Postcoloniality: The French Dimension*, Berghahn Books, 196

⁸ Kenneth, K. & Falola, T. 2019, p. v

⁹ Falola, T. & Achberger, J. 2013, *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment in Africa*. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 1

erroneously, that liberation from the shackles of colonial administration would imply that they could govern themselves and this would naturally translate to good governance in such a manner as to reposition the dignity and pride of Africa in the politics of the global community¹⁰. However, this narrative of a decolonized Africa was far from being true, for if it were, then African leaders and intellectuals at this time must have substantially misconstrued the idea of self-governance for good governance thereby making the process of political independence an end rather than a means¹¹. The implications of this narrative are not without their tolls on Africa. One of such is the devastation it has caused on African culture and the sociology of African society thereby creating indelible scars that seem to stifle every attempt toward development in Africa¹².

Deriving from the above, it will not be implausible to argue that political independence attained by Africa from its erstwhile colonialists is a mockery of genuine liberation and an illusion to African nationalism. To therefore think that the dubious surrender of the African state to Africans by the colonial administration is tantamount to a genuine process of decolonization is a height of irrational deduction. Indeed, the process of decoloniality, according to Ramon Grisfoguel, is a myth. Postcolonial Africa is nothing but a neo-colonized Africa. Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni reasons in this same direction when he writes:

African nationalism and decolonization were thus ranged against all the dark aspects of modernity, including underdevelopment and epistemic violence. But what emerged from the decolonization process was not a new world dominated by new humanist values of freedom, equality, social justice and ethical coexistence. African people found themselves engulfed by a 'postcolonial neo-colonized world' characterized by myths of decolonization and illusions of freedom¹³.

Sabelo employs the term 'postcolonial decolonized', when interpreted in relation to Africa, to indicate an African state faced with the challenges of authentic and genuine decolonization from its colonial constriction. Elsewhere, he agrees that

...The term 'postcolonial neocolonized world' captures a normalized abnormality whereby issues of African identity formation, nation-building and state-construction, knowledge production, economic development and democratization remained unfinished projects mainly

¹⁰ Kenneth, K. & Falola, T. 2019, p. v

¹¹ Kenneth, K. & Falola, T. 2019, p. v

¹² Kenneth, K. & Falola, T. 2019, p. 3

¹³ Sabelo, J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, *Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa: Myth of Decolonization*. Dakar: CODESRIA, pp x-xi

because of their entrapment within colonial matrices of modern global power...Therefore, within the context of a 'postcolonial neo-colonized world' such issues as identity formation, nationalism, decolonization, nation-building, liberal democracy, epistemology and economic development form a single part of a complex discursive formation whose genealogy is traceable to the underside of modernity and so cannot be treated separately if a clear and broader picture of the African postcolonial present is to be understood¹⁴.

Resolving the Problem: Some Attempts

Considerable scholarships have been produced in an attempt to address the condition of impoverishment of the African continent which bears directly on the future of Africa. There is a proposal in literature for an evolution of inclusive economic institutions which encourage the participation of people in economic activities, beckoning into usefulness the talents and skills of individuals, and enabling them to make relevant choices informed by reason¹⁵. Acemoglu and Robinson locate the cause of failure of the third world nations in extractive institutions which accounts for the level of impoverishment and deprivation. Extractive institutions are those implicitly defined by poverty without entrepreneurial initiatives or creativity and adequate education to prepare people for the requisite skills and interpretation of their reality. There is no incentive to save and invest in addition to an extensive violation of rights and privileges. This is the reflection of many African nations. A discourse surrounding the future of Africa is better appreciated if prevailing colonial structure is totally severed through which failure of governance represented in factors ranging from colonial exploitation, gross postcolonial misrule, moral and epistemic perversion is a subject of continuous critical re-examination¹⁶. This paper notes that most previous attempts at resolving the African condition merely divulge the materialist requirement for development of Africa. Ignoring the essential and ontological dimension under which hierarchy of beings ought to be appropriately understood continues to implicate on the sociology of the African society.

Earlier in this work, the structure of the African society in terms of its commitment to family and kinship ties, as well as its deep respect for religion and spirituality was already highlighted. African communal consciousness as expressed by its idea of collective responsibility is fostered by conception of priority of kinship groups, and the idea of

¹⁴ Sabelo, J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p, xi

¹⁵ Acemoglu, D. and Robinson, J. 2012. *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. New York: Crown Publishers. Pp 72-74.

¹⁶ Kenneth, K. & Falola, T. 2019, p. vi

common ancestry by which almost same religious values were professed and social practices, harmonized. This is a reflection of sociology of the African society which establishes a firm commitment to social interactions and social institutions at both micro and macro levels in Africa. It is micro when such interaction occurs within families and macro if the larger dimension of the social life in Africa involving its economic and political systems are considered. It is, however, in the latter that policies and interventions are formulated for credible growth and development. The experiences of the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism from which gross exploitation and subjugation of Africa emanated had been the rallying point for the Pan Africanists' agitations against the colonialists and by this had further been united by certain commonality usually referred to as African communalism generally taken as the principle of social ordering in Africa. This principle, I believe, provides the grounds for the attractions that define every interaction in Africa. Communalism in its extreme form stifles the being of the individual in the society without which social cohesion becomes unattainable. Not until recently did scholarships begin to provide a moderate version of this principle, offering some explanations about the individual, its place in, and relationship with the society. In the next few lines, I shall attempt to provide the different dimensions to this debate.

Very prominent in the discourse of African socio-political thought is a debate amongst communitarians about the interpretation of the self within the African communal universe. For the radicals, the self is embedded in its ends in a manner that makes the individuals to be conceived as belonging to the community¹⁷. This presupposes a crucial implication for an idea of individual autonomy. There may be no self, independent of the community since the community, by its perfectionist guise, encourages all citizens to recognize the state's conception of the good as inevitable and superior. The moderate version of communitarianism, in a rather different stance, emphasizes individual's worth and freedom arguing that there is no incompatibility between ideas of belongingness and individual autonomy. This is because, though the self may be conceived as constitutive of its ends, in terms of societal requirement, he is as well other things such as rational and autonomous, capable of making choices¹⁸. Underlying this assumption is an individual who is responsible for his ends in terms of the choice he makes, and particularly in a way continuous struggles are defined by a commitment to, and fulfillment of these goals and tasks. This position equally shows that there may be no fulfillment of an individual's goals or self-determination outside the social environment provided by the community, thereby casting aspersion on the integrity of moderate

¹⁷ Oladipo, O. 2009. 120.

¹⁸ Here, Oladipo, O. 2009. 121, corroborates Kwame Gyekye's idea of moderate communitarianism but questions how restricted this version can possibly be.

communitarian's perspective to the debate. The position of moderate communitarians concerning the space of an individual in the community is particularly not too clear. This, according to Oladipo, is because moderate communitarians argue that there should be no limit to self-sacrifices and the extent an individual is willing to take full moral responsibilities¹⁹. I do not intend to dwell further on this debate due to its superfluity in literature. However, a few other positions regarding the subject of individual/community relationship must not be discarded.

The intellectual resources describing African socialism are clearly represented in the works of Leopold Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere and many more. The kernel of this socialism is an affirmation of a socialist consciousness that is unadulterated by colonialism, suggesting the need for a rediscovery of autochthonous values which defined traditional Africa. This according to Matolino Bernard, suggests a commitment to certain communitarian ethos which fail to recognize the contemporary African condition characterized by incessant conflicts between the community interests and those of the individuals who constitute it.

Matolino takes African socialism in all its variants, as insufficient to serve as socio-political theory needed for the emancipation of Africa on the grounds that they appeal to certain communitarian ethos as constituting the structure of socio-political and economic realities in Africa.²⁰ For him, such a theory of politics relevant in addressing Africa's problem must not be committed to certain ideological proclivities involving a conception of Africa's essentialism²¹. Such a political theory, which Matolino refers to as Afro-communitarianism, must appreciate, as a priority, the relationships between the individual and the institutions which regulate their existence. Very suitable for Africa therefore, in terms of a socio-political template, is a thin and normative version of communitarianism which is neither essentialist nor traditional but one that projects an understanding of the community as representing an organic dimension of people's lives with the readiness and vision to respond to these aspirations through strong institutions which are designed to regulate people's existence. Matolino seems to suggest a strong proposal that recognizes voluntary cooperation amongst the people undergirded by values of mutual recognition and beneficence.²²

For Thaddeus Metz, African communalism or communitarianism reverberates in the consideration of an Afro-relational ontological dimension of the individual involving the relational properties of the self

¹⁹ Oladipo, O. 2009. 121

²⁰ Matolino, B. 2019. *Afro-communitarian Democracy*. London: Lexington Books, xii

²¹ Matolino, B. 2019. Xi

²² Matolino, B. 2019. Xvi-xix

through which the essence of an object is determined. This metaphysical conception is further strengthened by the determination of the moral status of an individual involving the recognition of a modal-relational approach understood in terms of the causal or intentional connection with the other and ultimately the community. This for Metz, offers a credible alternative to holism and individualism. Metz further argues that the possible conciliation of the rupture and gaps concerning the conception of difference in Western-liberalist orientation and Afro-communalism consists in the Afro-communal ethic²³. This idea has been propagated in my previous works and still finds relevance within the present inquiry. However, the position of these communitarians concerning the space of the individual in the community, capable of fostering good relationship amongst individuals in Africa in terms of the commitment of Africa communal universe, conceals the true nature of the requirements for a truly independent and decolonized Africa. Any study concerning the future of Africa, which ignores the recognition of the ontology of the individual as a prerequisite to a genuinely liberated Africa, is a candidate for disillusionment and paranoia. A critical discourse of the future of African state within the postcolonial experience, and how this state must respond to its needs and those of the international community in the emerging world order, requires a condition of the recognition of the individual laced with critical or rational attitude.

Critical Individuality and the Future of the African State

At the heart of the thesis referred to as 'critical individuality' is an individual who, in his ontological separateness, is critical of his condition and interrogates his environment involving traditions, institutions, orientations, and dispositions. It is not an individual who is independent or unrelating with his environment, but one that is oriented toward the other. This is the kernel of the thesis which is akin to Karl Popper's scholarship centered on critical rationalism represented in the idea of the intrinsically fallible nature of our knowledge in a manner that makes the rational justification of them implausible. The idea of 'critical individuality', as deriving from the rationalist tradition, was initially developed in a matrix relating to two principles namely, the critical attitude and the principle of relationality. However, the current paper draws its focus from Popper's thesis 'that we can learn from our mistakes'²⁴, thus making the base of the pile that carries the structure of our knowledge always amenable to revision. Embedded in this thesis are theories of reason and experience which seek to show that our attempts to solve our problems can at best be misleading. Our knowledge of the world then grows by refuting these attempts or theories which in turn

²³ Metz, T. 2020. African Communalism and Difference in *Handbook of African Philosophy of Difference*. Imafidon, E (ed.). Switzerland: Springer, pp 31-51

²⁴ Popper, K. 1965. *Conjectures and refutations: the growth of scientific knowledge*. New York: Harper Touchbooks Publisher. vii.

might just take us nearer to the truth²⁵. That truth is manifest, either of reason or of experience, is a conspiracy theory of ignorance since it is an attempt to establish a justification for the belief we hold. The pursuit of our knowledge, according to Popper, cannot assume a certain foundation involving apodicticity, sanctity, and incontrovertibility. No knowledge then might be immune to revision as there can be no rational justification for holding beliefs other than that they temporarily serve our purpose. In Popper's reasoning, the base of the muddy swamp, upon which the piles that carry the structure of our knowledge is constructed, cannot be said to be secure on firm ground. Theory of rationality of any sort cannot therefore be committed to certainty or foundation²⁶. Popper's idea of critical rationalism appeals to reason and in particular, the role of criticism in the pursuit of our knowledge. For him, knowledge and its growth should not be fettered by certain constraints involving authority. Attaining objectivity and rationality in science and society entails deconstructing all forms of authority for none can be a true representation of reality rather, a mere approximation of the truth²⁷.

Critical rationalism, therefore, is an attempt to provide a common path between two opposing forms of authoritarianism that have defined rational discourse such as in science and society. Here, Popper speaks of dogmatism and relativism. Within the discourse of politics, scholarship has focused on the sort of relationship that may exist between individuals and the community with minimal success. A major aspect of this concern refers to the rights the individual has to self-realization and rational revisability without being unnecessarily sucked in by communal ethos and principles on the one hand, and the quest for a sustainable social order on the other. Either of these extremes is capable of engendering a form of authoritarianism, perhaps dogmatism of communal life and skepticism or relativism of the individual. A major concern of Popper's philosophy then is to unveil a thesis that seeks to curb the excesses of science and workings of the society in a formulation of rationalist attitude or critical attitude required of every rational being to interrogate his world as an individual on the one hand, and for the society to cede her values and practices to further strictures on the other. The method of rationalist attitude which describes all rational discussion is that which utilizes the ideals of criticism toward resolutions to our problems. Popper agrees that

Whenever we propose a solution to a problem, we ought to try as hard as we can to overthrow our solution, rather than

²⁵ Popper, K. 1965. vii.

²⁶ Karl Popper presents the idea of natural and objective science as lacking empirical base; a position which makes empirical sciences as well as social sciences as justifiable without foundation. The idea is contained essentially in (Karl Popper, 1959: *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, but cited in Stefano Gattei, 2009: 87).

²⁷ Stefano, G. 2009. 1-2.

defend it. Few of us, unfortunately, practice this precept; but other people, fortunately, will supply the criticism for us if we fail to supply it ourselves. Yet criticism will be fruitful only if we state our problem as clearly as we can and put our solution in a sufficiently definite form—a form in which it can be critically discussed²⁸.

This is then to argue, according to Popper, that the growth of knowledge consists in conjectures and refutations of our hypothesis, and by subjecting every attempt at solving problems to severe criticism. With such a bold attempt at solving problems often checked by a series of criticisms, no authority remains an authority anymore both in science and socio-political environment. An individual can no longer see himself as an 'atomized, impenetrable windowless self' nor should the community extol its feature of perfectionism; for either of these can at best lead to redundancy or superfluosity, rather, both must relinquish their authorities in a rationalist attitude. Human fallibilism is a given but the need for a critical attitude is a requirement of truth for it is in the awareness of our fallibility and deliberate criticism of solutions to our problem that we move nearer the truth. Although the pursuit of truth is a commitment, achieving it is a myth. No wonder Popper maintains that clarity and distinctiveness are not clear criteria of truth, but obscurity and confusion are indicators of error²⁹. Combatting error then requires that we are open to criticism, and this implicates on the rationalist attitude involving a deliberate readiness to consider other points of view in a rational argument. Popper argues that

Rationalism is an attitude of readiness to listen to critical arguments and to learn from experience. It is fundamentally an attitude of admitting that "*I may be wrong and you may be right, and by an effort, we may get nearer to the truth*" [. . .] In short, the rationalist attitude, or, as I may perhaps label it, "the attitude of reasonableness," is very similar to the scientific attitude, to the belief that in the search for truth we need co-operation, and that, with the help of argument, we can in time attain something like objectivity³⁰.

Popper attempts to construct a rational theory of tradition as a route to interrogating myths and taboos which usually characterize our social practices and ethos. The aim of giving attention to tradition is to enable us examine the basis for which it can provide progress for a people by

²⁸ Karl R. Popper (1959), xix. Popper, K. 1965.

²⁹ Stefano, G. 2009. 3.

³⁰ The fallible nature of human knowledge and the quest for rationalist attitude are underscored by Popper in many of his text particularly in (Karl Popper, 1994: *The Myth of the Framework: In Defense of Science and Rationality*, Mark A. Notturmo (ed.), xii-xiii. Stefano Gattei, 2009: equally reiterates this).

which it is bound. By tradition here, we refer to a body of customs or belief system long established as a pattern of behavior in a community and valued by their culture³¹. There is then a certain affinity between tradition and culture which sometimes wants to make the two have a common reference. Concerning culture of a people, it is usually described by their values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations, dispositions, and other underlying assumptions prevalent among them. It is the culture, according to Huntington, that determines to a large extent, societal development³². There is then a sense in which culture provides a social structure or arrangement upon which individuals and the community can thrive. Gyekye points out that this arrangement is usually a product of public conceptions of personhood especially as it relates to individual-community relationships and is literally articulated by its intellectuals³³. It is therefore instructive to carefully examine the place of tradition in the whole discourse of postcolonial Africa.

Popper identifies two possible attitudes to tradition namely; to accept a tradition uncritically without being aware that one is committed to it. The other is to develop a critical attitude toward tradition involving its acceptance, rejection, or even compromise. The latter is instructive to this paper. Accepting or rejecting a tradition squarely rests on whether one knows the tradition to accept or to reject. This is to aver that criticizing a tradition in a rational manner depends on knowing it; an exercise which in itself a tradition. This is the tradition of criticism or the rationalist tradition which underlies Popper's philosophy. There may be no liberation from shackles of tradition for a renunciation of one is an enunciation of the other. However, unfettering the bounds of taboos that are surreptitiously embedded in tradition is unveiled through the critical attitude³⁴. Popper maintains that:

The other possibility is a critical attitude, which may result either in acceptance or in rejection, or perhaps in a compromise. Yet we have to know of and to understand a tradition before we can criticize it before we can say: 'We reject this tradition on rational grounds.' Now I do not think that we could ever free ourselves entirely from the bonds of tradition. The so-called freeing is really only a change from one tradition to another. But we can free ourselves from the taboos of a tradition; and we can do that not only by rejecting it, but also by critically accepting it. We free ourselves from the taboo if we think about it, and if we ask ourselves whether we should accept it or reject it. In order to do that we have first to have the tradition clearly before

³¹ Microsoft Encarta. 2009.

³² Huntington, S. P. 2000. xv.

³³ Gyekye, K.1997. 35.

³⁴ Popper, K. 1965. 122.

us, and we have to understand in a general way what may be the function and significance of a tradition.³⁵

Critical attitude, just like skeptical attitude, involves the disposition of carefully and constantly reviewing the basis of our knowledge and not to give in to the first comer. This attitude, it is believed, should eliminate apparent conspiracy that might define most social theories as well as scientific practices. The basis for what Popper refers to as the conspiracy theory of society rests on the axiom that social life is way off prediction since nothing ever comes off as exactly intended. Popper maintains that

...it is one of the striking things about social life that *nothing ever comes off exactly as intended*. Things always turn out a little bit differently. We hardly ever produce in social life precisely the effect that we wish to produce, and we usually get things that we do not want into the bargain. Of course, we act with certain aims in mind; but apart from the question of these aims (which we may or may not really achieve) there are always certain unwanted consequences of our actions; and usually these unwanted consequences cannot be eliminated³⁶

One major task of social theory according to Popper is then to develop a capacity to explain why certain unintended consequences of our actions cannot be avoided. Evidently, there are always social consequences either intended or unintended for actions of individuals endorsed by the society. There may not be any controversy concerning such actions when these consequences come out as intended. However, where they do not, conspiracy theories are bound to emerge in an attempt to respond to why they come off the mark and this often leads to distortion of the required understanding and explanation; a task social scientists ought to project³⁷. Explaining unintended social consequences of our actions then forms a major aspect of the discourse of social sciences and for as long as tradition defines the operations of any society and in responding to why our actions come off the mark, it might be argued that social theories need to incorporate adequate critical attitude in line with scientific tradition. Popper maintains that the task of a theory of tradition then lies in its analysis³⁸. What is then implied by this analysis of tradition? Just as the ancient Greek philosophers did not just replicate the thoughts and myths of the primitive and pre-scientific myth-makers by accepting their religious traditions uncritically, Popper identifies the attitude of discussing and challenging the matters in order to accept or reject the myth which is in contention as constituting analysis of tradition. This is to

³⁵ Popper, K. 1965. 122.

³⁶ Popper, K. 1965. 124.

³⁷ Popper, K. 1965. 124.

³⁸ Popper, K. 1965. 125.

suggest that the understanding and explanation of nature is usually formulated as myths and the rationalist tradition requires that a myth is challenged and discussed not necessarily to supplant the tradition of myth-making for the outcome of this is represented by another myth but to eliminate the taboos embedded in them. Eliminating taboos embedded in our myths then requires the adoption of the tradition of a critical attitude toward them involving telling the myth first, understanding them, then discussing and challenging them with the view to improving upon them. Popper speaks of the ancient Greek philosophers that:

Instead of accepting the religious tradition uncritically, and as unalterable (like children who protest if aunty alters one word of their favorite fairy-tale), instead of merely handing on a tradition, they challenged it, and sometimes even invented a new myth in place of the old one. We have, I think, to admit that the new stories which they put in the place of the old were, fundamentally, myths- just as the old stories were...the Greek philosophers invented a *new tradition*--the tradition of adopting a critical attitude towards the myths, the tradition of discussing them; the tradition of not only telling a myth, but also of being challenged by the man to whom it is told. Telling their myth, they were ready in their turn to listen to what their listener thought about it--admitting thereby the possibility that he might perhaps have a better explanation than they. This was a thing that had not happened before. A new way of asking questions arose. Together with the explanation-- the myth--the question would arise: 'Can you give me a better account?'; and another philosopher might answer: 'Yes, I can.' Or he might say: 'I do not know whether I can give you a better, but I can give you a very different account which does just as well. These two accounts cannot both be true, so there must be something wrong here. We cannot simply accept these two accounts. Nor have we any reason to accept just one of them. We really want to know more about the matter. We have to discuss it further. We have to see whether our explanations really do account for the things about which we already know, and perhaps even for something we have so far overlooked.'³⁹

Very fundamental to Popper's critical rationalism is the view that we can learn from our mistakes. This then presupposes that theories in science, as well as traditions, are mere guesses and hypotheses involving myths which must be constantly discussed, challenged, and revised. Just as in the natural sciences, social sciences ought to entrench a tradition of critically discussing the myth involving a process of interrogating a story

³⁹ Popper, K. 1965. 126-127.

or narrative handed on but accompanied by a second-order tradition of criticism which in itself, a myth. Often, this rationalist tradition involves that the man to whom a myth is handed on, reserves the right to criticize it in order to improve on what has been handed on to him. He, in turn, hands-on the myth upon the same clear mandate. A continuous and sustaining attitude of discussing and challenging a myth in this manner over time draws us nearer to the truth though it may, by an inch, elude us. This then is the basis for the rationalist tradition. Popper maintains that the discourse of social sciences requires analysis of institutions and traditions in terms of individual persons, their actions and attitudes, orientations and dispositions, beliefs and expectations as well as their interrelations⁴⁰.

Critical Individuality, deriving from Critical Rationalism, is a rationalist tradition which basically employs the rationalist and critical attitude toward the understanding and explanation of our world. It is therefore, "an attitude that seeks to solve as many problems as possible by an appeal to reason, i.e. to clear thought and experience, rather than by an appeal to emotions and passions"⁴¹. The critical attitude then suggests the admissibility of certain dissension to factual hypothesis involving a reasonable assumption that the outcome of our research or ensuing information concerning a particular hypothesis might turn out, not in a particular way, but anyway at all. What Popper refers to as taboos of tradition might be perceived as represented in core dogmas of factual hypothesis and this tradition requires constant revision in order to eliminate its taboos. This is because our social actions and behaviors might generate certain unintended consequences which might turn out either way.

In conclusion, this paper has vaguely outlined the predicament of Africa in the period prior to colonial incursion as well as in the postcolonial era and toes the positions already expressed in literature which regrettably suggest that the postcolonial Africa is a neo-colonized Africa. Vaguely because the focus of this paper is not to replicate what has inundated literature concerning the African condition but to propose a new thesis capable of addressing its condition. In doing so, this paper realizes that previous attempts to address the African condition have been insufficient and perhaps impotent to provide a more credible option for African state in the postcolonial era.

African intellectuals must now move away from blaming African condition on external factor rather begin to look inward for possible solutions. This paper provides a premise to the new position which is now being pursued namely that the bane of Africa is Africa. The problem of

⁴⁰ Popper, K. 1965. 133.

⁴¹ Rowbolton, D. P. 2011. 2.

Africa, though may have been initially induced externally, is now a problem sustained by Africans and must be forthwith addressed by seeking its solutions from Africa thereby making a rationalist attitude an imperative approach.

The military intervention in Africa seems to be redefining governance in some African countries due to the gross misrule by African leaders making democracy a mockery of itself. Credible electoral processes are no longer yearned for. Despite the global trend of economic recessions and prevailing condition of inflations, many African leaders continue to be involved in frivolous spending of funds meant for the development of their nations thereby causing exponential suffering and pauperization of many. The regime of law has now become compromised and nearly inexistent with justice system perverted. A nation with no justice system is one headed for ruins while human rights remain at mental realms untranslatable in the world of concrete realities. For how long will Africa continue to exonerate itself from the problems created by its political leaders? The tradition which provided for commonality arising from the idea of common ancestry and commitment to kinship is now convoluted and distorted making it impotent to account for a contemporary heterogeneous African society in which individuals are continuously seeking meaning within a continent which seems to have lost its legitimacy. The tradition which seems to have outlawed development must forthwith be subject of constant criticism and the taboos embedded in it, eliminated. It is a call to continuously employ the critical stance toward tradition which ultimately improves its usefulness. That a theory of rationality cannot be committed to any form of certainty or foundation requires that our belief systems and practices as well as traditions are constantly being interrogated for nothing is immune to revision. The fallible human nature makes a deliberate stance toward tradition of criticism a commitment. This paper notes that the rationalist tradition advocated by critical individuality is human nature with an inclination to review the basis of our knowledge carefully and constantly and not to give in to the first comer.

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