Eurocentrism, African Colonial Experience and the Role of History

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Abstract

This research titled "Eurocenttrism, African Tragectory and the place of History" is an expository and critical analysis of the basic tenets and claims" of the term Eurocentrism. The problematic which the paper attempts to confront are the assertions that Western Culture and Philosophy are the first and intellectual and scientific legacy to mankind. The aim of the research is therefore to subject such claims, its characteristics and justification to critical analysis, the essence being to lay base the veracity or near reasonableness of those speculations. It is to further expose hidden fallacies, false assumptions and inherent contradictions in Eurocentrism, as a Western cultural and historical

movement with ethnocentric bias against what other human race especially Africa consider cultural, philosophical or scientific. Logical arguments will suffice here as method of this research. This work strongly admonishes that a reasonable study of the historical education as referenced in this research can help in curbing the excesses of Eurocentrism.

Introduction

Eurocentrism like colonialism or imperialism is an off-shoot of the Western or European life style, and system of values. The most pronounced and active among its values. Their vision of relations between human beings one of the exploitations (Ukpokolo 26). It asserts therefore, that "Present Africa would not be what it is today if the colonial phase of its history were erased (Sagolo 187). This is however contrary to established definitions of culture, as a way of life of a people. Besides it is known that culture translates as foundation, to multifarious institutions and components of every society. In this regard, it has been noted, that "every culture is seed for the development of philosophical thought" (Anakwue 168). Still on the above strength, all philosophies remain context-dependent and culture oriented according to Martin F. Asiegbu. For Kwasi Wiredu," any natural language is pregnant with philosophical meaning is virtue of its stock of concepts (Flikschuh).

Here, Okere (quoted in Anakwue) regards culture by the distinctive term of "Philosopheme," which for him is the basic raw material of philosophy, buttressing that just as philosophy was to rely on culture for its material, so also philosophy could be attested to constitute "one of the cultural activities of humanity." Being no the least, nor the best, but merely unique and indispensable (170). Africa has seen the growth of original philosophical ideas and is in no way alien to the philosophical spirit (178). Language obtained by active engagement in community life, is consistent with Vygotsky's, propounded the social-cultural theory that underscores the significance of social contact in cognitive development (Odey Etta and Edet et al... 572).

Etta, Ojong and Asukwo while in support of the above quote ZerZan, where he explains that language is the most significant and colossal work that the human spirit has evolved, the determinant organizer of cognition. And stands behind all

the massive legitimation necessary to hold civilization together, this is because, it is at the root of civilization (529). It follows therefore that the growth of original philosophic attitudes do not just happen in a vacuum; they are spurred on by influences from other cultural niches. In this stead Africa has something to offer. It has wealth of a vast cultural and philosophical richness that can furnish us with tools to aid and hasten philosophical development and the emancipation of the African continent from the shackles of post-colonial trauma and depression (Anakwue 179).

MEANING OF EUROCENTRISM: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

Eurocentrism is said to have been coined, and first used by Samir Amin in 1988 (Akpan and Odohoedi, 1431). It is seen as an attempt by Europeans to dominate the world, thereby placing Europe as the cradle of world civilization against other regions. This context is an expression of Western culture, described as a collective consciousness of the people of the West, of their right to indicate the distribution of power-economic and technological and, as a consequence, political structure. Hence, a cultural affirmation by the West of its perceived strength vis-à-vis other cultures (Ukpokolo 26). To put this in right perspective, Gomperz is quoted in Olela, and believes that knowledge about geographical factors and influences are necessary conditions for the understanding of a people's philosophy. Moreso, the location of Greece was ideal for cultural influences from neighbouring states and civilizations, thereby becoming an apprentice of older civilizations (Wright 78). Moreso, in Leonard Cottrel's "Lost World" as further quoted by Olela, corroborates that, it is safe to assume that Minoan Civilization throughout its development gathered ideas and techniques from both African and Asian sources. Similarly, Willis N. Huggins in his "Introduction to African Civilization" asserts that no evidence exists to show that they were influenced from any other source other than Africans (79).

For Nwala, Eurocentrism is not only a denial but appropriation of Africa's rich intellectual and scientific legacy to Mankind (55). In Akpan and Odohoedi, Eurocentrism sees her thinking and philosophy as superior to all groups. Again, that some authors have noted that European countries colonized nations because they assumed that they were better countries. In Akpan and Odohoedi (1431)

Godwin Sogolo argues against such a position because, the argument fails to stand on the ground that, like many argument of the same sort, it rest on the false premise that the civilizations of the colonizing nations were superior to those they confronted. Moreso because, there are conceptual problems about the notions of "superiority" and "inferiority" of races since the criteria used for such distinction seem to be as relative as those applied in all forms of moral judgements (189).

Valentin Y. Mudimbe in his outlines on the evolution of Africa's philosophical discussion, has noted that it was initially labeled "primitive" philosophy (online). Fritz Stenger, agrees with the above therefore, that Hegel assumed or believes that Africans were not able to think logically, this gave impetus to Hegel's defender L. Levi-Bruhl, who spoke of European values and culture as the standard through which humanity is measured. Also related to the assumption that Western European values, culture and philosophy are qualitatively superior to all non-Western philosophical values and culture (online). According to Anakwue philosophy presents two paradigmatic ingredients intrinsic to identifying the philosophic spirit, namely the idea of "rationality" and value. Whereas rationality represents instrument that enables the realization of the goals of philosophy, value represents the goals that philosophy attempts to grasp. He adds that since philosophy is a function of rationality which in turn is an essential characteristics of the human person, it follows that the history of philosophy would basically be coterminous with the history of humanity (169).

Flegel similarly saw philosophical value only in Western tradition and agreed upon Greek being the only birthplace of philosophy while achievements of other traditions were merely teachings of wisdom (online). Such a position is fallacious, because a study of cultural history, records, evidence of this monochromic development of all cultures at the unphilosophic stage. At this stage, all men sought explanation from their unaided reason taking recourse only to observation, experience, intuition and imagination. This view according to Ozumba destroys the conventional wisdom that tries to paint a super-human intellectual endowment of any race. Emphasis here rest on the fact that philosophical and scientific development was the aftermath of the attendant challenges which different nations and people faced. It follows therefore, as he opines that the question as to where

philosophical thinking first began cannot be objectively or meaningfully asked. For the true answer is that it began in all cultures at unknown times (Asouzu 2).

Flegel explains further that academic such as Temple University's Molefi Kete Asante who cited a variety of primary and secondary Greek, Roman and Egyptian sources, to claim that Afrcian civilizations were at the root of western thought, science and medicine. A counter claim by Mary Loftowitz, summed up the issue down to a simple axiom, "The Egyptian peddled in myth, while the Greeks proferred reason and logic". Her conclusion is that, Africa had taught nothing to the Greeks when it came to philosophy and to claim otherwise was fantasy or politically-motivated wishful thinking.

Loftowitz's axiom, in simple terms is nothing short of a fallacy against the very foundation of philosophy, and a contradiction of the notion of myth. Myth, it has been argued gives to human knowledge and action an ontological value and psychological satisfaction (Azenabor 62). Myth serves in place of or as a filter for experience (Bruner 33) Mythology in the beginning according to Momoh, comprised all aspects of knowledge. It was the initial, the first rudimentary efforts of man to understand and explain the universe or the world. This efforts, further led to philosophy, technology and religion. Today mythology, religion, philosophy and science for hum have one common thing, which the search, attempt to zero in one principle to explain all (63). Moreso, worthy of note is the fact that all former cultures had knowledge and probably also methods for collecting and disseminating it. Myths and mythologies, large-scale narratives and symbolic depictions certainly served the purpose of collecting and disseminating knowledge. This function according to Hans Siggaard Jensen was integrated with several others linked to child-rearing education and to assuring the continued existence of society (online).

Akpan and Odohoedi raised the argument in which European countries claim to have introduced European ideology and culture to what they considered to be primitive colonies (1431). According to Elman R. Service, the lexicon of early anthropologists, defines primitive culture, as any of numerous societies characterized by features that may include; lack of a written language, relative

isolation, small population, relatively simple social institutions and technology, and a generally slow rate of socio-cultural change. Moreso, history and beliefs are passed on through an oral tradition (online). Melville J. Herskovits agrees with the fact that the word "primitive" came as an anthropological theory, and/or evolutionary approach that equated living people, outside the stream of European culture, with the first human inhabitants of the earth, justifiably called "primitive" in the etymological sense of the word (Feinberg 475). It is safer at this juncture to rather argue that all cultures had modes of documenting their thoughts, and in a language understood by them. Relative isolation is a choice, and population, social institution, technology as well as social cultural change are inevitable and can be attained by all cultures at their pace. Here although it has been argue that primitive people are characteristically unable to think, excepts in a special kind of mental process, have simple culture and inferior to the historic civilization. One of the basic generalizations about culture as pointed by Herskovits is that no body of custom is static. This is based on the argument that no matter how conservative a people may be, investigation reveals that their way of life is not the same as it was in earlier times. Desmond Morris author of the "Naked Ape", opines that ethnicity is natural because 'Man is a tribal animal' (Campbell 3). Similarly, a Scandinavian anthropologist Thomas Eriksen avers that virtually every human being belongs to an ethnic group whether he/she lives in Europe, Melanesia or Central America (Campbell 15). Moreso, Aidan Campbell, had argued in support, saying that primitive society often presented as a source from which decadent modern nations can rejuvenate their humanity (Campbell 2).

Characteristics of Eurocentrism

Sundberg summarizes features of eurocentrism to include:

- Ignoring or undervaluing non-European societies as inferior to Western. This feature cannot be sustained, given the conceptual problems associated with such a notion, as earlier pointed out by Sogolo. Here, the universal rejection of colonialism or the imposition of alien rule on colonized people on the pretext of advancing their social institutions is based on the conviction that no human race is superior to another (189).
- Ignoring or undervaluing what Asians or Africans do within their own society or seeing the histories of non-European societies simply in European

> terms, or as part of the expansion of "Europe" and its civilizing influence. This position is again contrary to Cottrel's view for he assert that, it is safe to assume Minoan (Western) civilization throughout its development gathered ideas and techniques from both African and Asian sources (Wright 78).

Mbembe, (quoted in Gwaravanda and Ndofirepi), added four qualities which are jointly necessary and sufficient while defining Eurocentrism. The first characteristics is that Eurocentric canon attributes truth only to the Western way of knowledge production. It is said to disregard other epistemic traditions. Secondly, it portrays colonialism as a normal form of social relations between human beings rather than a system of exploitation and oppression. Thirdly, Eurocentric epistemic traditions are traditions that claim detachment of the known (object) from the knower (subject). They rest on a division between mind and the world. Detachment of the knower here, results in the knower being detached from his or her own environment, culture, identity and even from her own self in the name of philosophizing. Fourthly, they are traditions in which the knowing subject is enclosed in itself and peeks out at a world of objects and produced supposedly objective knowledge of those objects (online).

Justification for Eurocentrism

Some scholars argue that although eurocentrism has been common through the ages, it has not been constant nor has it affected the way Europeans have viewed all of the pre-logical mind of the Africans, similar to the mind of small children (online). To further expantiate this line of thought, E. B. Taylor in his book "primitive culture" saw in mythical thought, the human mind in its first infancy (Azenabor 60). The truth is that the human mind in all cultures and civilizations progresses through the mythical stage to a higher level. By implication, it means primitivity is characteristically in all cultures, but because human culture is dynamic, it progresses with myths, which is the foundation of all philosophical exercise, even among non-European societies. Moreso, Europeans have not always been in full agreement with each other over the merits or failings of particular non-European societies. This is because in some writers and periods we find a tendency to romanticize Asia and Africa, it has been expositorilly articulated, to the effect

that, there are certain beliefs, valid or otherwise, that have led Eurocentric thinkers toward ignoring, undervaluing or condemning non-European societies (online). They include the following:

- That non-European societies tend to be despotic and servile as against the west's freedom and individualism. This Eurocentric belief appears fallacious (hasty generalization), because there is no substantial evidence, besides freedom as used here is vague. Again what the West call freedom has impacted negatively on the global moral character, morally wise. On the other hand, Western individualism cannot be relied on, why because, according to Aborsade Olasunkanmi, in his online publication titled "Economic Globalization and its Effect on Community in Africa", individualism which is an instrument of globalization is creating a situation of all to himself, where the only governing principle is to survive by all means, survival in this case, is not seen as a community phenomenon but within the context of the 'I' in exclusion of others, creating a scenario where the ground has been pulled under one's feet and with this, emergent situation, survival has replaced rationality and desperation replaces reason (online).

  J. K. Kigongo corroborates Olasunkannu's view, when he argue that individuality sometimes tends towards enhancement of the freedom that entails pursuit of egoistic or selfish interest, that is negative individualism, (www.errp.org). This imperialistic disposition is already attracting a lot of criticisms. The tendency is that the dominant, and powerful, economically, and politically may control or oppress the entire world.

- That non-European societies are Islamic, or pagan or believe in strange religions, which are inferior to Christianity, or lack its truth. This belief is in itself a contradiction of the Western notion of freedom, because it disregards man's fundamental human rights (freedom) which are natural. It further indicts the West, who disregarded African traditional religion, and imposed Christianity which the Africans considered a strange religion. Moreso, it negates a central truth and very foundation of the varieties of religious experiences, in which all religions are said to make supplications to one God. By this it means no religion is inferior to the other. And again, man's

religious experience depends on personal commitment and also that religious experience, is a personal encounter (Uduigwomen 89).

- That non-European societies are cruel and lack concern for human life, through the practice of barbaric customs toward women, such as female genital mutilation, widow-burning and foot-binding. These are cultural practices not originally intended to destroy human life. And although it accidentally lead to dead, it cannot be compared to the destruction and death or human life which western technology has caused, occasioned by the production of weapon of mass destruction through western technology.

- That non-European societies are inflexible and unchanging. This work argues that it is ignorance, characterized by unwilling or deliberate refusal to explore other traditions or to accept the fact that African conception of being, is that it is dynamic not static. Again, it is a well established fact that man is structured to adapt to which ever environment it finds itself. Furthermore, it negates the philosophical idea of change or flux. Here, Heraclitus had long opined that all things are in a state of flux. Meaning that things are ever changing, nothing ever remains the same. This is why for him, we cannot step into the same river twice because fresh waters are ever coming upon us. Hence nothing is eternal substantive and enduring except the law of change itself (Asouzu 59).

- That non-European societies are poor backward, and underdeveloped, as opposed to the industrialized, progressive and rich West. Here, it cannot be denied that the more new ideas and thoughts that appears, the richer becomes society. This is because free competition of minds gives rise to unity of operation. It is the dialectics of culture Kokhanova, (online). Such dialectics of culture is what the West have benefited from. This is because philosophies grow and influence each other upon contact, as their development cannot be achieved in vacuo (Anakwue 169). When the above is related to the fact that civilization is simply the integration of the important social and cultural aspects of life. These social and cultural supersystems coincide neither with a nation, nor with the state, nor with

any social group. Rather, they go beyond any geographical or racial boundaries. And like deep sea currents, they determine the nature of all smaller social groups and units in the ocean of social and cultural life (online). Here, civilization is simply the movement of the world from pieces to unity. This is gradually being attained by all races of people, so it is rather not a Western or African thing.

- That non-European societies lack rational modes of thinking and scientific approaches. To say that a society lacks rational modes amounts to saying nothing, for it to make sense, its context of usage should be clearly defined. There are several definitions of rationality, relative to individual usage. It is in light of such variation that W. D. Hudson argues, that rationality is notoriously hard to define, it lends itself to persuasive definition, and has both emotive and descriptive meaning. The emotive meaning is constant; to call anything "rational" is in normal usage to express approval of it. But the descriptive meaning varies from context to context and may vary from speaker to speaker (Azenabor 58/59). Also, to directly despice the ingenuity of a particular society is to disregard humanity. It negates and defeats the very essence for which the sophists brought philosophy from macrosom to microsom or from cosmology to anthropology. So, for scholars, God is the measure of all things. It is true that God created man in his image, it follows therefore according to Protagoras, that man is the measure of all things in so far as man derives strength from God. Hence all things being equal, different societies have the capacity to develop scientific approaches that suits their need per time.

African Colonial Experience

Isaac E. Ukpokolo writes on the Western culture and the history of culture development, here, he argues that western is the European lifestyle and system of value. This lifestyle or system of value characteristically pursues a vision which in terms of relations between human beings, is one of exploitation. N. S. S. Iwe expatiates thus "The concentration on and unjust exploitation of the raw materials and mineral resources of the natives by the Western powers has led to economic imbalance and underdevelopment (72)" Coupled with their Eurocentric and

ethnocentric mind-set, culminated into racism, colonialism and/or imperialism, which almost eliminated Africa from the cultural map of the world (26).

Hans Kohn, while affirming the above, avers that besides the economic urge, psychological motives played a great role in imperialism, the lust for adventure, and for power, the added prestige and glory which seemed to accrue from a vast colonial empire not only to the governing class but even to the masses of the colonizing nations, the new sentiment of pride and superiority which animated even the lowest members of the white races in their dealings with the "backward" race (80). Africa one would say was at the receiving end.

Such historical antecedence has coloured what we today have as Africa. African historical trajectory for Nicholas Chukwudike Anakwue, has witnessed constantly the portrayal of Africa in negative and prejudiced light, devoid of rationality, philosophy, society, civilization and consequently, a history. Hegel in this regard, it is argued, erroneously expressed Africa as being of "no historical part of the world", and hence, possessive of no movement or development to exhibit (168). Oladipo explains, that African are, and always have been a backward and barbarous people who have never been able to establish any civilized society of their own (60). However, some authors argue that these days illustrations of the tribalism from African tend to be employed by Western commentators with the intention of emphasizing humanity in general's potentials for evil, rather than solely lay stress upon African atavism (Campbell 2).

Still within the colonial era, our traditional culture and values were seriously threatened. In this regard Gbotokoma as quoted in Mbakogy reported that, the colonialists categorically denied the existence of African cultural values and worse still taught the African themselves to despite them (38). It moreso resulted to a change of attitude towards traditional culture which according to Alexandra Marc diverted many people to new values inspired by modernization and westernization. Many in turn loss regard for their cultural heritage which they associated with backwardness and underdevelopment (261). The negative aspect of our cultural contact with the West can be viewed differently. For N. S. S. Iwe, it arose either from the colonial mistakes and follies of the Westerners themselves or

from the irrational limitation or imposition of the Western culture-politically or religiously on our people on Africans themselves (72).

According to J. Chidozie Chukwuokolo, Africa has not remained the same since the rape of its continent by the West who pretended to be on a "civilizing mission", for there was a total distortion of all the values of the African to the advantage of the West. He further asserts that the European colonialists found it difficult to believe that a group of people raped and devastated by them could own the ancestry of letters and civilization that they share in. to accomplish same, Historians, ethnographers and philosophers were therefore recruited to do the ignoble toy of distorting historical factors (online).

These African colonial experiences has not changed rather has only taken on, a new approach through the global village agenda.

John Storey, in this regards defines globalization as the name given to the complex relations which characterize the world in the twenty-first century. Samir Amin defines globalization as the existence of relation between different regions of the world, the reciprocal influence that societies have upon each other (Ebijuwa, 166).

The possible implications of the envisaged global village is captured by Aborisade Olasunkanmi, who explains that today individualism which he conceives as a product of globalization and as a destructive divisive element in African society, promotes many African problems, has replaced the sense of community and mutual antagonism. He also acknowledged the fact that globalization is seen as a suspect, which acts as a vehicle to western cultural and economic imperialism in a nuanced fashion. The suspicion for him has replaced unity of purpose. Furthermore, individualism as an ideology and principle of life is not encouraged in Africa (online).

To corroborate, the view of Olasunkanmi, Janisk (John) Ozolins writes that globalization sometimes regarded with suspicion is a major and continuing influence on not only the economic development of countries, but also their cultures and language. Hence, economic imperialism, through the flooding of

countries with consumer goods from European countries, United States, and perhaps even further a field such as China and India, has a very powerful influence on popular culture within a country and arguably will erode it (Sweet 27). In addition, Olasunkanmi explains that, individualism (economic globalization) also creates a situation of all to himself; where the only governing principle is to survive by all means. Survival here, is not seen as a community phenomenon but within the context of the 'I' in exclusion of others (62). The same writer has observed that, the philosophy behind the African communalism is to guarantee individual responsibility within the communal ownership and relationship.

Janis (John) Ozolins avers that globalization and the varieties of mass communication brought about by the electronic age have brought cultures together in ways that was not possible previously. This, for him, suggests that differences between people and cultures are decreasing (Sweet 26). However, not all intermingling of cultures, languages and traditions is benign, however, he avers that it is possible that one culture will dominant another and that the latter will disappear under the onslaught of a form of cultural imperialism. This is because culture is affected by the interaction of human beings. Hence, where two cultures meet, they are both changed in some way, though the extents to which each will change depend on their relative strengths. Where it involves two equal cultures living side by side they have a good chance of preserving their separate cultures, if they do not interact to any great extent. Where there is considerable disparity in size between two cultures, it is difficult for a minority culture to maintain its separate culture (27). A further reaction to the threat posed by the current emerging globalization is captured in Kintto, is work titled "Defending Indigenous Cultures", here, a global appeal was launched by indigenous leaders from around the world, to defend their traditions against the impositions of mass culture, which they contend is inherent in the globalization process (online). Other discussions centered around the fact that, in recent years a "cultural and economic racism" has gained strength and is hurting the native populations' development potential.

According to Kintto Lucas, globalization is visible in virtually every sphere of culture with its accompanying challenges to traditional and indigenous cultures (crumbling of former pattern) and the start of new global competition among a

plurality of cultures. The result will be formations in the area of human relationships, principles of communication, and other basic human values (online). It is also argued that since the competition will occur frequently in a disorderly way and with no specific ethnic background, the process may be both constructive and destructive. This will result in the creation of a new tradition on a global scale, or the collapse of culture as we know it (online).

He further pointed out that globalization suggests the advent of many troublesome problems, among which is the loss of traditional indigenous cultural values, and also the fact that the ethics or morals systems which have been sustained by each culture may be rendered meaningless or rootless (online).

The Place of History

History according to Bill Nasson, is the study of the past in order to understand the meaning and dynamics of the relationship between cause and effect in the overall development of human societies (online). For him, history is concern with wide perspectives, general explanations, and fundamental questions, as with specific detail or events, and the particular interpretation of sources and evidence. History's claim is for him not so much its capacity to capture immense details, or to record knowledge of the past, but to interpret, to handle a rich variety of sources in order to draw out their general relevance or to reveal their general significance for human understanding of why and how change occurs. It is again an intellectual attempt at ordering human activities and social events chronologically (Azenabor 31).

Why historical education is significant in this research, is aptly captured by Nasson thus,

> "If humanity is to plot a realizable future, we need to understand through history how it has achieved its present. For the usefulness of history, therefore, is not only that it constantly offers new ways of viewing and understanding the grip of the past. It is also a means of generating the confidence about and absorption of critical knowledge, to produce a changing consciousness" (online).

The general tenets of Eurocentrism, are in epistemic terms false, because there lack the necessary and sufficient condition or criteria for the definition of knowledge, as justified true belief. Given the seeming fallacies and inherent contradictions in Eurocentrism, as a cultural and historical manifestation, this paper suggest that history can offer a guide towards overcoming the limitations of Eurocentric thoughts. It is in light of above that Hegel opines thus;

> "history has its own solutions to its problems which even the wisest men understand only in small degree. Great men are rather instruments of impersonal social forces that lie below the surface of history, they bow before the inherent logic of events. That is, the Minerva's owl begins its flight only in the gathering dusk, meaning that great men know the times and the direction of the tides and they follow. Thus like the stoic God, history leads the wise man and drags the fool" (Uduigwomen and Ozumba 121).

However, there has been a recurrent skepticism in western thinking as to whether we can learn anything at all from history. For many, it is perhaps none better than Hegel: The only thing we can learn from history is that we never learn from history (Christian 306).

James L. Christian argues that, there are times we can all share Hegel's outlook. But his skepticism needs some work because, as it stands, it's a statement of a mood, not a fact. For certainly, we can learn from history. These lessons of history are to be found in his view, in the work and thought of anyone who loves facts and tries to see the big picture. It further lies in the gradual accumulation of knowledge, insight and understanding that has been achieved over the centuries.

Secondly, it is the offspring of the continuing critical enterprise embedded in what we call education. It is however pointed out, that in any existing culture that has remained uncritical and myth based, the precious learning that comes from understanding history will be effectively dead.

Thirdly, it involves being willing to see the glass as half full rather than half empty. To explain this, Walter Kaufmann, in his book on Hegel, writes especially of the human attempt to understand and see, he put it this way,

> "instead of seeing philosophy as a accumulation of fantastic systems, one may view it as the gradual analysis of, and liberation from one illusion after another, a stripping away of fantasies, a slow destruction of once hallowed truths that are found to be errors" (Christian 307).

The above is therefore the rich philosophical tradition that any one of us can cash in on. There are the lessons of history also available, provided one is willing to learn them. However, the following suggestions has both historical and educational guide in checking the errors and contradictions of Eurocentrism. They include the fact that we:

(1) Should be careful how we interpret history. If we have been taught to believe that history is a preordained account of conflicts between groups of people, and that the only hope for human race lies in the ultimate victory of some one group over all the rest, then there is little hope to begin with. But this view of history is false. It is the result of the us–them mindset, and though its roots are evolutionary, civilized humans will reflect it and work to change it.

(2) Should understand others. Break through the arbitrary walls that separate us from them. Exercise our xenophobias and learn the truth about other peoples, other religions, other cultures, other points of view, and learn about them not to annihilate them, but to appreciate what these other perspectives mean to those who hold them. All ideas are held by human beings because they are perceived to be of value in the struggle for survival. Hence, learning about others' worlds doesn't mean suppressing our own critical faculties, but it does mean being willing to understand them before trying to criticize them.

(3) Should understand ourselves. Become aware of our own thinking processes and, no matter how deep their roots or how powerful the opposition we feel from authorities, honour what we find. Two-valued thinking here, is fallacious. That is, there is no empirical evidence to support dividing the human race into us and them. Abstract thinking for him, create friends and enemies, aliens and citizens the good and the evil, the saved and domiciled, prisoners and guards, ugly and beautiful, and so on.

(4) Discover that empathy with living creatures is normal and is perhaps the most distinctive quality that makes us human. He argues that exactly the same feelings and thoughts that make up our own experience, moment by moment, (fear, affection, hope, depression, excitement, loneliness and the entire range of experiencing we know so well, as the same experiences in others, despite walls that our us-them culture, has tried to erect between us and them. He adds therefore that it may be a cliché to say that we are all the same under the skin (Christian 307).

(5) Admonish that we should keep in mind the big picture. Here, historians are keenly aware of the fact that groups (both in-groups and out-groups) are forever in a state of change, and in the long view, it is arbitrary and accidental that a specific individual happens to belong to a particular in-group. He argues furthermore, that in the long perspective of history the issues and beliefs that are used to classify and sub-divide us will be non-issues in a few hundred years, then future generation will wonder why we were pre-occupied, often to the point of violence, with such pretty problems as racial sub-division and ethnic identities (308).

Conclusion

This research, as earlier stated is a critical examination of the basic tenets of Eurocentrism. Having carried out an extensive exposition, as well as critical analysis of the central ideas of Eurocentrism, this work has observed that most Eurocentric tenets are baseless, fallacious, unacademic and philosophically contradictory. The attempt to dominate Africa through the European cultural lifestyle or value, with its vision of exploitation, with claims of civilizing the Africa was partially an error. Anakwue in this regard asked a question, that continually begs for an answer; for how was it possible that a people-devoid of rationality or the possibility of development, were able to create the magnificence of the ancient civilizations that marked Africa's historical development in Ancient Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana and various parts of Africa? And how could you refuse Africa the basic essence of humanity in the face of her very many exploits and evidences of a complex rationality? (170)

Kochalum Chuvattil, in response has noted that:

> Historically, Africa may have lagged behind Europe in terms of technology. However, long before the coming of Europeans to the continent, Africans possessed social and political philosophies as valid as those of their European counterparts. These system revolved around a universal recognition of human worth which formed the spiritual foundation of African societies (109).

Moreso, if one accept the fact that, philosophy is a product of human experience, it suffices further to argue that there is no part of the world where men do not engage in reflection, in search for answers or explanations, which itself is descriptive of philosophy. This why in some quarters there exists a domineering view of philosophy as objective and universal in character according to Bernard Matoline (1).

Besides the historical education which this work offers, as a means of curbing the ills of Eurocentrism, there are fundamental implications.

According to Adestina Afolayan it is a fact that the critical responses of Africans to the intellectual onslaught of Eurocentrism ironically had to be through the medium of European languages – English, French and Portuguese. The significance of this is not only that the Africans were responding to certain problems that have different ontological suggestiveness and meanings within the European cultural context, but such responses also come with the huge assumption of the universality and equivalence of meanings between Europe and Africa (Oladipo 41). This poses a methodological problem, arising from the need to ensure that African meanings are not distorted in the process of analyzing them with the conceptual frameworks of alien languages. Hence, confronting the contemporary African philosopher, is a major linguistic problem, namely, that of the extent to which meanings can be translated across cultures without distortion.

As a remedy, Kwasi Wiredu has advocated conceptual decolonization. For him, it means avoiding or reversing through a critical conceptual self-awareness the unexamined assimilation in our thought (that is, in the thought of contemporary

African Philosophers) of the conceptual frameworks embedded in the foreign philosophical traditions that have had an impact on African life and thought (22).

In conclusion, this paper asserts, that Western European culture, lifestyle or values has its equivalent in Africa though in varied form. Whether the African values are regarded as uncivilized, primitive or babarick does not really matter. Instead, what is important, is that the African Weltanshauung, which is a characteristically rich embodiment of such expression, in parables folktales, myths and proverbs, can be rejuvenated for development concerns (Anakwue 171). To buttress why the modern retrieval of Pre-colonial practices and beliefs in Africa is necessary, Kwame Gyeke (quoted in Flikschuh), argues thus:

> "One's past holds the key to one's future: the Akan symbol of Sankofa advises a person not to shy away from searching her past for the seeds of her future. Because the belief is widespread that the success of a Post-colonial African revival depends on the reaffirmation, albeit under modern conditions, of colonially denigrated traditional values and beliefs.

Bill Nasson (quoted in Etta, Essien and Ekanem), argues in line with the above view. He avers therefore that "The usefulness of history, is not that it constantly offers new ways of viewing and understanding the grip of the past, rather it further helps to shape the future by always emphasizing that it can be one of possibilities and alternatives (185) value of the practical relevance of a people's past according to Robert Goodland and Maryla Webb (quoted in Marc), is that knowledge and understanding of a people's past can help present inhabitants to develop and sustain national identity and to appreciate the value of their culture and heritage. Such knowledge it is said, enriches the lives of a nation's citizens and enable them to manage contemporary problems more successfully (259). From the foregoing, it is clear that Western European values and African cultural values, can and should compliment each other concerning development issues. This is why schools of art and architecture, along with international exhibitions, facilitate dialogue between Nigerian creators and Byzantine-inspired works from Europe and other regions. This cultural exchange continues to influence the design and decoration of churches in Nigeria. The cultural and religious landscape of Nigeria has long been

a convergence point for indigenous traditions, colonial influences, and global religious trends (49). It informs a fusion of global and local traditions (Odey Etta and Ikike et al..50).

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