

Beyond Corruption: The Rationality of the West and Morality of the East as Viable Development Attitude for Nigeria as an African Nation

Isaac E. Ukpokolo

Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract: The central argument of this study is built round the conviction that the problem hindering growth and development in Nigerian as well as most Africa nations is essentially attitudinal, inadequate attention to the application of core principles of reasoning and ethics-principles blurred by ethnic and religious considerations. Beyond the phenomenon of corruption, the problem of ethnicity and religious considerations are perhaps more fundamental as obstacles to socio-political and economic development. Besides providing fertile ground for corruption, ethnic and religious considerations prevent any adequate application of the principles of rationality and morality. It is therefore proposed here that a development attitude that would ensure genuine advancement in Nigeria, Nay Africa, must consider a robust combination of the rationality of the West and the humanistic morality of the East.

Key words: Rationality, morality, West, East, Nigeria, development

INTRODUCTION

Every human community, social group or nation desires to sustain itself, improve its conditions and enhance its development-social, economic, moral, political and industrial to mention but a few areas of need. Such social units must be able to confront its environment (cultural, moral, physical, social, political and economic) engage its challenges, attend to its predicaments and foster growth and advancement. The African Nation State of Nigeria is not an exception. As the singular largest black nation in the world, Nigeria occupies a unique position in the comity of nations in terms of expectations from her and opportunities to attract attention towards development. From its manifest perspective however, efforts and strategies of development seem to have always eluded her. This study argues that the real nature of the obstacle to growth in Nigeria is essentially attitudinal and that contemporary Nigerian state should consider a robust combination of the rational attitude of the West and the moral attitude of the East. This is to rest on a genuine desire to improve on the individual members lives, drawing on the imperative of national consciousness or social agreement and individual freedom. The study therefore emphasizes the place of attitude in the search for a development scheme and calls for an attitudinal change in combining reason with morality.

THE RATIONALITY OF THE WEST

What has come to be known as the rationality is a system of ideas, methods, axioms and principles a

framework of discourse that is build on a certain assumption. This assumption is that the order of nature is fixed and stable and that the human mind acquires mastery of it by operating in accordance with principles of understanding that are equally fixed and universal *S. toulmin*. To most Western thinkers, this assumption is beyond question. It does not only influence the understanding of rationality, it also, determines the type of questions that could be raised.

In addition to this assumption is a certain disposition of the mind a certain anxiety expressed in the belief that in the understanding of reality and the interaction with it, only two options are open to us: either we are equipped with some permanent, ahistorical framework to which we can ultimately appeal or researchers are ineluctably led to relativism, historicism, scepticism and irrationalism and so, we are always faced with a choice between a certain binding set of ideals and epistemological chaos. It is therefore believed that to resolve this anxiety, researchers require a fixed framework of universal and foundational principles.

This framework of principle is provided by the scientific programme. This programme has been able to equip man with what has come to be known as the popular image of science or rationality. This popularly held view of rationality is that advanced by the West. According to Jarvie (1974) it is that rationality attributed to those views which can be shown to be based on facts which can be justified or supported. Science therefore becomes the popularly held basis for rationality. Science itself is founded on certain method which emphasises logical consistency and coherence in the explanation of reality. Taylor (1983) says therefore that when the

question what do researchers mean by rationality is asked we are apt to reach for characterisation in formal terms such that:

Rationality can be seen as logical consistency for instance, researchers can call someone irrational who affirms both p and non- p . By extension, someone who acts flagrantly in violation of his own interest or of his own avowed objectives can be considered irrational

Scientific method stresses adherence to what has come to be referred to as laws of thought or the rules of reasoning which are:

- The law of identity and by the law of identity whatever it is. Put symbolically if P then P
- The law of contradiction which means that a thing cannot be and not be. Put in symbols not (P and not P)
- The law of Excluded Middle which says that in any given circumstance, a thing will either be or not be. That is (P or not P)

It is held that whatever belief, opinion, action, thought system or mode of explanation in general that conforms to these rules is rational. Sogolo (1996) puts it succinctly that:

The appeal of formal logic to commonsense has been so overwhelming that for a long time it was thought that logical principles were prior to all experience and that they constituted the a-priori order of the universe. For any form of thought or action to be judged intelligible or rational it has to conform to the rules of formal logic

Therefore, the scientific community has through the ages, especially since the time of the Royal Society of London, chartered in 1662 for the advancement of science with such reputable scientists as Robert Boyle and Christopher Wrens (Merken, 1980) succeeded in projecting an image of itself that has become very popular.

This image is that of rationality per excellence where science is taken as the paradigm of rationality (Newton-Smith, 1981). Since, the development of the scientific mode of thinking a mode of thought which we now owe largely to the West the image of science has come to constitute the Occidental (Western) rationality.

A number of reasons are responsible for this now popular image of science. One of such reasons is its

possession of a method of inquiry, a method that generates logic of justification and includes a logic of discovery (Newton-Smith, 1981). This method is seen as the idea cognitive scheme for dealing with reality because of its commitment to the rules of formal logic. Furthermore, it includes ideals such as individuated facts, testing, inductive and deductive reasoning. It also recognizes the place of observation and experimentation. Besides possessing this method of inquiry, scientific rationality is applied by the scientific community in a dispassionate and disinterested manner in order to attain objective results that can be replicated with similar effects anywhere under similar conditions.

Another reason is that science demands evidence such that the validity of scientific claims is settled by reference to observations and experience of facts, events and phenomena. When faced with a claim that something is true or is the case scientists respond by demanding for demonstrable evidence as supports. Hence, scientists concentrate on getting appropriate data. Such evidence is obtained by observations, measurements and experimentations taken in situations that range from natural settings in the environment to completely contrived ones like the laboratory. Observations are often made by means of the five senses or instruments meant to enhance or improve the efficiency of the senses. In some circumstances, scientists may control conditions to obtain evidence. They may for example, control the temperature, change the concentration of chemicals or choose which organisms mate with others. By varying just one condition at a time, they can hope to identify its exclusive effects on what happens, uncomplicated by changes in other conditions.

Closely related to the foregoing is the fact that science is a blend of logic and imagination or speculations. Imaginations are employed in formulating hypothesis. Although, various of imaginations and thoughts may be used in coming up with hypotheses and theories, sooner or later scientific arguments must conform to the principles of logical reasoning that is to testing the validity of arguments by applying certain criteria of inference and demonstration. Nonetheless, hypotheses are widely used in science for choosing what data to pay attention to and what additional data to seek as well as guiding the interpretation of data. Thus, science does not only employ logic in arriving at basic truths about the universe but also relies on imaginations or speculations.

Another reason for the popular image of science as the paradigm of rationality is its success in explaining, predicting and controlling nature or events therein. As Cassirer (1967) says:

There is no power in the modern world which may be compared to that of scientific thought. It is held to be the summit and consummation of all the human activities, the last chapter in the history of mankind

Science is able to understand, explain and gain knowledge about particular objects and events in the world using the scientific method. Based on the knowledge gained, science is able to predict and control to a reasonable extent future events. This is one of the landmark achievements of science that places the West in a place of esteem today. It has also led to unprecedented economic, industrial and technological development of the West especially in the last century in the areas of information and communication technology, transportation, industrialization, health care and so on. Thus, due to advancement in science, Western nations rank top among developed countries of the world, especially in terms of material and economic development. What this means is that there is a comprehensive application of scientific reasoning to the development of society and improvement of human existence. The utilitarian function of science shows both in technological advancement and the solution to problems by rational evaluation of prevailing circumstances to determine the most appropriate approach to tackling particular problems. Of course, essential characteristics of the scientific approach and rationality include objectivity, impartiality and detachment in subject-object relationship, clarity, analyticity and empirical grounding. In all, the line of Western rationality is that the belief about nature must start as they do in the deductive system of mathematics from some intuitively certain axiomatic premises, proceeding through necessary deductive inferences to securely establish demonstrable conclusions.

THE MORALITY OF THE EAST

That there is some kind of link between religion and morality is not a point of debate in the history of ideas. It is thus agreeable that Western morality, at least in pre-modern times (before modernity or the age of enlightenment) was primarily founded on divine precepts specifically those of Judeo-Christian Belief System which were beyond criticisms, questionings and revisions (Finlayson, 2005). Enlightenment, especially since, the time of Immanuel Kant, saw the fall of such divine precepts and the replacement of religious traditions by many competing conceptions of the good (Hillar, 2003). This collapse of religious traditions led to the emergence of the kind of secular morality responsible for the moral

challenge in Western societies. To a large extent, the East has also been influenced by the enlightenment, especially Western science and technology. Yet its structure of morality and ethics seems to remain conserved in the East. Thus, the question often raised is: why does the East remain firm in its moral rectitude even in the face of enlightenment, globalization and secular influences? For instance, the Asian nation of China in spite of intense pressure is such that her National People's congress has never considered removing the death penalty as a punishment for corruption all through the consideration of an amendment of the criminal code. The proposed amendment which would reduce the number of capital crimes was presented to the standing committee of the National People Congress. The current criminal code in China outlines 68 criminal offences that carry death penalty. If adopted, the proposed legislation would eliminate death sentences for 13 non-violence economic crimes including smuggling and fraud related activities and would be the first time the number of crimes carrying the death penalty has been reduced since the enactment of China criminal in 1979. The amendment also proposes expanding capital punishment exceptions to criminal over the age of 75. Previously, only pregnant women and criminal offenders under the age of 18 were exempt from the death penalty. The proposed legislation is the latest move by the Chinese government to reduce the number of death sentences ordered by the country's courts. Earlier in 2011, the supreme people's court of China issued new guidelines for limiting Capital punishment in Chinese court. The guidelines instruct courts to issue the death penalty only to those who commit extremely serious crimes. However, the guidelines also states that reprieves should be issued in certain cases as allowed by law. The consistent use of the death penalty in China has been met with significant criticism from anti-death penalty advocate. Anti-death penalty group has said that China, Iran and Iraq account for more death penalty than any other countries. According to the group in 2009, China executed about 5,000 people for crimes, a good percent of it can be regarded to as derived from moral disclaimant.

For a more robust understanding of the issues, we need to take a glance at the relationship between religion and morality in the East. Baker (2009) discusses two ways in which this can be understood. First, recorded history concerning the East shows that religious institutions in the East were mostly too weak to challenge the moral hegemony of the powerful central governments that existed. Instead, they accepted the subordinate role of promoting adherence to norms already proclaimed by their political leaders. However, over the last century or so as the notion of religious freedom and autonomy penetrated

the East and compelled governments there to acknowledge and allow more than minimal autonomy for religious organizations, a number of religious organizations began to claim responsibility for defining moral principles and for articulating ethical injunctions (Baker, 2009).

Secondly, granting that Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism play a crucial role in the determination of the moral standards in the East, there is a significant difference in the nature of these religions when compared to Western forms and this difference also accounts for why moral standards remain firm in the East even in the face of modernity. In the Judeo-Christian tradition of the West as in many other religions, God handed down decrees which must be obeyed. In the Buddhist and Confucian traditions that dominated religious and philosophical discourse in traditional East Asia, humans discovered for themselves the proper way to behave. They did not believe they needed God to tell them what to do. They did not need God to define morality and ethics nor did they necessarily need religion to achieve the same feat. God did not occupy a central place in these religions. Thus, moral precepts were thought as based on humanist principles meant to ensure the survival of the society as a whole and peaceful coexistence among humans within it (Baker, 2009). A brief examination of these two major Eastern religions-Buddhism and Confucianism will reveal their humanistic undertone that is not founded on a belief in God.

Although, Buddhism has different schools of thought such as Zen Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism with each having its customs, practices and philosophical teachings what is common to these schools is their moral core which is composed of the principles and precepts and the values and virtues expounded by the Buddha in the 5th century BCE and which continues to guide the conducts of all Buddhists around the globe (Keown, 2005). Buddhist ethics as derived from the teachings of Buddha is ultimately founded on the concept Dharma. Dharma according to Keown (2005) is a notion of:

A universal law which governs both the physical and moral order of the universe. Dharma can best be translated as natural law, a term that captures both its main senses, namely as the principle of order and regularity seen in the behaviour of natural phenomena and also the idea of a universal moral law whose requirements have been revealed by enlightened beings such as the Buddha

By means of Dharma Buddha revealed the four noble truths: Duhkha means all existence is suffering.

Samudaya-Suffering is caused by craving. Nirodha-Suffering can have an end. Marga means the way to the end of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path. The noble eightfold path is divided into three: first two: right view and right resolve are meant to aid one's insight. The three that follows: right speech, right action and right livelihood are meant to aid the person develop fine moral standards. The last three: right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation are meant to aid the person in attaining genuine meditation. Dharma is intrinsically linked to the doctrine of Karma. The doctrine of Karma according to Keown (2005):

The doctrine of Karma is concerned with the ethical implications of Dharma in particular those relating to the consequences of moral behaviour. Karma is not a system of rewards and punishments meted out by God but a kind of natural law akin to the law of gravity. Karma as a religious concept is concerned not with just any actions but with actions of a particular kind. Karmic actions are moral actions and the Buddha defined Karma by reference to moral choices and the acts consequent upon them. He stated, It is intention (*cetana*), O monks that I call Karma having willed one acts through body, speech or mind

Thus, Dharma and its ethical implication, Karma are at the core of Buddhism and are not tied to the belief in a God who prescribes norm that researchers are to act on. Confucianism is in many ways similar to Buddhism. Confucianism which is associated with but not solely to the teachings of Confucius about 2,500 years ago is referred to as *ru jia*, *ru jiao*, *ru xue* or simply as *ru* in China and other Eastern Asian countries. *Ru* describes an ancient Eastern tradition originating long before Confucius but mainly developed by him (Yao, 2000). He is called the Supreme Sage and not Saviour or Lord. According to Yao (2000):

The main concern of Confucius was with humans and the fundamental principles of humanity. Confucius believed that were the root of social relationships, the foundation of the stability, peace and prosperity of the state, the family and individuals. He developed his ethics around two central these that goodness can be taught and learned and that society can only be in harmony and at peace under the guidance of wisdom. He further developed a system of concepts to expound the central theses.

Of these concepts four became the underlying ideas of the Confucian tradition, namely, the Way (dao), ritual/propriety (li), humanness (ren) and virtue (de) and later the backbone of the ideological structure of a confucian state

He devoted himself wholeheartedly to solving human problems. In doing this, he propagated the value of education, moral virtue and self-cultivation. He believed strongly that moral virtues could produce trust and faith among the people of a community more than cruel and punitive measures could (Yao, 2000). He however, kept a distance from religious matters such as serving spirits and ghosts and would rather talk about this life than the life after (Yao, 2000). This however does not mean that he (or adherents or Eastern religions are) is an atheist because he had deep faith in heaven and destiny. But Confucian ethics was not built around the concept of a god or heaven but rather centered on humanness.

Hence, many scholars have argued that morality is at the core of confucianism. It is on the foundation of confucianism that various codes of moral life, rules of propriety, patterns of behaviour and guidelines for social and daily life are produced and enhanced (Yao, 2000). Confucian morality revolves around family relationships, especially around the relationship between parents and children between elder and younger brothers and between husband and wife. In this relationship, the focus or emphasis is put on fulfilling responsibilities to each other with a sincere heart (Yao, 2000). Thus, one of the strengths of confucianism is frequently thought to lie in the way it conceives a full human life in terms of relationship to others, structured by a set of duties to them that realize the self rather than constrain it (Shun and Wong, 2004). This does not mean that confucian ethics is fixed to the family. It simply takes the family as the cornerstone of social order and world peace since, the family is the basic unit of community. The centrality of morality to Confucianism is stressed by Henri Maspero when he says that:

The central problem of confucianism in all ages was one of ethics and that is probably what has often led to the judgement that confucianism was above all a morality which is far from accurate. It is indeed a matter of a very particular ethics in reality, the problem is the effect which the good or bad acts of man (and especially the governmental acts of the sovereign, representing humanity) have upon the orderly progress of natural phenomenon and upon human affairs (Yao, 2000)

Indeed, confucian ethics is not only what we normally regard as moral issues but also about politics,

religion, education, psychology and metaphysics. As morality is integrated with religion and politics so are moral virtues essential both for governing and religious activities (Yao, 2000).

Thus, both buddhism and confucianism, though having morality as the core of their religion do not however rest their moral principles on divine precepts or commands from God. Rather, they are principles that are geared towards the attainment of humaneness and humanness within the society. These moral principles meant to ensure peace, harmony and the welfare of community and its individual members are outcome of wisdom and deep reflection on the nature of things and order in the universe. This being the case, the advent of enlightenment or modernity that led to the shattering of religious traditions in the West could not have easily affected or collapsed the religious traditions (that were basis for morality) in the East since there were really no divine precepts founded on religious ideologies to shatter but rather humanistic moral values for the enhancement of humanity.

Thus, morality has often been secular and humanistic in the East. This gives credence to Baker's first explanation of the relationship between religion and morality in the East that governments in East Asia often had a powerful moral hegemony that was meant to ensure the survival of the community as a whole as a necessity for the survival of individual members. Thus, these moral principles were never really divine principles but precepts proposed and enforced by man. This lingers on today in the secular moral education in East Asia. This is why according to Baker (2009), Korea for example, shares with its neighbors the traditional notion that the state should teach basic morals and ethics and religions should play no more than a supportive role in that endeavor. Hence, in South Korea, school children are required to take courses in morality and ethics through all their 12 years of education before they enter university using textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education. In elementary schools, those courses are called learning to live a proper life. In middle school, the name becomes morality and in high school, those courses then are called National Ethics. He adds that:

In none of these courses taught in public schools is there any promotion of belief in God, gods or religion. But religious schools are allowed to add a religious component to the required morality and ethics curriculum. In public schools, focus is on teaching Korea's traditional values primarily the values associated with confucianism as well as the proper behavior for a citizen in a democratic society (2009)

Japan has a similar but somewhat more muted approach to morality and ethics education. Japan's Fundamental Law on Education which was promulgated in 1947 and is in effect today, declares in its Article 1 that education shall aim at the full development of personality, striving for the rearing of the people, sound in mind and body who shall love truth and justice, esteem individual value, respect labour and have a deep sense of responsibility and be imbued with the independent spirit as builders of the peaceful state and society. Obviously, this would involve teaching values and moral principles (Baker, 2009).

The above implies that secular morality has long take its roots in the East and has advanced to a stage where it has been institutionalized in the dynamics of normative structures of the people. People therefore do not often act out of fear of being punished in hell or out of the quest to be rewarded in heaven but rather for the sake of humanity or out of fear of the power of the state as wrong acts will not go unpunished.

Thus, there is this group moral consciousness or social agreement among member of the society to empower the state with the ability to make moral decisions that are humanistic in nature and punish those who do not adhere to the principles of behaviour. Morality in the East therefore is founded on the humanistic principles meant to ensure the survival of the society and its individual members.

THE NIGERIAN CHALLENGE: BUILDING A VIABLE DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

There is no doubt that the Nigerian state like many other African states is in a dire situation. She is trouble ridden and is far from attaining development in its entire ramifications. The problems faced by the Nigerian State include economic, social, ethno-religious, security, mora and infrastructural problems. Oladiro (2009) explains that Nigeria like many other African states is in a state of crisis and moral bankruptcy, key elements of which include corrupt and visionless political elite, a public bureaucracy that has become an end in itself rather than a means to an end increasing social fragmentation as a result of the failure of the process of national integration and poverty and the marginalization of the people. All these have made the Nigerian State an arena of conflicts. In fact, the Nigerian state is in a state of confusion that has made the definition of national purpose a daunting task.

Hence, corruption and greed, especially have often been seen as the bane of the Nigerian condition. However, there are more fundamental considerations: the inadequate application of reasoning and moral principles.

The Nigerian predicament is easily identifiable with what can be referred to as an insufficient appeal first to reason or rationality and second to ethics or moral principles. This is quite opposed to what researchers may find fully developed and represented in the rationality of the West and the Humanistic morality of the East.

It is understood that Nigerians are not unaware of these principles but rather are not in the position to employ them sufficiently. How else do we explain the following scenarios:

A local government project in agricultural development would consist in outright purchase of acquisition of machines, tractors and perhaps fertilizer and other materials needed. Evaluation of such programmes by implementers usually consisted in a catalog of these purchases and listing of these acquisitions as representing development in these areas. What is obvious here therefore is the lack of understanding of the meaning of and the difference between facilities and productivity. For avoidance of doubt it is the position of this study that the reasons for the acquisition of these materials and considering that simply as the end in itself is because this is probably the way or the means by which fraud could be perpetuated. Same goes for health services, the provision of other basic amenities such as roads and water. In all these, economic gratifications of the individual are almost always prior to all considerations.

A second scenario could still be identified even in very contemporary events such as the 2011 elections. For instance, the fact that election materials are produced and procured overseas and imported to Nigeria is an admission of lacking the moral strength and security ability to produce same in Nigeria.

A third scenario is yet considerable. In the preparation for the election, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had to procure 120,000 machines for voters registration. At the end of 3 weeks, 73 million voters were registered. This means that a machine would have registered 608 voters in 21 days. One is yet to understand the economic sense in this action and in the acquisition of these machines, there were the initial problem of weather and climatic condition hampering adequate productivity of the machine. One would now wonder whether this condition were not there before the acquisition of these machines.

A fourth scenario has to do with the phenomena of ethnicity and religion whether in the formation of political parties or in the voting patterns of the election. These were obviously lined up along ethnic and religious considerations and to be sure, these considerations have not only provided fertile ground for corruption, they have perhaps more importantly created a cloudy and foggy climate for the appropriate employment for reasons and moral principle.

Oladipo (1996) therefore laments the low level of a rational outlook on life in Nigeria and many other African states. This is made obvious again in the lack of the needed facilities by scholars, scientists and non-scientists alike for the development of knowledge. This is what Paulin Hountondji calls the displacement of knowledge. The point Hountondji seeks to make is that though the problems the African scientists and scholars seek to tackle are in Africa, the raw materials for the development of theories to address them, the facilities for sustained scientific research and painstaking scholarship are to be found elsewhere (Oladipo, 1996). As Oladipo (2009) says:

The best equipped laboratories necessary for the African physicist, chemist or biologist to pursue his work beyond a certain level of precision and complexity are to be found outside of Africa elsewhere too are to be found the best universities and research centres elsewhere too are the seat, the editorial committees, the material and human bases of scientific journals in which the most original and innovatory findings are published lastly elsewhere are to be found those libraries, those publishing houses which produce books, manuals and the most importantly scientific treatises, monographs criticizing the latest discoveries on such and such a subject in such and such an area or research

Thus, rather than develop the Nigerian, Nay, African states, the political leaders of these nations have succeeded in encouraging the procurement of genuine and standard facilities, equipments as well as knowledge. This explains why Nigeria will print its voting material abroad. It shows a poor application of rationality on the part of the leaders of the nation. The few who appreciate rationality and develop a strong moral consciousness that surpass ethnic and religious sentiments and considerations have excelled. Such include the Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, the great writer Chinua Achebe and many others.

CONCLUSION

It is therefore vital that Nigerians go beyond religious and ethnic sentiments and develop a robust rationality such as in the West as well as develop a national moral consciousness for the survival of the nation as we have seen in the East. This to be sure does not imply that Nigerians are irrational or immoral. It simply implies that there is a limit in the adequate employment of rationality and morality in the affairs of the state that needs to be

maximized. Using rationality to the fullest would result in the infrastructural development that the West enjoys and imbibing the core moral principles of the East will aid in going beyond ethnic and religious sentiments and focus on national growth and development.

Furthermore, full application of human rationality makes it possible to subject situations or circumstance to critical evaluation. As a consequence, the best approach to the handling of any given problem, granting the available resource will always be determined. Critical analysis, in itself will attenuate corruption as it will be discovered that immediate gratification may not ultimately be in a person's long term interest. In the same vein, enhanced morality will entail placing the common weal above personal interest. As a result, human actions, devoid of ethnic considerations and religious sentiments will be aimed at the development of the state and the welfare of her citizens. If these two all important values are appropriated by Nigeria or indeed Africa, particularly their leaders, in no distant future, we would dare to rub shoulders or even surpass the Asian tigers.

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