

## The Effects of Western Colonialism on African Predicaments

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**Abstract:** *Communalism is one of the characteristics of African people. It is the spirit that brings them tied together. It is not only a vital aspect of the African cultural values, but also affirmed by some African scholars that communalism is an African identity. However, this communal life for which Africans were so called is gradually eluding them since their encounter with the colonial masters. This work therefore, examines the nature of African predicament and what gave rise to the increment since the intervention of the colonial masters. Comparative analytic method of study was adopted in this inquiry into “The Effects of Western Colonialism on African Predicaments”. Findings indicated that Africans are not the only people with communalistic tendencies; that community life is a universal idea; it is found among other continents of the world in diverse forms and degrees; though human nature work and live together and is seen as being gregarious, the intervention of colonialism, encouraged the loss of African cultural heritage to cling more towards Western individualism, leaving African communalism as one of the African predicaments. This paper identifies the cordial relationship that existed between the “whites” and the “blacks”, until the Europeans discovered gold and ivory on African soil, then the scramble for African partition and Africans underdevelopment. This paper set out to study the various African predicaments and the role of Western colonialism. This we believed will reawaken the African mind in appreciating who they are and the best approach to Western civilizations.*

**Key words:** *Predicament, Communalism, Individualism, Colonialism.*

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### I. Introduction

Africans in the ages past were peacefully living together within themselves. It may be said of them that they were at the time very primitive. There was a cordial relationship between the Blacks and the Whites. According to Onyewuenyi, up to the periods of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, ‘blacks’ and ‘whites’ co-operated and intermingled and colour was never used as a criterion for evaluating peoples. Those days were a period of great admiration by the Europeans of the intellectual and sundry capacities of the ‘black man’. Onyewuenyi maintained that as the admiration grew, the quality of this co-operation did also. Hence, in order to see that trade relations with Africa was maintained places like Portugal, Spain and England exchanged Ambassadors with Morocco, Guinea, Ghana, and Congo. By this, these Europeans were allowed to establish trading base on African coasts. But unfortunately, as time went on, and as the wealth of Africa became the talk of Europe the idea of conquering Africans and taking over their lands and wealth became dominant in European minds. And thus was born a new colonialism and slavery.<sup>1</sup> What is more? Sustained efforts were made by the west to justify the new set of ideology for conquering. Thus new theories “political, racial and moral, were devised and used to check the evils of their ideology with some semblance of innocence. A new style of class structure, history, literature, art and religion was introduced in Africa as a means to consolidate imperialism, colonialism and slavery.”<sup>2</sup>

The first instrument for effective crusade deployed by the ‘white’ was the total colonization of the whole information. Facts were distorted, others mortgaged and very many eliminated to the disfavor of the African race. Soon it became obvious that the agenda was to deny true human identity to the African, reduce him to a thing and so could manipulate him without any moral regrets. Nothing could be more effective and successful at this than dubious historiography, re-writing of history ‘panel beating and gate instrument of philosophy and this becomes ideas that rule the world whether they are true or false ideas. Note that ideas are psycho-spiritual in motive and strength; that immediately an idea or principle is well marketed, it begins to hold sway, influencing the people in their daily life and actions. Ideas are unlikely to be efficacious of influence merely because of their truth-content. While the truth of an idea has something to contribute to the ideas influence-potential, it does not exhaust what it takes for the success of an idea. Needless to say that only positive ideas are desiderata, but one notices that philosophies that are apt to have such outcome do not always receive large audiences. Unfortunately, ideas capable of disaster do sale. “In this regard one remembers the

legacies of Karl Marx and communism. Karl Marx remains the most influential political critic of all times, a thinker who more than any other had the fortune or misfortune of having his thinking adopted as guide for powerful nations and mammoth number of people. It turns out that this experiment was one of the most disastrous in the history of the world, second only to the Prussian chauvinism of G.W.F. Hegel<sup>3</sup>

At the instance of this intention, a whole recast of the African history and even geography was made and this was followed up by a plethora of philosophical cum ideological weapons weaved and aimed at the ontological status of the Blackman. Very many philosophers were involved especially those of the modern dispensation. Philosophers who lived and worked when the African predicament had begun expressed their views on issues as they relate to Africa directly. But those thinkers, who lived before the modern period especially in the ancient period, expressed their views on the burning issues of slavery and or colonialism. Without any particular reference to Africa.<sup>4</sup> This includes the views of Berkeley, Hume, Kant and Hegel to be conservative with roll.

## II. EGYPTO-ETHIOPIAN HISTORY

In order to denigrate the African person and also be able to rise at his expense, the west gave herself a first duty of denying Africa any noble achievement in the past. This is necessary because, to accept that the marvels by Hannibal and those of the Egyptian pyramids are all issued from the African spirit will abort their programme of denigration.

Therefore, they started with truncating and falsifying history. Egypt was mentally and intellectually bracketed out of Africa. Owing to such dubious historiography, people, even African students were placed in doubt as to the authentic 'Africanness' of the Egyptians. All the effort of the west was to deduce from the prejudice what should be the proper boundary of nations. After all, 'can anything good come from Africa? A major contributor to this intellectual robbery is Eva Matthews Sanford who in his book *The Mediterranean World in Ancient Times*, tried to tie Egyptian history to the history of the people of Ancient near East-Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, the Aegean and Rome. He carefully feigned silence on the issue of Egyptian belongingness to the surrounding countries of the Nile Valley. Unfortunately, this book became popular and was being used by Euro experts in anthropological studies and allied disciplines.<sup>5</sup>

Western interest was not only on Egypt but also Ethiopia, and in this way, what Mary Penick Motley says assumes some importance viz: "One of the primary objectives of many American and European histories seems to have been to remove Ethiopia and Egypt from the African continent. Of course, it could be done physically, but the old cliché 'the pen is mightier than the sword' was true in that these historians cause a cleavage in popular thought about the two countries. Ethiopia and Egypt were simply not thought of as Africa."<sup>6</sup> However, Onyewuenyi maintained that

there is ample evidence to demonstrate that Egypt and the Egyptians who did a great deal in shaping world civilization, were black Africans, that the philosopher-priests, organizers of the mystery system to whom students from Greece, Asia and parts of Africa flocked to study, were black Africans; that the Pharaohs of the early dynastic periods who laid the foundations of Egyptian glory were black Africans, that the kingdom of Egypt itself was founded by Africans of Nubia.<sup>7</sup>

The precise vindication of these facts is outside the interest of this work as it is not a book of history. However, astounding evidence of the veracity of the claims can be found in such works as: Onyewuenyi's *African Origin of Greek philosophy*, Herodotus' *The Histories* translated by George Rawlinson; Gerald Massey's *Classic, Ancient Egypt the light of the world*, and his work, *The Book of the Beginnings and The Nature Genesis*, A.H.C. Heccrens, *Politics, Intercourse and Trade of the Carteginious and Ethiopians*, Count Volney's *The Ruins of Empires*.

From available history also, Menes who reigned in the 1<sup>st</sup> dynasty as the first pharaoh and the first king of the upper Nile (Sudan), conquered the lower Nile (the place of controversy) and welded the lands together.<sup>8</sup> As a matter of fact, Herodotus being among the first Greeks that entered Egypt testified that they are of the black stock. Apart from their black skin, woolly hair and so on, the great historian observes too that "the Colossians, the Egyptians and the Ethiopians are the only nations who have practiced circumcision from the earliest times"<sup>9</sup> and in the way Africans sustained it today. Another point to be noted is that of the dynasties under which Egypt was ruled, though accidents of history has occasionally brought in foreign pharaohs, the height of the civilization was reached at the time when the indigenous African pharaohs were on the throne. In fact, in a period of about two thousand years, Egypt was under native rulers except for the 108 – year rule of the

Hyksos, the Persian interregnum of only fifty years and the ten years of Greek rule under Alexander the Great.”<sup>10</sup>

What history has shown is that the intellectual achievement of Egypt in science and technology, in architecture and government predated the Greek civilization. Hence it would be contradictory to posit the Greeks as the original settlers of Egypt. Volney who visited Egypt in 1787 attested to the peoples black and woolly haired nature. Reflecting on the unfortunate state of Egypt of the after the glorious days he writes:

There is the Nile, there is the ruin of Thebes where once lived a people who discovered, while others were yet barbarians, the elements of the arts and sciences ... a race of men now rejected from society because of their sable skin and frizzled hair, yet who founded on the study of the laws of nature those civil and religious systems which still govern so large a portion of the Universe.<sup>11</sup>

Writing to explain why the modern Egyptologists and historians would want to corrupt evidence of enormous volume, against Africa, Cheikh Anta Diop says, that, they want to obliterate the black identity of ancient Egyptians so as to supply the theoretical basis of imperialist ideology. Such writings are being sponsored by western countries who colonized and enslaved Africa.

### **III. Philosophical Strategy For Eventual Conquest**

In the modern period, it was the empiricists more than the continental rationalist that were at the vanguard of the anti-African campaign. Oguejofor attempted to proffer a reason for this. According to him “most of the empiricists are British and Britain had a lion share of the trade in slave across the Atlantic.”<sup>12</sup> Added to this, North America to which unnumbered Africans were shipped for the plantations was under the colonial governance of Britain. This coincidence brought the British empiricists to a closer contact with the African slaves. In all, these thinkers did not rise above their time but valorized the obtainable practice by logic and ideas. For instance, while Berkeley helped in writing the laws which in Carolina legalized slavery and the subjection of slaves, it was left for Immanuel Kant to lay down principles for the rough treatment of blacks by using bamboo capable of penetrating their hard skin.

The classical denunciation of the Black man was achieved in and through Hegel whose views about Africa can be summarized as follows:

Africa proper, as far as history goes back, has remained, for all purposes of connection with the rest of the world, shut up; it is the gold land compressed within itself-the land of childhood which lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark-mantle of night.<sup>13</sup>

Hegel graduated to defended his submission point by point. Geographically he argued that Africa is excluded from the rest of the world. He further argues that Africa lacks all decent political arrangement. In anthropological fitness, Africa was described as utterly inferior to Europe.<sup>14</sup> Hegel did also insist that universal concepts as God and law has no place in the African categories. It is rather incisive to learn of the first impression Hegel creates of the social relationship amongst Africans. This relationship consists of animal-like habits and attitudes towards one another. Negro life as he appreciates it is overly natural, wild and untamed. In such a situation as he pictures, the conclusion is that the Africa lives in a state of nature where he is selfish, self-indulgent and utilitarian even in the act of raising a family. What appears to be the most decisive prejudice was Hegel’s accusation of cannibalism to the African. Thus “...devouring of human flesh is altogether consonant with the general principles of the African race.” Hundreds are killed and eaten and their flesh sold in the market.<sup>15</sup> As is obvious, Hegel consigns Africa and the African person to purely bestial status. And having regarded the African man as base, in whom no sense of purpose, justice and morality can be found. Hegel makes it clear that it is only through interaction with the Europeans that Africa can begin to develop. This much-orchestrated need for interaction ended in slave trade, colonialism and others. Yet these were justified and given ideological impetus.

#### **IV. Slavery As One Of The Africa Predicaments**

The slave trade has remained a major article in the world of man's inhumanity to man. It is an unmortgaged statement of inequality among men; a rare demonstration of depersonalization and dehumanization. Slavery had been an index in the history of nations but the Trans-Atlantic (African) slave trade assumed an unparalleled density. What is considered the greatest factor in that heinous campaign was the circumstances of the Agricultural and Industrial revolutions in Europe, which required a multiple assortment of manpower to work in the cane-fields and to assist in the factories. Accomplices in this viruluous commerce were Portuguese, Spaniards, Dutch, the French and the English. Of all the channels of slave trade; The sheer volumes of the slave traffic across the Atlantic and the brutality with which African slaves were treated renders the European trade fundamentally different from anything that took place within Africa itself.

Commercial relationship then was triangular according to which England, France and colonial America supplied the exports and ships; Africa, the human merchandise, the colonial plantation and raw materials.<sup>17</sup> Precisely because the triangular trade favoured the growth of the British commercial empire, African chiefs were lured into selling their own people for an exchange of sordid money, tobacco or den gun.

It must however be pointed out that at the height of that iniquitous transaction in African history not all African chiefs were co-operators with the 'white foe' for instance Don Affonso, King of the Congo wrote king John III of Portugal in the words viz:

“... the merchants daily seize our subjects, sons of the land and sons of our noble men and vassals ..... it is our will that in this kingdom (of Congo) there should not be any trade in slaves nor market for slaves.”<sup>18</sup>

Another major factor in the shaping and reshaping of the African identity was to be colonialism itself.

#### **V. Colonialism In Africa As An African Predicament**

The attraction of the colonial masters was over and above every other thing economic. After the abolition of the slave trade, the commercial legacies of the economic Europe can only stand by a revived opportunity of sustaining it. Raw materials and markets for finished goods were all the more needed to establish the foundation of the new revolutions in the economic sector. However, quite before this new craze for raw materials, and markets, Christian missionaries had traversed the African interiors and were baffled by the enormity of economic opportunities found therein. Consequently, they made valuable situation reports to their home governments appertaining the commercial fertility of the African interiors. Little wonder a great many scholars have tried to see in colonialism not merely the proclaimed civilizing mission but an essential content of economic exploitation.<sup>19</sup> Added to the patriotism of inviting their home governments for economic gain, the missionaries requested the presence of their home government to protect them from obvious and possible local aggression.

The era of colonialism was properly called the age of imperial expansionism Colonies were sought and annexed not merely for economic expansion but for the 'libido' of political prowess that was the situation in the early 1870's. Thus, according to J.K Buah, African territories became the target for compensation of France when she lost Algace.<sup>20</sup> Nations were gaining and loosing territories. One looses here and compensates from there. In this power-prestige equation, the weak African nations were susceptible to plunder and annexation. In fact the trend in those days are such that:

...the acquisition of colonies added to the power and prestige of the mother country. It is perhaps this psychological drive and satisfaction that engineered the expansionist tendencies of great ancient empires like those of the Greek and Roman.<sup>21</sup>

All these factor; religious, economic and political led to the eventual partitioning of Africa. The vast land was divided into apartments between the English and French powers. Now, through the indirect and direct rule policies respectively but especially through the indirect rule of the English, great damages were wrought on the image and personality of the African man. This damage continues through the complicity of the so called national bourgeoisie who though are today governors in independent African states remain stooges of foreign powers for gain and power. These leaders work to maintain the status quo ante. Concerning them it was said.

Seen through its eyes, its mission has nothing to do with

transforming the nation, it consists, prosaically of being the transmission line between the nation and capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mask of neo-colonialism. The national bourgeoisie will be quite content with the role of the western bourgeoisie's business agent and it will play its part without any complexes in a most dignified manner.<sup>22</sup>

## VI. Identity Crises Due To Western Contact

It must be accepted by any honest work that the western contact with the African at his home, brought alongside some disadvantages a great many positive effects in religion, in politics, in education and social life. Many practices that were repugnant like the killing of twins and like practices were struck down and fought against, formal education in the schools were introduced with great results. In fact, western science as machines, cars and sundry technology were introduced to save human energy for more constructive employment and to enhance mass productivity and efficiency in all facets of life. On the agricultural realm for instance, the agrarian pre-colonial Africa leaped, from manual labour to mechanized agriculture. Transportation has gone air and sea.<sup>23</sup> In similar developments, the areas of medicine, communication and politics and many other sectors have got something to gain at the instance of colonial encounter. However, notwithstanding this good news of the colonial days, the negative impacts of the experiences were quite enormous to the peril of African personality.

Indeed, there was much political quagmire that arose from the Afro-western contact. The first political difficulty was the sorry specimen of breaking up Africa's ethnic groups into fragments subject to different political sovereignties. These ruling authorities, would then, with their different methods, and ideologies infuse into different portions of the self-same people varying ideas and thus making them strangers to their own kits and kin. At other times, the opposite effect of lumping together people of divergent creeds and values into one country, constitutes the polity into a cottage industry of war.<sup>24</sup> Oguejiofor advanced this same idea thus:

With the partitioning of Africa, different ethnic groups and nations suddenly became parts of the same political entities without any regard to their history, religion, culture or experience. Some suffered arbitrary division between colonial masters. Part of the Somali nation found itself in Ethiopia, another in Kenya yet another in Northern Somalia and the rest became vassals of Italian peninsula.

Hence, the western experience, its advantages notwithstanding, shattered indigenous political institutions and boundaries.<sup>26</sup> Also, colonial administrators were overly dictatorial and while leaving, left a legacy of dictatorship which the new crop of leaders prove to be incompetent and self-serving, the results became obvious-corruption and embezzlement.<sup>27</sup> It is the same logic of selfishness and passion for fraud that explains the incessant acts of military coup d'etat's in Africa.

On the economic pedestal, Africa suffered a grave wound too because without prejudice to other advantages, the west fed and grew on the ruins of Africa. With one hand they offered promises of hope and with another- they siphoned our resources. As a matter of fact, the Euro-African contact on slave trade and colonialism left a colossal economic scar. With regard to slave trade alone, the millions of people carted away meant a drastic reduction of the productive capacity, especially when those sought after were those at the bloom of their lives. Also, "wars aimed at gathering slaves and other raids meant serious rupture of economic and social life."<sup>28</sup>

Okolo had elsewhere argued that the European domination of African nations "is not for mere humanitarian purposes but mainly for economic exploitation."<sup>29</sup> It therefore meant that during the colonial campaign all economic activities were directed toward the needs of Europe. Once again, the implication is that Africa lost all control over the quality, quantity, speed and direction of her economy. Agricultural economy remained but it was directed towards export. Mineral exploitation and distribution of manufactured articles became the decisive sectors. Land, labour and capital were therefore diverted from traditional though rudimentary economy to the export oriented sector whose direction was based on the export of single agricultural commodities, with the exception of a few countries that were blessed with the ability to supplement with earnings from mineral resources.<sup>30</sup>

The result today being that majority of African countries belong to the league of world poorest nations.

Pretending to have come for our good and in the bid to plant the gospel, the missionaries, strategically alienated the indigenous people from their culture and religious heritage completely. It would be acceptable if theirs as an effort to humanize the culture in terms of promoting its good values and criticizing the odious ones. But what they did was a blatant jettisoning of a whole system of values. Ayittey, S.B.N. in his *Africa Betrayed* described this alienation in terms of a people denied of any real intellectual, cultural or historical accomplishment or experience, who are impotent of contributing anything to humanity.<sup>31</sup> It was then left for Fanon to unfold another rather obscure side of this alienation according to which the native is not just considered unethical and devoid of values but personifies a negation of values. In terms of morals and values, he is evil, corrosive, destructive, disfiguring and is an inescapable matrix of malevolent forces.<sup>32</sup> In a short but brilliant summary Fanon observes that the west by a kind of perverted logic turns “to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigured and destroys it.”<sup>33</sup>

Next, without prejudice to the “good news” of western education, the west appeared to have achieved a great deal of her violent agenda through it. This is because in the entire curriculum of schools and colleges, one seldom sees any place for African culture and psychology; neither does the schema presume to produce independent specialists in different fields of life so as to promote African welfare.<sup>34</sup> Commenting on this on this state of affairs, Offiong writes:

Just as the Europeans controlled African participation in the new Economic order, they also carefully structured African education so as to perpetuate their underdevelopment and dependency. The colonial power mainly Britain and France knew that the introduction of western education was Sine-qua-non for the exploitation of Africa and Africans.<sup>35</sup>

On the whole the combined indices of the combined effects of slavery and colonialism boils down to: economic, cultural, political, religious and psychological violence.

## VII. Aspects Of The Identity Crisis

All questions of identity are issues of metaphysical importance. And when what is at stake is human identity the gravity of the matter will ramify to sundry anthropological extensions. Hence, what the African experienced, in slavery and colonialism had indelible effects not just on what the African has but on his idea of what he is. It is here that the identity crisis lies. What happened in slavery and colonialism has been described as a deliberated depreciation of all that we are our history, our culture, our dignity, our rights, our hopes and our plans. The damage was wholistic, total, personal, and deepseated.<sup>36</sup>

Having been beaten down and violated even to the depth of his person, the Africa as it were, appeared to lose confidence in himself and by himself began to broadcast the western superiority. In this connection the Igbo will say *Bekee bu agbara, Oyibo ka Onyeocha*, and the Efik will exclaim *Mbakara edi ekpo*. Further, the African manifests this accepted superiority in his unbridled flair for the exotic and an inordinate crave for foreign things, foreign cars, foreign books, foreign women, foreign studies, foreign currency, foreign skin as is the case of bleaching and hairdo.<sup>37</sup> In and with this frame of mind, whatever is African or Nigerian is an “imitation” not the “original” while the exotic is the “original” and “authentic”. What is indigenous is fake while its exotic alternative is “the main”. It is not enough that this strange mindset is unfortunately operative and unleashing violence on the Africa personality but it is all the stranger ideological protections. For instance, Phillis Wheatley writing in 1773 referred to own Africa as the land of errors and darkest abodes. For Booker, T. the life of his African forebears is seen as darkest heathernism.<sup>38</sup> Araoye Oyebola’s *Black Man’s Dilemma* was an extreme showpiece of an indigenous ideological denigration of our people and culture.<sup>39</sup> He argued very strongly that the Black man has not made ‘any’ contribution to civilization and so is not qualified to lay claim on any positive identity.<sup>40</sup> In his words Africa lack all originality. Thus “the black race imitates other races. We are copycats”. Further, he insisted that there is something deficient in the human of the African saying “we have some basic human weaknesses that are peculiar to us.”<sup>41</sup> Other vituperations which Oyebola vented on his Africa were that in terms of technology Africans “were far cruder than those prevalent among the Caucasian and Mongolian races at the same periods of history”! and that Africans “possessed no knowledge of technology comparable to that found among the other races”.<sup>42</sup> Oguejiofer had flatly dismissed Oyebola’s work as an intellectual failure and as light-weighted. In his *Philosophy and the African Predicament*, he posits and rightly so, debilitating refutations of Oyebola’s positions. In a brilliant summary he writes: It is only from the background of the African psychological

trauma that *Black Man’s Dilemma* can be rightly and fairly appreciated. Oyebola’s book is a good example of Africa intellectuals who behave as though the most remarkable sign of learning and enlightenment is

the vilification of their history and culture, their people and forebears. In the end his analysis of the African situation is so full of inconsistencies, and his suggestions of the way forward so incomprehensible that the whole project becomes an abject lesson on Africa's most aching problem.<sup>43</sup>

Another native at the vanguard of African inferiority is the author of *Africa: The Agony of A Continent* in the person of J.O. Odey. Odey who expresses total acceptance of the pessimism of Oyebola epitomizes the African identity crisis to a real ontological level when he asked the question: is the black man truly made of the same stuff as the white man?<sup>44</sup> Despite all attempts by him to attenuate the gravity of this interrogative, it remains a critical point and extemporization of African's acceptance of a midwife inferiority.

What has become arguably obvious is that by a stream of planned events, the African man's psyche is as if by a planned programme been disoriented. It is this psychological trauma more than any other thing that is the bane of African identity crisis. There is as it were a tension between what the African is and what he has experienced, - a sort of confused sense of identity and split personality. As epitomized in Oyebola and Odey, who we must agree are paradigmatic representation of most Africans, the black man was through in doubt of who he is. Black or white? Half black-half white? He appears and feels he is neither, for alienated from the old he is not accepted full in the new. Some authors have called this situation an "anthropological neurosis". Acting from his neurosis and dense feeling of inferiority, "they indulge in exhibitionism" and wholesale" aping of the white man, especially in things that do not matter.<sup>45</sup>

### **VIII. Critical Considerations For An Emergent Identity**

The afore-discussed unfortunate accident of history, which Africa underwent, has remained the greatest factor in the popular definition of her identity even by her own sons and daughters, in the comity of the continents. The situation is such that Africa and or the African has become popularly 'identical or synonymous with the underdeveloped, barbaric, uncultured and primitive'. And so, Africa became depicted as "a dark continent of jungle and dark mysterious swamps and Africans were thought of as savages with no history and no "culture".<sup>46</sup> The high-point of the whole complex is this fact that even the Africans themselves have by a logic of intimidation, been cowered to accepting an identity of "bad news" for themselves. Hence any "bad ware" or product is made in Africa or Nigeria. Popularly it is "*be anyi*", meaning our own or made in our place (in one of the Nigerian popular language, Igbo), and as such, any bad news is normal because this is Africa or Nigeria.

However, some principles must be borne in mind as one reflects along the cheered trajectory of African identity crisis especially in the context of African predicament. These include the fact that any conclusion established on false premises cannot but be false. And by the logic of the above principle, it is arguably clear that the premises that concluded for slavery and mischievous colonial schemes were false and this cannot have any strict logical or ontological implication. To start with, all the philosophical propositions that attempted to justify or sustain the mischief of slavery and colonialism contradicted some major logical canons not excluding the logic of their various systems. Most others jammed into a critical self-contradiction. In the words of Oguejiofor, some philosophers especially the empiricists, ... and other thinkers of the enlightenment who commented on the Africans did so in negative tones. Like Aristotle, some would go as far as contradicting the most important principles of their philosophy in their attempt to present theoretical justification of their prejudice.<sup>47</sup>

British empiricists, more than the rationalists of the continent had more contacts with the Africans and thus much more aware of their condition. Now, instead of employing the rigours of philosophy and truth of knowledge to liberate the African condition, they deployed their thoughts to defending the practice at their time or simply put to vilifying the Africans without necessarily giving any strong philosophical backing to their views.<sup>48</sup> By so doing, the empiricists betrayed the 'tall' project of philosophy.

An example of the radical fallacy of the premises for the African derogatory identity is to be seen in Hume's contradiction of the foundations of his empiricism. His empiricism like its counterparts, holds that all human knowledge must be derived from the sense and that any conclusion drawn, which is inconsistent with observation is quite unacceptable. Central to Hume's empiricism is his denial of causality and consigning it to mere contiguity in time and space, temporal succession and or association. If this is to be taken serious and were Hume's position regarding African relationship with the west to be judged against the thesis of his system, evidence will reject either his empiricism or his position on identity. On the canons of empiricism, "an observation of superiority in technical sophistication can only lead to a statement asserting such superiority. To go beyond this, and proclaim one race inferior or superior presumes much more that has been observed. Such observation is not same as the observation of the nature or essence of the people or group or people concerned. It then means that in Hume's racist statement against Africans, he grossly removes the ground on which his philosophy is standing.<sup>49</sup>

David Hume also fell into the fallacy of over generalization, knowing little about Africa at his time save for a few slaves known to his informants he made a universal statement of implication. Does it not contradict the very essence of empiricism to make statements about a people without really observing them? In fact;

Consistent empiricism cannot subscribe to natural superiority of one race over another or the inferiority of one person to another for essential superiority or inferiority is not given in the senses ... strict empiricism must limit itself to the sensible, since it does not accept even the necessity of causal connections. The problem that British empiricism had with the African is therefore their failure to draw the practical consequences of their philosophical theory, clouded as they were by the same prejudices that were prevalent.<sup>50</sup>

Baron Montesquieu, was sure that the denial of African humanity by the west was purposeful and utilitarian because to accept their humanity and consequent dignity will mean a judgment on the Christian conscience of the usurpers. Hence "it is impossible for us to suppose these creatures to be men because allowing them to be men, suspicion will follow that we ourselves are not Christians."<sup>51</sup> Voltaire portrayed yet another approach to that utility calculus when he said that they (west) accept the humanity of Africans and that God created and redeemed them but would still cut off their leg and put them back to manual labour if they try to escape.

Immanuel Kant is yet another case in point for having in his metaphysics of morals talked of and defended the principle of universalizability turned round to contradict it in his contribution to the African experience. The principles of universalizability states that one should "act in such a way that the norms of your action can be used as a universal principle of action to which yourself will be happy to be subjected to"<sup>52</sup> But one would wonder if Kant would desire that the norms he so prescribed for the treatment of the African be applied to him or his own. Therefore, in what he advanced for the treatment of the African, he disappoints his theory and his philosophy as a whole.

Hegel in his doctrine of the unfolding of the absolute spirit (Phenomenology of Spirit), tried to provide a philosophical foundation for the subjugation of the Africans. In this way he enables a system with a pre-ordained end. That is to say that desired conclusions had been established and then premises were scouted for to support them. Such conclusions are not free consequences of independent premises. In this way, a great many modern thinkers, disappointed reason and philosophy.

Another capacious argument against these biased thinkers is that many other philosophies of some epoch and a little after who were unprejudiced and clear-headed came to conclusions opposite to that of the aforementioned scholars. Among them are Bergson, Martin Buber, Levinas, to mention a few.

What this survey has permitted us to conclude is that since the premises of this epochal denigration of Africa are products of bias and prejudice and not conclusions from facts and sound reasoning, it cannot be allowed to define the African identity. And any design of African identity, which has arisen from and modeled by that current is to be disregarded as void. As it were, no volume of false representations can by equal or unequal laws translate into reality.

The identity crisis into which these malicious innuendos have plunged Africa are much. Africa and Africans are decisively fighting them. Hence Africans are not merely what they do or what they eat and wear. They are not what they have and are not what people say they are. Without prejudice to the identity issues which the above indices can raise, they are nonetheless dangerous ideas and grounds for establishing African (human) identity. The reason is that people can easily lose their position and gain another, they can drop what they have and pick others. What is more, people around others can be insidious in their prejudice against them. Thus, as Africa goes on with a frantic search for identity and meaning and relevance, one thing certain according to David Pagne is that "we are human beings and at each time we adjust to the circumstances that define us by providence."<sup>53</sup>

What is certain is that the odious experience and mischievous colonialism cannot determine the African identity exclusively, for it is only circumstantial or better put incidental to African identity determination journey.

After all, today in a class comprising of the "whites" and "blacks", the blacks take the lead with all their so-called "primitivity". In many other fields of endeavour the experience is same. Over and over again, these Africans take the lead and emerge as champions in most sporting activities worldwide – football, boxing, jumping, basket and volley balls.<sup>54</sup> Interesting today as we relish the goodness of the computer and communication age, an African (Nigeria) Philip Emeagwali emerges as the world's computer *whizzkid* and 'unbeatable', taking the lead in some aspects even over Bill Gates. And so Africans are infinitely more than what particular circumstances say they are. Yet the African identity cannot be defined without elements of those circumstances of her history. This is because in everything the African does today, there is found there-in, an interpretation either in terms of a struggle to deny the claims of those historical experiences over him or to deliver himself and his own from the predicament of those experiences, in which ever way, without exclusively



determining the African identity, something of those historical experiences go into the definition of African identity.

## **IX. Conclusion**

The point remains that authentic African identity must be a historical dynamic identity, begging for a review. In history Africans have cultures, traditions and specific way of life for which they were known and were called Africans. It is quite unfortunate that in the recent past African identity appeared to be facing a number of crises. This might be as a result of their encounter with the Colonial master, which brought about what I call confused identity on the Africans.

The activities of the colonial masters, aimed at overcoming Africa, led to Slavery, Colonialism in Africa and African identity crises due to Western contact. These we referred to as African predicaments. The effects of western colonialism on African predicaments has both positive and negative implications on the Africans. Positively, colonial contact brought about African development and civilization while negatively, Africans were meant to see themselves as inferior and everything from the Colonial masters as superior. They were at one time viewed as having no religion or culture and on another time viewed as having inferior forms of religion, law and economy.

As earlier mentioned, there existed a cordial relationship between the “whites” and the “blacks”, until the Europeans discovered gold and ivory on African soil, then the scramble for African partition and Africans underdevelopment. The various African predicaments and the role of Western colonialism instead of drawing the Africans backwards, should act as a means through which the black race (Africans) had to heed to a re-finding, redefinition and re-proclamation of itself. This we believed will reawaken the African mind in appreciating who they are and the best approach to Western civilizations.

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