

THE CONCEPT OF NEGRITUDE AND ITS EFFECT ON AFRICAN COMMUNAL SOCIO-POLITICAL LIFE

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Abstract

One of the main features of African life style is Communalism. It is a system of life that integrates communal ownership and federations of highly localized independent communities. Communalism is anchored on blood relationship and fortified by marriage ties and as such human/individual dignity, rights and responsibilities are valued. Communalism offers the opportunity to relate with nature and accepts the unity of every individual and other simple entity, enabling Africans to commune with their gods. This unity could be observed in the entire gamut of their existence including their social, political, economic and even cultural life. The introduction of Negritude into African lexicon by Leopold S. Senghor and Aimé Césaire captured the entire African life, both philosophically, politically, anthropologically and socially. Both as a concept and as a movement Negritude to encapsulate, promote and indeed celebrate the Africanness of Black People. Philosophical analytic method is adopted in the effects of Negritude on the African communal socio-political life. As a protest against colonialism and racism on Africans, Negritude defines the African personality, history, culture, pride and values from a uniquely African perspective. However, communalism remains an African identity and enable man recognize his individuality, in the universality. The interaction and inter-communication between man and nature no doubt spins the kind of unprecedented harmony found in communalism. Though uncommon in societies such as socialism, capitalism, Africans are expected to appreciate who they are in spite of the effects of Negritude on the praxis of communalism.

Keywords: Communalism, Negritude, African Socialism and African Politics

Introduction

Africans may be dark in colour but are knitly tied in spirit. Their existence is such that it is dependent on one another. Nze in his discourse on communalism insisted that an individual in the African context is elevated beyond his subjective individuality and as such it became necessary to recognise the universal in him. He went further to say that 'Man is not truly man... than where/when he lives and acts as a recognized citizen of the community, (Nze, 1989:8).

This appreciation of reality has consequences on human freedom and liberty, equality and social responsibility, which implicitly and explicitly will invariably have effect on our economic, social and political aspects of life.

It is this freedom within a communalistic set-up that is under study with much reference to the Igbo experience. It is the freedom that has to do with human thought, desire, will, appetite etc for it is connected with choice. It is not one that is usurped in communalism, but one in which both in African and Western settings, an individual can choose for a group and vice versa. In the African setting, it is motivated and dominated by the collective interests, while in the West it could be so motivated but not without a ring of individualism. For Iroegbu encapsulates this idea thus: "Fullest liberty is the freedom to contribute the most through what one has received to one's community and to humanity in globe. Who belongs the most via best contribution is the freest", (2000:117).

This liberty and freedom in the Igbo-African communalism is made of life in which the other is valued, respected and thought for. The other is in the 'I' and the 'I' is in the other. Although a slight degree of stratification could be seen, there is strict class distinction in African society.

African communalism in this sense is seen as a "social life of the Africans founded on the African belief, where all human being are members of one family of mankind, (Nze, 1989:14). Like a system, it gives man a sense of belonging and direction as it recognizes the place and value of the man since it is based on peculiar identity of Africans. Ikegbu, saw this African communalism as a therapy for healing Africans based on the principles of equality, justice and the realization of an egalitarian society and he remarked:

Egalitarianism as a component in African communal system implies that the philosophy behind the adoption of this system is to ensure a common target, to collectively ensure a (sic) society where people, lives and property would be protected, where things would be collectively owned, (2003:35).

A casual look at communalism with its collectivist tendencies may cast rings of doubt on the values of individual liberty and responsibility and as such raises the question such as won't the individuality of the individual be swallowed, jeopardized or even annihilated in the collectivism of communalism? Although such fears could be justified, the truth remains that this system of life steeps deep with respect, regard and concern or care for both the individual and the community. It is not the type of respect accorded to one merely out of fear of what one stand to gain or as a formality. Respect in this regard is not a matter of reward; rather it is a matter of justice, which remains the chief virtue of the State. It is the granting of esteem, reverence and care to somebody or something that rightly deserves it. Even in relation to the human person, appropriate respect that is due to each person is a matter of justice based on the *personness* of each. That we are all persons, fully human beings, woman or man, child or adult, poor or rich (sic), white or black, each person deserves respect, (Iroegbu, 2000:145). Each is seen as respectable and respectful due to the communal self-hood which sustains communalism. In the system at its best, the individual's life is made for the glory of the collective body. Since the dawn of civilization the place of the individual in community has been a subject of great interest.

For the Ancient Roman Empire, stress was placed on the living of either contemplative life (*vita contemplativa*) or active life (*vita activa*). The former is life in the household, while the latter is life in the public, and only the free-born strictly speaking participate in the public life. In our context Igbo-Africa scene, it will be life in the 'ilo'-the village square. This is tied strictly to politics, governance, but since it points to activity, it could be dragged in, within the economic sphere. This is because the Africans relations with or contact with his environment (nature) is active than contemplative. In short for the African, life is a constant struggle. So he requires spirited effort to surmount and survive in what he perceives a hostile environment. This is because survival is unsure for according to Maquet: "all the adult members must spend the greater part of their energy harvesting enough food for their needs from their environment. Definitely the group of people will have a different view of nature from that of a group in which a few members can produce plenty food for all" (1985:22)

The essence of this action initiated by our environment is for the good of all. As such, the largest social unit is seen as the clan, made up of villages or communities referred to as *Umunna* in the Igbo-African setting. These groups fit properly together as they maintain an extended family system anchored on blood ties and fortified through common ownership of land as the means of production, markets and even shrines. The political unity in African enclave also took its bearing on this same *Umunna*, which has been sustained by some forces: blood ties, kinship ties, common ownership of the means of production and mystical bond weaved by our metaphysics.

Unfortunately, this traditional togetherness among Africans began to suffer with the advent of the colonial masters. The irony in that encounter is that while the colonial invaders saw a lot of material resources in African soil, they refused to see anything good in Africans themselves. Even human colours (pigmentations) which anthropologists see as nature's gifts to the races received symbolic interpretations from the racists. This is how the black skin and black people acquired purely pejorative symbolism from white imperialists, supremacists, racists and even some writers and even some religious leaders among them. For them black became synonymous with evil, laziness, backwardness, dirtiness (like charcoal) that could stain the 'whiteness' of the 'whites'. This is how the colonial onslaught inflicted mortal wound on the personality, psyche, economic, political and the cultural heritage of the Negros.

The above presentation gives us a brief insight into the circumstances that gave birth to Negritude both as a socio-political movement of protest and intellectual effort at re-presentation of African history and Black identity. In this study, we will follow closely the ideas and works of two Franco-phone African writers and philosophers Leopold S. Senghor and Aimé Césaire. They remain the fathers of Negritude. With them we shall demonstrate that black is beautiful and that the world has much to learn from Africa as exemplified in the invaluable practice of communalism.

It is generally admitted that Negritude owes much of its form and content to Western philosophical discourses, especially to French intellectual influence. The fact that the two most outstanding exponents of Negritude, namely Léopold S. Senghor and Aimé Césaire, are deeply impregnated with French culture is taken as a case in point; among the French roots, some scholars single out the profound impact of Henri Bergson. Irele thus maintains, "it is largely the epistemology of Bergson that Senghor has adopted in his formulation of Negritude," (1981:80). It was this ideology and under this experience that every African

cultural value especially their socio-political began to lose their natural quality. In the socio-political life of the Africans, communalistic tendencies still exist as among their identity amidst the influence and effect of Negritude.

African Socio-Political Life as Value System

Africans are known for their communal life style. Though this community life style is not exclusively African, it has so affected every aspect of their life practices and value system. As such, the African socio-political life as a value system could be traced from the individual to the community. Among the Africans an individual is in possession of communal self-hood, and as such he originates from his community and in it, his actions, his individuality and substantiality could be identified.

This life style requires freedom and liberty for both the individual and the community in the case of choice making. This choice is not only for the individual but also for the community. Armed with fundamental liberty and freedom, one is therefore to examine issues, situations and weigh up things in order to make a perfect choice. Nze in this communal life style is of the view that:

The individual chooses for the community as he chooses for himself and the community chooses through individual choices of members of the community. That is, individual choices roll on to become collective choices. Therefore, the individual is a participant in choice determination by the collectivity (1989:13).

Where there is any conflict between the individuals and community, the communal demands automatically take precedence since individual demands are usurped and appropriated therein. Liberty is not necessarily a concept, but makes it easy for one to realize his potentials in the society. "Participation in community life is communal liberty. It is the concretization of the common life of a people in daily experience. Mutual co-existence that promotes both the individual and communal good is the demand of communal liberty", (Iroegbu, 2000:122).

The real liberty equally qualified as liberty for enablement or liberty-enablement concerns itself with access to what makes life sweet, tick and sound. Of course, experience will immediately drum the lesson that if liberty-enablement is lacking, all the other kinds of liberty crumble as they will be of no significances. Irrespective of the seemingly usurpation of the individual freedom in Africa, as such the individual is free. According to Nwoko, that leaves African traditional society as a society where the individual is always considered a free, integrated member of his community. His pride in the community is seen as power. The more united he is to the community, the more he sees the community as more extension of the family, (1985, 71).

In the suggestion of Ikegbu, the logic behind the powering of the community over and above the individual, is to ensure community cooperation and in order to disallow usurpation, (2003, 39). The individual is no longer a member of his community but is mystically bound to his community hence is one with his community. The individual existence is not only corporate, but he lives for, in and through the other (the community), as such devoured of selfish interest. Nze puts it beautifully that the ontological being of man in African

communalism is unique. In an African communalism, man is man because he functions in a community. He is always elevated beyond his subjective individuality. He is a universal man and in him one detects and locates other men and the entire community is discoverable in him. In his individuality, man is a concrete universal wearing an individual or separate appearance, (1989, 15).

Though there is collective response, the action of the collectivity is that of the individual, it does not vitiate individual responsibility. It is not uncommon to see both men and women appoint others partners to what they do, or even to oversee to their cooking's. This mode of life which expresses the African perception of reality is imbued with logics. It is logical for in African setting no distance exists between the individual and the other unlike Sartre who capped the other 'hell'. In Africa, the individual is for the other and vice versa, hence the freedom is indisputable.

Equality in this case is possible because all are seen as equal. A pivotal question here would be equality of what? As Uduigwomen saw African society as based on an extended family system, which in turn expanded into kingship groups, which further extended into clan system, whereupon lies a theoretical basis of African communalism, where then is the equality?(2002,27). In answer to this, Nkrumah (1964,61), saw the kinship as the theoretical basis of African communalism which expresses itself on the social level in terms of institutions such as the clan, underlying the initial equality of all the responsibility of man, for one.

That does not mean that the individual is not responsible towards the other and the community for he is a person, and remains one only if he participates in what the community does. He must relate actively, can he do this if there are classes, castes, differences? That will be more arduous to achieve.

All forms of inequality were abhorred. There was no granting of special privileges to people by virtue of birth, sex, race, wealth, position or class. Every member was accorded an equal opportunity to enjoy his material, social and cultural benefits, (Uduigwomen, 2002:28).

However, upon every attempt man makes to stress and show that all are equal, experience points towards inequality. Aristotle, Karl Marx, Cicero, etc tried to adumbrate reasons for human equality based on what each sees as the essential attribute of man. But Rousseau did acknowledge human inequalities in his "Origin of Inequality". Aristotle still insisted that people are not in fact born equal, either, physically mentally or in other respects, so that, the classification of equality between human beings remains of necessity a mere formality (Aristotle, Op. Cit.).

Amartya Sen added his voice: "Even though such rhetoric as (all men are born equal) is typically taken to be part and parcel of egalitarianism, the effect of ignoring the interpersonal variations can in fact, be deeply in egalitarian..." (Amartya Sen, Op. Cit). Every attempt to construe inequality and amend it in many system of life ends up in inequality. It is upon this stand that Ucheaga, (2000:6), posited this question saying, there is a consensus among modern political theorists that society must treat its members equally in some respects. But what are the respects and in what order of priorities remain a point of contention?

In African communalism, every man is ontologically equal with the other and yet equal in virtually every other respect. For Heidegger, every man is old enough to die. In death, everybody is equal; death is a leveller. It is a common human experience from East to West, North to South. In some other societies, there is no right to life, property, etc. In African society, there is equality with regard to relationship as it is one of the cardinal features of life in Africa. Maurier even in the bid to stress its importance made it the kernel of basis of African ontology. Man is equally free to engage in the exercise of manipulation, that is in the deployment or management of all the other realities of life, as the universe is centred on man. Manipulation 'is a permanent activity' for Maurier. There is equality of opportunity for anyone to express himself, as one is required to participate in the 'doings in the community in order to be acceptable to the community. Amartya Sen remarked that every normative theory of social arrangement that has all stood the test of time seems to demand equality of something-something that is regarded as particularly important in that theory, (12.). Thomas Nagel talks of economic equality, Dworkin talks of equality of resources, Rawls talks of equal liberty. In Africa, all these are emphasized because virtually everything concerning the individual could be said to be appropriated by the community's appraisal. The cardinal focus remains that the 'I' is in the 'We', communal demands takes precedence over individual demands. On account of liberty and equality, there is respect too, which is at the basis of responsibility.

Even when community demand is seemingly compulsion among the Africans, it does not vitiate individual responsibility since our system is a collective response. Man being a creature and creator of culture, making use of his will, indicates continual acceptance of the underlying principles in a place if he continues to be there; for consent remains the highest degree of freedom; and freedom has rights, privileges and responsibilities or obligations attached to it. "An individual is responsible for those actions and consequences which he does or brings about intentionally, that is, those actions he does from choice. In other words, he does what he does knowing what he is doing and being able to do otherwise" (Nze, 1989:18).

Although in makings choices, the individual takes into consideration not only his interests but those of others as unselfish interests have no place in communalism which is tied head to toe by collectivist interests. The individual is still responsible for his actions because he has the obligation to act in such way. Nze pointed out "Since it is the action of the individual because of his values and obligations, then he is responsible for his actions and their consequences because of his psychological and cultured dependence on his community" (1989:18).

In African communalism, which is rooted on Igbo-African ontology, with the unitary perception of the universe which engineers the idea of holism, every individual is socially responsible not only to others but for the harmonious wholeness of the entire system. The individual shall do this because his wellbeing too is dependent on it, for he is not separated and cannot be separated from the community. What affects one affects the other. This is because according to Temples (1959:60) "the world of forces is held like a spider's web of which no single thread can be caused to vibrate without shaking the whole net-work. You can observe that there is not only individual responsibility, there is equally collective responsibility. "In as much as African communalism is concerned, there is a patterned responsibility accorded to each member of the family (society). Accordingly, every member of the family has the responsibility of contributing towards the upkeep and development of the (sic) society" (Ikegbu, 2003:35).

It is not uncommon to see mechanisms designed and perfected whereby individuals' acts are rewarded by the community, as we have awards in our present day society which should depict those who have shown themselves socially responsible. (Today most awards have been politicised). The kind of appropriation in communalism does not connote domination or involve alienation and exploitation in other systems for the individual has responsibility towards the community and vice versa. It is not surprising therefore to observe that there were no idlers, loiterers, beggars in traditional Igbo-African society. Since these principles are manifested in the cultural sphere, let us then examine the manifestations of communalism in the economic, social and political aspects of our existence (life).

Communalism in the Social, Political and Economic Life of the Africans

In the consideration of African social life and value, it is equally good to point out that everyone is related to every other one, as decipherable in the Igbo-African names like 'nwanne', my brother, 'nwanne', my sister and 'nwadi' my cosine, etc. This relatedness extends even to the spirit world, for daily or yearly Africans are in the habit of pouring libation, through which they express in-depth relationship with the living dead, ancestors and spirits. Based on the African ontology, Onyewuenyi remarked that the Africans intend "to strengthen the spirits in turn so as to enable them continue in their intercessory service for the living, which is the essence of the deathless existence of the spirits and God (1984:27). The groups in African social unit are not held together by contract, rather they are held in a cob-web kind of network by not only biological ties, blood tie, kinship tie but equally by the immanent spirit of the clan. So, he is not only a social being as was observed by Mbiti saying: "In traditional African society, the individual cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole" (1969:109). He is not just social; he is a communal, communitarian being, a being-in-relation, a being-with, a being-for, and a being integrated to the holistic functioning of reality. Even among forces in the Igbo-African world, there are interactions.

Nwala, (1985:167) observed that African political community is a spiritual commonwealth, which comprises the living, the dead and even the gods of the community. Although collective action is the underlying principle in Africa, on account of the hierarchy of being some people like the elders or chiefs or priests are in positions of authority and as such they exercise a kind of influence in the interaction of forces. The truth is that the chief does not rule single-handedly irrespective of the fact that mostly the three functions of government are reposed in him. The political manifestation is based on our ontology for the chief remains the custodian, hence a link between the living and the dead of the community he oversees. The life force is made to flow through him, so as to reach the rest. The chief is not on his own, but for his people and community.

In all these manifestations: the economic, social and political tend to point at a unique world-view which flows from the ontology of the Igbo-Africans. This is where being is seen as a force and vice versa, and there is interaction among these forces. These manifestations are seen in relation to our attitude towards life and are as rings around the spiritual and central attitude of the people.

The economic life of Africans is not an exception. Its existence must rather be a co-existence, in relation with the others, or else one would not have time and energy for other vital

affairs if one must do everything by himself? Africans see land as the key means of production. Their economic life, therefore depend on land. It is as a result of this dependence that land is sacred. Each member of the community owns a piece of land. To deny him land is to deny him life. The head of the family or clan is the custodian of the land which is communally owned and he had to sacrifice to 'Ala' – the earth goddess constantly yearly to ensure productivity. Though we say that an individual owns a piece of land, it is communally owned. (Uduigwomen, 2002) states that the ultimate right of disposal (of land) outside the tribe was essential tribal owned, (27) Economic life tended to be essentially communal. Mboya argued that it was believed that every member of society exercised tremendous control in all aspects of life. It was this belief that gave rise to the logic and practice of equality and the acceptance of communal ownership of the vital means to life-land. Nyerere points towards the communitarian and collective spirit as he states: “That the individual or the families within the tribe were 'rich' or 'poor' according to whether the whole tribe was rich or poor. If the tribe prospered, all the members of the tribe shared its prosperity” (1968:9).

Look at the above manifestations of the Africans in their different communal life style, they live and existed as one family. Colour was never a barrier within their socio-political history, as well as in all the above manifested activities in the lives of the Africans. They were still found together, appreciating each other in whatever they shared. It is in the spirit of all we have seen above that we can really appreciate the importance of Negritude both as a philosophy, ideology, philosophy or spirit of Africa. Below we will see that indeed Negritude as ideology best explains who we are as a people and gives insight into how the **theory** and **praxis** of communalism can be better appreciated.

The Negritude and African Communalism

Negritude as an ideology was only a differentiating factor between the Europeans (Whites) and the Africans (Blacks). While the Blacks appreciate their colour, the Whites did not reject theirs. It was never a discriminating factor or a measure of superiority. Among the Africans, colour never played any role in their communal life and activities.

With Western influence and the ideas of some scholars like Bergson, some eminent Francophone scholars at the time gave Negritude an ideology with a different meaning. It then began to negatively affect African communalism, which cut across social, political, economic and especially the cultural life of the African man. It was also observed that Negritude at the time “impregnated not only poetry and the novel in Africa but also African research in all the different human sciences,” a meticulous knowledge of affiliations is most necessary to decide to what extent the self-appointed African philosophy is authentic, expressive of African indigenous thought (Wauthier, 1979:22). It affected the Africans and African life so much that even the existence of African philosophy was in doubt. Bergson's philosophy so influenced Negritude that the impact was felt not only on the established concept, but also on the methodological, and ideological filiations. However, it also raises the question of knowing where Negritude departed from Bergsonism and to what extent this bifurcation inaugurated a distinctly African discourse especially when we are concerned with one of the deepest African culture or better still value, in the name of communalism.

Our concern here is not basically on the Bergsonian Epistemology, connecting Negritude with Western philosophical positions via the debate opposing the defenders of reason and those who rebelled against its dominance. Nor the influential trend of Western thinker, the Cartesians, whose philosophical project had promised to bring nature as well as human desires, social environment, and aspirations under the governance of reason. Our concern here is mainly on what level of influence Western interpretation of Negritude has on the African socio-political life. Was this European background of a receding authority of reason enough to inspire Negritude's radical profession of non-rationality? Blackness in the manner of Senghor and Césaire, seem to be looking at Africans in their colour as backwardness and primitivism, since the Western world began to feel that progress in some aspects of life could mean regress in other areas of life, (Kebede, 1995). This is to suggest that African progress in their cultural belief could mean regress in the area of modern civilization.

A little reflection into the connection between French culture in general and Negritude can be used to settle the issue pertaining to the alleged difference between French and British colonial methods. Truly in no small measure has this affected the African socio-political life. This is because seeing Negritude as a brain child of the French soil, with the French assimilationist policy, as opposed to the British system of indirect rule, one will understand that the forced assimilation brought about a reaction of "passionate exaltation of the black race" in lieu of the restraint that prevailed in the British colonies of Africa, (Irele, 1981:68). A distinction of this nature between the two colonial powers is hopelessly futile; in both cases we find the same policy of "reduction and acculturation", (Mudimbe, 1988:68). If at all it means something, it must be that the French outcry against the supremacy of reason was more conducive to an exalted assertion of Blackness than the subdued atmosphere of British empiricism. However, our concern here is not mainly on the epistemological content of Negritude but rather as it affects on the African person or their Africanity, (Africanness) that is, in what really makes them Africans.

Besides, the geographical entity known as Africa cannot be classified as a national community, nor defined in terms of a common language, culture or world view. Ideologically, the northern part of Africa, predominantly Muslim, identifies more with the Arab world than with Sub-Shara Africa. According to Southern Africa's policy of apartheid, until recently whites have not considered themselves as Africans; indeed, the whole idea of apartheid has been aimed at dehumanizing Africans on the basis of colour. Whites have their affiliations with the Caucasians of Western Europe and the United States as the home of their forebears. Thus, we are left with the sub-Saharan southwest and central Africa, often referred to as the "real" Africa or "Black Africa", they are the Negros, (JahnheinzJahn, 1961:19-21). Yet there are the African Americans (courtesy of the Reverend Jesse Jackson) and the African Caribbeans (so-called "Black Souls in a white world") who by accident or design are black migrants or descendants of former slaves. There are the offspring of intermarriages between Africans and non-Africans. These people are popularly known as half-casts and often battle with the challenge of their true identity (Downs, 1972). Who then wears the African badge; is it possible to have in-between Africans or people more or less African than others? So why not appreciate the Africans for who they are, black or white?

Negritude and its Effect on Socio-Political Life of Africans

On Socio-political life of Africans, colour does not seem to provide the ultimate answer to the question of African identity. There are many light-skinned people in Africa, just as there are so many dark-skinned people in other parts of the world. It is, however, noteworthy that most of the attempts at identifying the African, even by Africans themselves, have never quite succeeded in getting away from the question of colour. One possible explanation is the fact that the human mind often tends to work within established categories such that opinions earlier held tend to influence subsequent views. Some of the theories proffered as to the content of Africanity lean heavily on the question of race and colour. Negritude is one such theory. *The question of race*, the African does not pass simply, like any other person, but is always considered minutely with uncanny curiosity. Frantz Fanon shares his personal experience:

The schema of my normal body experience had dissolved, attacked at several points, gave way and was replaced by a schema that was racial and epidemic. In the train, I was responsible at one and the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I looked at myself objectively, discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics. And I understand all that was being held against me: cultural backwardness, fetishism, slavery, cannibalism. I wanted to be a human being, nothing more than a human being, (1967:114).

As a result of this kind of situation, many African Americans wanted to become white to liberate themselves from the burdensome memory represented by a more highly pigmented skin; others wanted to seek their salvation in the acquisition of the African heritage in the new-fangled spirit of Pan-Africanism.

The grand division of humanity as Caucasoid, Negroid, and Mongoloid seems to be altogether arbitrary. For instance, the blacks in India or Sri Lanka do not look like the Bantus in Africa. Nor can one accurately point to differences in mental and intellectual endowments as criteria since geniuses as well as dunces exist in every camp. That is why we decided to consider a little of Bergsonian Epistemology. Another fallacy, based on an incomplete understanding of the theory of evolution, is the idea that some races have some of what have been termed "primitive" features such as hairiness, thinness or thickness of lips or heels, etc (Downs, 1972). The point here is that there is no justification to be drawn from history, geography, sociology, anthropology, or anatomy to support the idea of one race being innately superior to another. The percentage of people who are battling with this mental challenge even among Africans themselves is surprising. One such person is Leopold Sedar Senghor of Ivory Coast. *Rationalizing with color Senghor's Negritude* sees the common factor of Africanity as consisting in the state of being black or Negritude. This is clearly an extrinsic and superficial analysis. He describes Negritude as:

The whole complex of civilized values, cultural, economic, social and political which characterize the black peoples, or precisely the Negro-African world. All these values are essentially formed by *intuitive reason*, which expresses itself *emotionally through self-surrender . . . through myths . . . and above all, through primordial rhythms synchronized with those of the cosmos*, (Senghor, 1972:250).

These values, according to Senghor, consist in the sense of communion, the gift of myth-making, and the gift of rhythm. Negritude is community-based: communal and not collectivistic. Though socialist in character, it is founded on spiritual and democratic values.

Senghor's analysis understandably met with criticism in that he, among other things, advocated a process of miscegenation which hopefully would get rid of the dark pigmentation over the generations. He also considers the African as emotional rather than rational: "Emotion is black, ... reason is Greek, (Senghor, 1964:24)." When confronted with these things, Senghor in a work he titled, *On African Socialism*, was not about to change his views, expressed thus: "Young people have criticized me for reducing Negro-African knowledge to pure emotion, for denying that there is an African 'reason.' ... I should like to explain myself once again. ... *European reasoning is analytical, discursive by utilisation; Negro-African reasoning is intuitive by participation*" (1964:74).

As if to complete his coup de grace, Senghor ventures into the area of epistemology and claims that African epistemology starts from a different basic postulate: "He (the African) does not realise that he thinks; he feels that he feels, he feels his existence, he feels himself" (Iroegbu, 1984:64). Hence his epistemology begins with the premise following Rene Descartes, "I feel, therefore I am."

Senghor never said how he came about this outrageous conclusion and on what basis such stereotypes, can claim validity. One would wonder if such conclusions were a result of some careful thought or an attempt to confirm his assertion that Africans feel rather than reason. For that matter, Bergson represents the philosophical culmination of the French protest against the rule of reason. But this characterisation falls short of indicating the specific contributions of Bergson unless it brings out the sharp and resounding concepts by which Bergson articulated and redefined the spiritual ambience. The appropriation of these special conceptual tools as well as arguments was crucial for Negritude's crusade against historicism and Eurocentrism. What is said here is no mere speculation, since Senghor himself has overtly hailed the appearance of Bergson's *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (Trans- 1960) as "the revolution of 1889, (209)." It was a revolution because it had a profoundly upsetting effect on art, literature, and science through the suggestion that "facts and matter, which are the objects of discursive reason, were only the outer surface that had to be transcended by *intuition* in order to achieve a vision *in-depth of reality*" (Senghor, 1988:105-209).

In the above thoughts of Senghor, it became obvious that his effort is to reconcile African socio-political activities with the concept of Negritude. As such we are to look at the inner being not the colour in all our activities be it social, political, economic or cultural. Though our different minds, understanding and ideology have been affected directly or indirectly by the foreign meaning of Negritude in our views of the African socio-political life, this paper calls for a redirection of the mindset.

Conclusion

Communalism as a system of life is one of the characteristics of African people. It is a system of life where Africans work and live together. The existence of one is dependent on the other. It is a system of life that is based on 'I – 'Thou' relationship. Communalism is a life style in which one lives and exists because others are living and existing. It is a system of life devoid of any

form of discrimination either of colour or personality. All are considered equal not only on the socio-political African life but also on the economic and cultural activities of the African people. The advent of western invaders dealt a fatal blow on this noble African practice of communalism. This led to reactions from some African elites like Senghor and Aime who proposed an expounded Negritude as a remedy to the challenge. Unfortunately Negritude itself encountered some ideological challenges leading to serious criticisms by even Africans themselves.

In spite of these issues, Senghor insisted loudly that despite the derogatory attitude of the white imperialists, Africans should appreciate their colour and look unto black as *also essentially* good, beautiful, valid and genuine. He and other African writers and activists like Martin Luther King Jr. Malcom X, Franz Fanon, Nelson Mandela etc, kept impressing it on Africans to reject all forms of mental slavery and inferiority complex. Looking down on our colour will in the final analysis hinge the African identity precariously upon color, while ignoring the ontology which is the root of our personal identity. In-deed it is when Africans accept themselves for what/who they are, when they rejoice at their blackness as the symbol of African pride that they can really appreciate the theory and praxis of communalism. Communalism is hinged on equality for all. It is Africa's great gift to humanity in a world characterized by selfishness, division, religious bigotry/terrorism, racism, xenophobia and immoral capitalism.

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