

The Impact of the Belief in the Occult and the Paranormal on an African Socio-Political life

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Abstract

This paper claims that the belief in the occult and the paranormal in the African religious universe have impacted negatively on the African's socio-political life. Using at once a descriptive and analytical methods, it discovers that the attribution of some power to the occult or some invisible being is traceable to belief in 'bureaucratic monotheism,' divinities, divination, and forces. One finds out that this belief has translated itself into some form of socio-political god-fatherism in social relations, psychological fears, intellectual ineptitude, social and religious confusion, and exhaustion. The 'healing option,' which the article suggests as a way forward, is for the individual to engage in differentiated consciousness in order to restore sanity and clarity of thought and action in the socio-religious sphere. Such a line of action, the paper argues, will heal the African's cultural desolation, and the dissipation of intellectual, religious and socio-economic efforts in the quest for meaning or the Absolute.

Introduction

Europe and America are said to be living in the post-modernist age. The modern world was once built on the confidence and authority of reason and the celebrated corpuscular scientism.

René Descartes sought help, through his methodic doubt, in clear and distinct ideas, (See Descartes 1989: part 4, 30-31). Extolling reason like Descartes, Kant appeals to deep rooted distinctions between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* (See Kant 1990: par 5, 9), the conceptual and the empirical, and the necessary and the contingent in order to construct a philosophical foundation. The modernist world was built on the Enlightenment trust of reason: use of reason without appeal to another or any authority that sets itself as guardian (See Kant, 1990:

83). Thus, modernist philosophers extolled human reason, claiming that it is universal, and that it has “power to apprehend reality and prescribe for both theory and practice on the basis of a contextually purified rationality,” (Graham 1997: 41).

Post-modernists contend that the proposition on which the whole edifice of the Enlightenment project was built has become suspect, as they see in Immanuel Kant the clearest expression of the Enlightenment project. The Enlightenment trust in reason did not avoid the two world wars; and the stress on democratic and liberal values has not saved the world from further wars and production of weapons of mass destruction, (See Rengger 2013: 52-62). Post-modernists then insist that Kant’s philosophical foundation is no less an illusion than the rationalism which preceded it; hence Richard Rorty maintains that Kant’s misconceived ambition to transcend the historical situatedness of culture, by attempting to make philosophy ‘scientific’ and ‘rigorous’, failed as a historical passage of idea since it alienated philosophy from the rest of culture, (See Rorty 1979: 4-13). So, the trust in reason has become suspect; hence there is now a genuine search for what is beyond the illusion of reason. Postmodernism has come about because the world created exclusively by trust in reason has crumbled; people in the West now talk about post-modernism because they are now living in a world of failed promises, unfulfilled hopes and exhausted dreams. This has generated confusion, that is, the crisis that expresses itself in the inability of the Western person to have a proper hand on the knowledge of himself (Cassirer 1944: 8). There is then an identity crisis.

But where does Africa stand in the midst of Western crisis and consequent post-modernist engulfment? If the Western society underwent the three stages of theological through metaphysical to positive stage as proposed by August Comte, in what stage is Africa? The post-modernist revolt of the West occurred at the positive stage. Is Africa part of the post-modernist revolt? She is, if postmodernism is defined by a search beyond oneself occasioned by the crisis of identity and looking for an anchor beyond the self. Employing a descriptive and analytic method, the essay examines how the belief in the occult and the paranormal has influenced the African socio-political life, thereby acerbating the crisis for meaning and quest for what is beyond. The

essay discovers that the belief in the occult and paranormal has impacted negatively on the African socio-political psychic compounding his ability to make differentiated choices; hence a way out is suggested that is rooted in differentiated consciousness in order to restore wholeness to his fragmented life in the pursuit of meaning. To address this crisis, one should not be contented to be given a mere documentation of the malaise by philosophers and historians; one demands a full diagnosis of the disease, a full pathology if a consistent cure will be achieved. If the post-modernist crisis has awakened one to a cultural problem, then individual solutions are not enough.

This reflection will be conducted under five broad parts, namely: 1) the African quest for the beyond within the post-modernist context; 2) a brief understanding of African belief universe and its problems; 3) problems of social life in the midst of divinities and the community; 4) the resultant effects and problems of African belief systems on the socio-political life; and 5) the way out.

I

The African quest for the Beyond within the Post-Modernist Context

Post-modernism in African Context

Although Europe/West and Africa are living at the same time, they are not necessarily living in the same time because they are struggling with different concerns and developmental problems.

Whereas Europe is lapsing into a post-modernist crisis, a crisis created by a machine culture that seems to have eroded the space for the divine, and still must look for some immateriality beyond itself as she deals with the excesses of technological advancement, Africa is still bewailing the destruction of her traditional culture by European colonisers, struggling with the provision of basic necessities of life (food, shelter and clothing); waging a battle against preventable diseases and so on, as she is caught in a quest for the divine with a divided religious heritage (Christian/Islamic and African) to which she pays no complete allegiance. Hence one can say that Africa is steeped into a quest for the invisible into the theological stage, to use August Comte's description.

Although Africa and the West are not living in the same time (albeit they are living at the same time), the end product of their quest seems to be the same – the plunging into the non-material. Africa is seeking the occult and the paranormal as means to possess and control matter and humankind; the West is appealing to the spiritual horizon as a result of disappointment with the illusions of the material and the unprecedented claims of reason. In both, there is a quest for what is beyond. If post-modernism is a way of living with plurality, that is, with multiple images of social and religious reality, then one can talk about an African post-modernist culture.

Africa is living her own period of fragmentation, with cultural, social and religious distortions, although she is living at the same time with Europe and America, but she is not in the same time. In other words, Africa's concerns are, here, different; and in this analysis, one should heed Kwasi Wiredu's warning on how not to compare African life with European life or philosophy. For example, "instead of seeing the basic non-scientific characteristics of African traditional thought as typifying traditional thought in general, Western anthropologists and others besides have tended to take them as defining a peculiarly African way of thinking," (Wiredu 1998:193). If one knows that Africa and the West are not living in the same time at the same time, one puts the studies and comparisons in their right perspectives.

The belief in the occult and the paranormal involves the acceptance of supernatural, mystical and magical activities or things, as defined by *The Reader's Digest Oxford Wordfinder*, "beyond the scope of normal objective investigation or explanation." This article does not intend to give a historical investigation of the occult and paranormal in the African universe. The account here is a kind of phenomenological assessment of the belief in the African's existence, and how such a belief has impacted and shaped the individual and his universe. Africa's present problem of obsession with the occult and the paranormal needs a full account of the pathology, if some healing options are to be found. Thus, the identification of the problem with its subsequent diagnosis must be located where it belongs in the many fabrics of African life: African belief systems, and the community-individual identity. The healing options will find expression in

addressing the institution of culture of mediocrity, the subsequent poverty of aspiration and poverty of opportunity.

II

A Brief Understanding of African Belief Universe and its Problems

Belief in Divinities

The term, 'divinities,' broadly "covers personifications of God's activities and manifestations, the so-called 'nature spirits,' deified heroes, and mythological figures," (Mbiti 1975: 117). The belief in divinities, scholars argue, is a common phenomenon in West Africa. One, however, has to be aware of the apparent confusion that stems from the use of the word 'spirits' such that it "has been used to cover in certain areas both the categories of divinities and the general uncharacterised spirits," (Idowu 1975: 165). There are several divinities recognised by various cultural groups in Africa or more precisely by the West African section. A distinction can be made between principal and minor divinities. Principal divinities are part of the original order of things or what David A. Ihenacho calls *Community Deities*, because of individual community's attachment to them: "The members of this category of divinities were conceived as naturally disembodied spirits or deities that were dedicated to or adopted by particular communities as their guardian spirits. They were usually associated with some form of active power that they were said to employ to the advantages of the members of their adopted communities," (Ihenacho 2012: 475). The principal deities include the *Ani* or *Ala* among the Igbo or *Aje* in Idoma land, and the cults of solar and thunder divinities in most regions of West Africa. These divinities are co-eval with the coming into being of the cosmos. The minor divinities are no more than ancestors and heroes who have been deified. The Idem people have innumerable minor divinities. From his study, J. S. Mbiti highlights that the Edo people of South Eastern Nigeria have several divinities according to human needs, activities and experiences, and their cults are recognised as such; for "one is connected with wealth, human fertility, and supply of children (Oluku); another is iron (Ogu), another of medicine (Osu), and another of death (Ogiuwu)," (Mbiti 1975: 119). Bolaji Idowu testifies that the number of divinities in Yoruba tradition is variously put at 201, 401, 600, or 1700. The Dinkas classify divinities according as they correspond to

the lived experience of Dinka people. The two kinds are, namely, the free and clan divinities. Free divinities are *Deng* -- associated with rain, fertility, and so on, *Abak* -- with mother role, *Garang* -- an epitome of father/son relationship. In the class of free divinities is also the bad one called *Macardit* associated with death. On the other hand, the clan divinities are permanent and ideal values of clan relationships expressed in a symbolic form: a *totem*, living, or non-living.

Divinities, Diviners and Mediation

The whole effort to search for information, by humans, in the domain of the sacred is the province of divination. Divination, according to John Beatie, is “the endeavour to obtain information about future things or otherwise removed from ordinary perception by consulting informants other than human,” (1987: 211). The diviner is a human agent who receives and deciphers pieces of information and signs in the spirit world and interprets them to his client. With his spiritual foresight, the diviner can reconnect the past, foretell the future, and read the figure both on earth and in the spirit world. Thus, on a wider context, divination is “not only a means of discovering things to come but is also used to uncover past secrets, and to smell out witches and sorcerers,” (Ibid.,119). Divinities can force themselves on man as forces. They have no hand or physical existence to fight with man. For example, people believe that the *Agwu* (tormenting spirit) in Igbo religion has a physical and non-physical way of tormenting his *possessed* (the patient). It can torment for good or for bad; it can make one rich or poor, richer or poorer, but it is all left for the person involved to seek the help of the diviner who would decipher what is in view for the *onye-agwu na-edede* (the one possessed by the spirit of *agwu*) - the client.

Mediation is the act or process of producing or procuring agreement or reconciliation between people, persons, parties or orders of existence. The fact of divinities as mediators or spirit/spiritualised intercessors is very common in the belief system of African Traditional Religion (*ATR*). The idea of mediation in the African conceptual schemes, as Aylward Shorter expresses, is more dynamic and vital. Against this backdrop, Shorter makes a trenchant remark that “the intermediary is not considered to be a barrier to communication, rather he is an essential channel of communication at solemn and important moments

of social life,” (Shorter 1975: 102). The implication of this observation is that divinities are not just mere messengers or disinterested informants, but are essentially intermediaries in the true sense of the word. Apart from divinities, humans can also be mediators.

Ancestors, divinities and territorial spirits are experienced as mediators between man and the Supreme Being -- who is believed to be the ultimate source of all blessings, rain, good harvests, plentiful meat and honey, victory in war, peace at home. Benefits are mediated through these divinely instituted intermediaries, (See Ibid.) Granted this role of mediation of values of life and well-being, it is logical that divinities are seen as sources of force (power). However, intermediaries can become barriers for the channel can be manipulated.

Divinities and their Activities: Problem with Function of Divinities

Divinities are functionaries in the theocratic government of the Supreme Being. As intermediaries between man and the Supreme Deity, they are entrusted with certain roles. A divinity, *Mawu-Lisa*, in Dahomey belief system, apportioned the kingdoms of the sky, the sea and the earth among six of his offsprings plus his seventh offspring who is both the divine-messenger and the inspector general in African pantheons. *Eri*, in Nri Igbo myth of origin, organised for Awka blacksmiths “to use bellows to dry the flooded land.” When *Olodumare* wanted to form the marshy, wet, monotony below the sky heavens into a solid earth, he commissioned *Orisa-nla* and equipped him with the necessary materials, (See Awolalu and Dopamu 1987:55). On an errand to survey the firmament, *Edo*, a female divinity lost her way, and spraying the lumps of *nzu* (white chalk) *Chukwu* gave her, she made the earth, (See Ibid., 57-58). This membership in the theocratic government, although conceived as ‘refractions’ or modes or qualities of Supreme Being, as Shorter calls it, attracts the allegation that the Supreme Being and the divinities are worshipped together (Shorter 1975: 100); hence the problem one has with belief in divinities.

Problem with Belief in Divinities

However, one must not lose sight of the fact that there are other hurdles to be overcome in the theological or philosophical conception of divinities as mediators. First, a shrewd reflection reveals that belief in

divinities could lend itself, if care is not taken, to mental creation of objects of worship, which can be perpetuated by priest-craft. Second, the African needs to do more research on the divinity system. This affair is still beclouded with some obscurities: for instance, that there are many mediators is not disputed, but after the Supreme Being, Chukwu in Igbo religion, which divinity ranks next in the order of hierarchy? Is it *igwe* (sky), *anyanwu* (the sun), *amuma* (lightening), *ala* (the mother earth), *ndiche* or *nnannanyi ha* (ancestors)? It does not seem worshippers are agreed on the order yet. Thus, the Igbo African religious universe, for example, is enmeshed in causal traffic between the Supreme Being and the divine beings or divinities. At this juncture, it is important to say a few words on the concept of 'force' as applied to *ATR*.

Belief in Forces

Edward Tylor, in 1871, invented the claim that inanimate objects have souls/spirits - a belief system purportedly called *animism*; Tylor's view attracted the criticisms of scholars, who regarded his claim as a minimalist view of religion, (although this belief was already in the ancient philosophers, an idea which Aristotle admired also, who seemed to attribute soul to everything) (See Aristotle, 1984 Book 1). As a refinement of the word 'animism,' in 1899, R. R. Marett came up with what she considered to be a substitute called 'animatism,' the belief in impersonal spiritual power or a life-force pervading all things, (See Parrinder 1975: 20-21).

Placid Tempels conceives that behind African belief, there is a vital force. The supreme value of the Bantu, which Temples describes as force, forceful living or vital force, embodies in it that which serves to acquire vigour or vital forces, to live forcibly, to reinforce life, or to assure its continuity in their descendants, (See Tempels 1998: 430-431). Edwin Smith preferred to use the word 'dynamism,' that is, "the belief in and the practices associated with the belief in hidden, mysterious, super-sensible, pervading energy, powers, potencies, forces," (Parrinder 1975: 21). 'Dynamism' fares no better than the other invented epithets. Some parts of West Africa call vigour in the living *nyama*. *Nyama* is also a name used for God (in Ghana). In any case, to reduce God to mere *nyama*, as vital-force theorist hold, is simply wrong. The present writer concurs with Parrinder that it is

reasonable to say that *nyama* is a psychic element, which people such as woodcarvers, blacksmiths, hunters, orators, priests and chiefs as well as witches have, in different degrees. Power, force, or the psychic insight (translated variously in different tribes as *kofi*, *ire*, *ashe*, *ike*, etc.) can be positively or negatively used and applied at will on people, for it “may be used for conveying justice, vengeance, or hatred, it survives death and never perishes,” (Ibid., 22).

In Igbo tradition, medicine men, sorcerers and priests, magicians are believed to have *ike* (power or force) which can be sent to act or influence people from a distance. Divinities or deities also have force and they can manipulate or influence people either for good or bad, materially or spiritually. Furthermore, *ATR* believes that there is dynamism in charms, medicines or latent powers in things out there that can be tapped.

The African type of Monotheism and Belief in Divinities

Some critics claim that scholars of African origin have an uphill task in reconciling the belief in divinities with a monotheistic conception of the Supreme Being in *ATR*. Thus, it is not strange to read in manuals of Histories of religion or Comparative histories of religion that African belief system is essentially polytheistic. For example, Onwuejeogwu, in delivering his *Ahiajoku Lecture*, thinks that the various names or attribute of the Supreme Being in Igbo make allowance for the co-existence of monotheistic and polytheistic dogmas in Igbo theology, (See Onwuejeogwu 1987: 61-62).

Although Onwuejeogwu says that complex dogmas were at once monotheistic and polytheistic, his articulation of the activities of Igbos’ *Chukwu* shows that he does not indicate which part of the *Nri* dogma was a manifestation of polytheism. The way he arrives at *Okike*, *agbala*, *anyanwu* and *chi* shows that these are various manifestations of *Chukwu*. The word *Okike*, which he puts in capital letters, is very confusing. It is possible that it could be understood as another name for *Chukwu* since the name *Okike* is a way of emphasising the attribute of *Chukwu* as a Creator. If this reading is correct, then nothing in the passage from Onwuejeogwu’s lecture portrays a polytheistic understanding in Igbo belief system. Therefore, *Chukwu* and *Okike* are not two different entities expressed by two words, but two terms,

which are used for the Supreme Being: (There could be a danger of seeing the words *Chukwu* and *Okike* as two different Supreme beings. Again, Onwuejeogwu does not make it clear that he wishes us to understand him in that line. Although, he capitalised the word *okike*, we cannot say that *Okike* is meant to be taken as another Supreme Being other than *Chukwu*, notwithstanding the fact that the word *polytheism* appears in his presentation. In fact, he has not explained in what way, from what he has summarized as Nri theological dogmas, Nri religious civilization has some clear polytheistic pinning). *Mmuo* and other named deities such as *ala*, *oye*, and so on do not rank with *Chukwu*. Their presence in the Igbo religious universe does not necessarily imply polytheism.

Idowu is aware of this charge that ATR is essentially polytheistic; hence he seeks with approval the insight offered by Paul Tillich on the concept of polytheism. "Polytheism," Tillich writes, is "a qualitative and not a quantitative concept. It is not a belief in a plurality of gods but rather the lack of a unifying and transcending ultimate which determines its character," (Tillich 1953: 246; See Idowu 1975: 166). The point in polytheism then is not the reference given to many deities as the lack of a unifying and transcending Being that determines the ground of all in the theocratic universe.

ATR shows respect for divinities but it does not deny a theocratic government under a unifying Being. All African societies have not only a name for the Supreme Being but see Him or Her as the final arbiter and the source and end of all life-roads. The divinities are said not to compete with the Ultimate Being. ATR worshippers look beyond divinities to *Chukwu*, *Nyama*, etc. However, the point remains that belief in divinities seems to be immediate in their consciousness.

One may insist that ATR is not a polytheistic religion as it is long misrepresented. ATR is a monotheistic, albeit with its peculiar nature. This peculiarity modifies its characteristic monotheistic viewpoints. As Idowu correctly explains, "the modification is however inevitable because of the presence of other divine beings within the structure of the religion," (Idowu 1975: 168). The monotheism of the type of ATR is 'diffused' or 'bureaucratic monotheism.' In this belief system, the Supreme Being is so accommodating that he allots functions to other

lesser beings who constitute his cabinet while the universe unequivocally remains under a unitary theocratic government. Every African, as Mbiti reiterates, recognises one God. There are divinities, yet people do not lose sight of the one Supreme God who is regarded in a class of his own, (Mbiti 1975: 29). But this bureaucratic monotheism seems to have spelt the undoing of the Supreme Being! How?

A Displaced or hidden God: The Problem with Bureaucratic Monotheism

The divinities arguably have creative activities that show the eruption of the sacred into the world (a hierophany), occasioning the charge that because of the enormous power wielded by them, the Supreme Being has abdicated his throne for the divinities both in creative activities and in the mind of worshippers. Idowu succinctly formulates this objection levelled against ATR that the Supreme Deity is “never approached directly by Africans or that, if he is called upon directly at all, it is only in moments of crises and desperation when all other aids have failed,” (Idowu 1975: 171). Critics insist that the Supreme Being in ATR is a *Deus obscurdatus* -- a hidden God, and people have settled with effects of powers than with the source itself. First, it must be pointed out that concealment is not the same as absence, for concealment is a divine attribute; that something is hidden does not presuppose that it is absent.

However, the absence of a hidden God replaced by the presence of multiply divine beings is beginning might raise some concern! Why? Although believed to exist and existentially in-charge of a theocratic universe, the Supreme Being appears to be effectively hidden, albeit concealment, we have said, is not co-extensive with absence. It does give the impression that in the horizon of the hidden God, divinities occupy everywhere. And the fear is that a world replaced by divinities is a capricious world steeped into superstition and magic!

Superstitious and Magical Attitudes

Both superstition and magic are manifestations of attitudes that can be directed to something beyond oneself. In superstition, one deals with an irrational fear of the unknown or mysterious or a misdirected reverence. The object of worship in a superstition is treated with fear and kept at arm’s length. Magical rites do not form part of the organised orthodox order; hence they are regarded as illicit, albeit

beliefs in such rights might satisfy psychological needs of people, (See Agha 2012: 126, 149). Again in magic, the perceived source of power is coerced for selfish ends. Colin Wilson writes:

And what is, in fact, the source of philosophy – or, for that matter, of any knowledge? It is fundamentally the need of power. You have only to watch the face of a baby who has just learned how to open a door by turning the handle, to understand what knowledge is *for*. In the twentieth century, power has become a suspect word, because it has become associated with the idea of power over people. But that is its least important application. One of the fundamental myths of magic concerns the magician who seeks political power; he receives a number of warnings, and if he persists, he is destroyed. Political power strengthens the ego; magical power rises from the subconscious, from the non-personal urge,” (Wilson 1979: 47-48).

In fact, the quest for the magical can be presented as a search for the miraculous, that is, “the sudden sense of meanings, far bigger than oneself, that make all personal preoccupations seem trivial,” (Ibid., 48). In the search for the miraculous, both the sacred and the profane converge; politics and magic emerge, and can be presented as a religious quest or manifested in religious attitudes

‘Everyone,’ in Nigeria, has become so ‘religious’; never in the political history of this country have so many religious slogans have been used into politics in the Third Republic: ‘Power belongs to God,’ ‘Redemption Agenda,’ ‘To God be the glory,’ ‘Anointed by God,’ ‘Divine Mandate’ ‘Revival’ and so on. To canonise this ‘religioicised’ attitude of politics or a politicised attitude of religion, pastors have become political visionaries and soothsayers; hence they can ‘forecast’ or ‘tell’ so and so politician that God has revealed that he/she will become the next governor, president or senator. So, people pray; everyone worships or goes to church. Every place has become a church ground, both leaders and led alike ‘wear’ religion around themselves. Yet, the masses are as gullible as their corrupt leaders. All conduct their affairs in a politically or religiously managed state deception,

where irreligiosity is propagated with a brainwashing religious zeal. F. U. Okafor could not have better described the typical Nigerian with an ambiguous socio-religious outlook who graduates in a socio-political treachery or fraud, and religious syncretism and anarchism that assigns him a special social category as “homo Nigerianus”; referring to the *Homo Nigerianus*, Okafor declares: “He is deeply superstitious but pretends to be religious. A professor in Malta analysing the characteristics and capabilities of **Homo Nigerianus** came to a firm conclusion that there are three species of human beings on earth namely, the whites, the blacks and the Nigerians. So also I conclude that we have Homo faber, Homo sapiens and **Homo Nigerianus**,” (2006: 16). A sceptic then dictates that humans themselves have taken control: they create their own object of worship, and call it their own god. Genuine religious people evidently see the eclipse of God!

The Eclipse of God

Magic and superstition are two combined aberrations of religious attitude. They trickle down into the post-modernist ‘religiocism’ of the street. One uses the word ‘religiocism’ to denote a hunger for something beyond but with misguided external acts of religion and confused religious consciousness. And this produces a social and religious psychosis: humanism without depth and religion without God. Of late, one seems to think that the African *Deus obscurditus*, rightly or wrongly, is establishing itself into an eclipse of God in the lives of believers. God has become estranged because of the irreligious in the purported religious acts of those who claim to align with him!

The many injustices committed in the name of God have made some to argue for an interdict to be placed on the Divine name. An acquaintance queried Martin Buber:

How can you bring yourself to say ‘God’ time after time? How can you expect that your readers will take the word in the same in which you wish it to be taken? What you mean by the name of God is something above all human grasp and comprehension, but in speaking about it you have lowered it to human conceptualisation. What word of human speech is so misused, so defiled, so desecrated as this! All the

innocent blood that has been shed for it has robbed it of its radiance. All the injustice that it has been used to cover has effaced its features. When I hear the highest called 'God,' it sometimes seems almost blasphemous, (Buber 1988:7).

In the name of God, humans end up into crazy and absurd deeds, create scapegoats and hold them responsible for their misfortune. And the fact is that those who call for ban on the Divine name seem to be right, at least to safeguard the name for further abuse. Perhaps one needs to call for that ban in a country like Nigeria that is so religious so corrupt, so superstitious and magical in its religious and political affairs. The human and the irreligious element in religion and politics should be checked, and should not be forced on people in the name of God, God in whose name all kinds of injustice and wrong are committed and referred to for authorisation, (See *Ibid.*, 8). Buber further reminds us that "when we look at the history of a historical religion, we see the reoccurrence in different periods and phases of an inner battle which remains essentially the same. It is the struggle of the religious element against the non-religious elements which invade it from all sides – metaphysics, gnosis, magic, politics, etc. This medley seeks to take the place of the flowing life of faith which is renewed in the flux" (*Ibid.*, 34); hence the prophetic protests against the non-religious in religion: "It is a struggle for the protection of lived concreteness as the meeting-place between the human and the divine," (*Ibid.*, 35). This protest must find expression in a better differentiated consciousness, in order to separate the religious from the non-religious.

The Problem of merging the Sacred and the Profane

Some African scholars affirm that in Africa there is no distinction between the sacred and the profane, that is, an African is so religious that he does not make a distinction between the sphere of the religious and the non-religious. J. S. Mbiti, for example, believes that there is no need to compartmentalise African world to see which side is philosophical, religious or social. Religion, according to him, permeates all aspect of the life of the African, is discerned "in terms of beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and religious officiants," (Mbiti 1989: 1). He claims that philosophy, unlike religion, cannot be observed in terms of specific acts of people who engage in it. However, he is convinced

that philosophy concerns itself with people's lives; and it is in the study of African religious acts that one can discover the philosophy behind them. He writes that "philosophical systems of different African peoples have not yet been formulated, but some of the areas where they may be found are in the religion, proverbs, oral traditions, ethics and morals of the society concerned," (Ibid., 1-2). So, philosophy is found in the history, culture and religion of Africans. Thus, it is needless to talk of a specialised discipline called philosophy; philosophy permeates the whole of African life, Mbiti insists. No wonder, in writing about African religion, Mbiti claims to be holding an inclusive stand about philosophy. The different cultural acts, such as initiation and dance, are channels of cumulative activity through which people express and understand their place in the world. Religion and philosophy intermingle, so the sacred and the profane mix safely in each other. According to Mbiti, where you see an African, there you see his religion and his philosophy as well. Like Mbiti, Izu M. Onyeocha merges the sacred and the profane (Onyeocha 1997: 130, 153); so also G. Ekwuru, in his *The Pangs of an African Culture in Travail*, accepts the merging of natures or spheres of existence in the African belief universe (Ekwuru 1999: 62-63, 73); however, in discussing religious art and genre specification, in a later book, he recognises a 'religious art' on its own right as distinct from any art work. The content of religious arts is religious beliefs; Ekwuru asserts the artist employment of conventional cannons gotten from the area of the profane does not blur the distinction between *religious* and *artistic-aesthetic* ideas, (See Ekwuru 2009: 244-248). So, in discussing artistic expressions within the religious parlance, one alleges that Ekwuru abandons the merging of the sacred and the profane spheres in Igbo socio-religious universe. A. N. O. Ekwunife concurs with the idea of collapsing the sacred with the profane when he said that "the African world does not seem to tolerate the modern distinction between the temporal and spiritual spheres; the sacred and the secular..." (2011: 25). The claim, according to Ekwunife, is that the African believes that nothing in the physical world happens without being influenced by the spiritual. Certainly, this belief might guide actions in the human realm, and, sometimes, make *one* deny responsibility for any action, blaming the spiritual realm! But this is immediately an argument in favour of merging the sacred with the profane.

One reads Ekwuru's words: "The traditional rationality in its functional ontological framework merges all natures and cancels the distinction between the real or the objective experience and illusions, facts and fantasy, absolute and truth and error," (Ekwuru 1999: 62-63); that is, the sacred and the profane, the subject and the object all are merged. But one insists that it is a conceptual weakness for one to be unable to make distinctions; although the denial of distinction between the sacred and profane is not a denial of interaction between them, neither does an admission of distinction between them necessitate a denial of interaction between them. The point is that if conceptually a subject cannot take a distance from the object, it will be difficult for one to do a science -- that is, some kind of disinterested study of reality, albeit not all science is presuppositionless. Besides, it will be hard to defend a descriptive and objective study of any reality at all. The inability to separate the religious from the rest, as we have seen, brings a lot of the non-religious elements in the religion. A true religious attitude should take a distance from the political and the social, and act as a conscience. Where this is not forthcoming, the Lord's house of prayer will be turned into a commercial sphere; the social or political will go its way without fear of reprimand, after all, everything has become everything else, and the crisis turns out into social and religious reductionism.

III

Problems of Social Life in the midst of Divinities and the Community

Social Life in community of Divinities and Forces: The Myth of the Community Man

There is the belief, whether founded or not, that the African lives in a community both of human beings and of forces; hence the allegiance to humans and to invisible sources. Man is an embodied spirit in the midst of human and natural environment within which he acquires his being and right. The 'we-identity' disposition, it is said, drives him and entangles him. There is a view that the community of human forces protects the individual.

Nyerere's socialism insists that African traditional society takes care of its members. It is based on some kind of distributive welfare or justice.

M. I. Nwoko corroborates Nyerere's views to insist that in the community the individual becomes "a community person," (Nwoko 1985 71-72). In other words, the community is the centre of gravity. The gravitational force largely pulls individuals to the communal centre. Consequently, individuals are like spokes organized around the hub -- the community. A disruption in any part of the circular structure or collectivity creates a malfunction in the whole set-up. It is said that, if a rung of the societal ladder is removed, the line of the societal life force is jeopardized. The emphasis on the collectivity as determining the 'person' of the individual prides itself as an ontological unity which creed is 'I am because others are, or I am because we are.' The sense of community and extended family spirit got into the United Nations Regional Advisor on Social Policy and Training, Economic Commission for Africa, giving the impression that rural Africa enjoyed the extended family and clan in which everyone was cared for, and people shared what they had generously; hence "in this type of community nobody can be labelled as poor because the group usually shares what they have. There is no competition; no insecurity, no big ambitions, no unemployment and thus people are mentally healthy. Deviation or abnormal behaviour is almost absent," (Iiffe 1989: 3).

Communalistic views maintain that the African is ontologically predisposed to care for the other, that is, individuals have an attitude of care towards each other. Kwame Nkrumah branded the attitude of care as 'egalitarian' (See Nkrumah 1964: 78) and Julius Nyerere articulated it as an '*ujamaa*' (See Nyerere 1968: 1). In the world of cultural encounter with Europe and America, Leopold Sedar Senghor captured the lively African spirit with the concept of *Negritude* (See Senghor 1995: 45), the predisposition for care by the African as a posting of the self in a free and symbiotic embrace with the other. Within the theological parlance, Eugene E. Uzukwu sharpened the egalitarian or care-attitude as 'hospitality' (See Uzukwu 1988: 158-169) that can serve the Gospel to inculturate itself within the African socio-religious matrix. The end value of the egalitarian understanding of African societies is the insistence on communion among members of African breed.

There is a merit to the view that the community gives individuals their 'being.' To be 'maintained' in 'being,' one must conform to community's injunctions and ways. The ethics of such a life is that "I am

not alone in the social game -- in the world.” What one does touches the other. The ‘other’ is understood as another person or a natural environment or God or any other symbol. The ‘we-identity’ has been used to explain the social being of the African as a positive value by African authors or writers on African values.

Some Reservations about the We-Identity

The ‘we-identity’ expressed in a community of forces is part of the undoing of the African, for the individual can be suffocated in this environment. The community-centred argument implies that community dies or survives with the co-operation of others. The view that one was invariably provided for by the country can impoverish the country and make people irresponsible. In the collectivistic community of meaning, what claims one has do not derive from one’s ontological constitution as an irreplaceable and incommunicable being but from the label placed on one as constituting a part in the whole. Evidently, the community in the African sense presents itself as the greatest infallible judge and distributor of resources for social living, and it can create scapegoats when it likes. Communities and opinion-leaders fuelled the slave trade. Rights are then community-sanctioned. If one translates this world-view in positivistic terms, a collectivistic understanding of African societies will tend to recognize only socio-legal rights. The dispenser of community goods, whether symbolized in the sole authority of the individual or some collectivity, will be the imperative speaker who makes social labels, places them on items, making them have, and become, what their labels have imbued in them. It is significant to note, as observed by Johannes Messner, that the social theory of all collectivist systems suffocate that individual at the end, as socio-productive forces are ranked above the human person, who has an absolute primary value, (See 1965: 96-129). Much emphasis on the community devalues the person standing as an incommunicable entity in-charge of his own conscience and author of his co-operation as an existential personality; hence it is high time the community-centred claim is analysed critically.

It is really time to critically probe into the so-called communitarian claim about African families or societies. Did rural or traditional society take care of all its members, especially the poor, as Nyerere and the rest claim? Actually, the various African families have a social inclination or orientation as to what class of people or poor the society protected.

Depending on the group, compassion is not always shown to the widow or her children. Some African cultures that allow the dis-inheritance of the woman or wife after the death of her husband will not be said to be compassionate or, perhaps, will indeed be said to have a very different notion of compassion! The general assertion that traditional Africa is very egalitarian and caring has to be demythologized. Sometimes, the family structure or community, as Iiffe remarks, perpetrates poverty and social discrimination as the widow, the orphan, the old, in some communities, are not cared for; in fact, “each kind of family had its particular points of weakness and excluded its particular categories of unsupported poor – orphans in one case, barren women in another, childless elders in a third,” (Iiffe 1989: 7-8). African communalists and their sympathizers, therefore, seem to ignore how poverty, social exclusion and oppression are maintained within African traditional set-up or families.

IV

The Resultant Effects and Problems of Traditional African Belief Systems on the Socio-Political Life

Too much Allegiance to many Forces

Forces are part of the symbolic forms or live information system (See Ukaegbu 2011: 299-301) alongside myths, folklores and proverbs through which the traditional and religious worldviews are expressed as varied and unified content, (See Ekwuru 2009: 135). One notes that the people whose ideas, mostly, reigned in the clan were the domineering or influential individuals. There is an obsessive fear of the juju man, the rich, the strong wrestler, the man with immense physical strength, the medicine man, the man who knows the way to the house of the medicine man, and so on.

It will be great remiss to ignore the element of priest-craft in shaping social, political and religious realities. While one does not deny that African traditional societies had their sense of justice, it should be acknowledged that most of the time, because there was no organized jural system, there was a miscarriage of justice for the balance was apt to be tilted to suit the dictates of some influential individuals. In fact, because, the intellectual intuition of the society or individuals constituting the influential group was short-sighted and sickly redolent with suspicion, many talents were simply ignored, suppressed or minimally tapped. Without much equivocation, it is not an off-hand

statement to say that traditional African society largely suffocated the private world of the individual; its formulated social constructs or recipes were largely codified mode of communication safe-guarding the interests and world views of the clever members of the group. In short, one can argue that there was no egalitarian society therein but a society of projected interests of some individuals who could exert their influence and impose the longings of their 'ideological' conscience, on others, as the social creed.

Distorted Identity/Enfeebled Mentality

The common man had many taboos to observe, and many daily rituals to perform, either to appease the community or the divinities. If he was not an indirect or unconscious slave of the dominant conscience, he held perpetual allegiance to one divinity or another. If he was 'free' with men, he was not free with nature or his environment. Suppose community and environment allow him to live his life with fewer burdens, he would still have to pay the debts owed by his past ancestors! He may still prefer to follow the uncritical way of his forefathers to spare himself the trouble of reasoning or evaluating the present situation. The individual in traditional Africa was living in bondage or slavery but was only free probably by virtue of his ignorance of the conditions under which he lived. In an inclusive consideration of pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial Africa, one should realize that the so-called influential individuals, even with their acquisition of Western education, in the present scheme of things, still remain great actors in an environment either dominated or enslaved by natural environmental forces or outside influences.

The Problem of Socio-Political Godfatherism

This is a carry-over from the worship of multiple deities, each capable of causing confusion if ignored. The search for power and miracles is also to secure the political status. There are so many influential people, like the various divinities, that can facilitate or delay matters for the individual in the socio-political set-up. In traditional society, certain animals and their parts belonged to certain deities, so also certain parts of federal allocation of states belonged to certain godfathers or influential individuals who must be appeased or nothing works in the state.

The Problem of Role of Secret Societies

This paper does not attempt to define what a secret society is here. However, in the traditional set-up men and women belong to different groups. But such ideas, information and so on held by the men cultural groups, which are not shared by women, can be said to be secret. A group can be said to be a secret society when the shared ideas it has are not open to the public, and the shared ideas are hidden from the uninitiated.

Raphael C Njoku makes a study noting the impact of the European influence on African culture, an enculturation that was wide-ranging, (See Njoku 2006: 17). Pre-colonial institutions such as power/authority, family and kinship systems, and village groups were all affected. Njoku centres his study on how the cultural background of four African political elites (who happen to be all Igbos) affected their political choices. In this regard, for example, the new Igbo, in colonial period, was not an uncontaminated individual; hence Njoku writes: “Here, my intent is to give a sense on how the new Igbo colonial society must be seen as a product of dialogue and negotiations between the ‘indigenous’ and ‘Western’ cultures,” (Ibid.) He devotes considerable time to the role of secret societies in socialisation in the pre-colonial and colonial period. What one knows of secret societies is now somehow different from the usage in the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Now the mention of secret society bespeaks a closed group associated with private or unorthodox/devilish rites sometimes ritualised in human blood, within which members are bound up by an oath of secrecy. Members are alleged to indulge in human sacrifices for the prosperity and protection of its members.

However, in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, in some places, secret societies formed part of the age-groups and social groups that helped in the socialisation of the individual, as revealed in Njoku’s research on the life of Alvan Ikoku, who hailed from Arochukwu: “As a forum for socialisation in Arochukwu, Ikoku retained a strong presence in the various secret societies (Abamaba). Among the prominent secret societies are *Obon*, *Ekogn*, *Akang*, *Iquot*, *Okonko*, *Ekpo* – mostly of *Ibibio* or *Efik* origin – the most important were the *Ekpe* for men and *Iyambe* (*Iyamba*) for women whose husbands were members of the *Ekpe* society,” (Ibid., 58). *Ekpe* became an elitist club

that served as “a conduit of tradition, adaption, and continuity in the colonial times,” (Ibid.,59).

In Unwana - the village of Francis Akanu Ibiam – age-grades were different from secret societies: “for individuals, the secret society initiation comes first. Unwana has a peculiar kind of secret society known simply as the *Ogo (Village)* or *Egbele*, the name of its central spirit. It must be quickly asserted that there were also other more discrete societies like the *Ekpe* and *Ekpo* that individuals could join,” (Ibid., 87). Although membership of secret society is differentiated from age-grades, they were also avenues for socialisation: “Until 1980 when Unwana started considering Ibiam for its leadership, membership in the *Egbele* was a prerequisite for playing a leadership role in any important activity or traditional adult organisation,” (Ibid., 88). Membership to societies provided a sense of social responsibility; for the “initiates were expected to maintain secrecy in all its activities and the uninitiated, like women and strangers, were barred from the *Egbele* secrecy. ’Initiation is not only a prerequisite for serious political activity in the village but to the whole range of adult functions. It must be done before marriage, before taking any nonsecret titles, and before joining an age set and grade,” (Ibid.).

A study of the background of Mbonu Ojike and K. O. Mbadiwe revealed that age-grades were not very strong in Arondizuogu. Rather, there were social clubs that helped maintain roads, market places and paths supervised by the elders. Such clubs included *Ikeji* or *Ekeji*. Ojike and Mbadiwe were active in the social clubs (See Ibid., 112-113), and “in Arondizuogu before 1920, there was a common village secret society known simply as the ‘Long Juju club’ into which males were initiated when they attained manhood. Unlike other societies like the Leopard Society or *Ekpe* (for men), and the *Iyama* (for women), ‘Long Juju’ membership did not bring the initiate any social privileges over non-initiates,” (Ibid.,117). Njoku assigns the Long Juju club the role of a “voluntary police force.” Whereas Mbadiwe refused initiation into any secret society, Ojike accepted membership in *Ekpe* and in the Reformed *Ogboni* confraternities, (See Ibid., 118).

Membership in societies was generally regarded as places of social departures for religious and political roles. One can say then that,

whether they were doing a good or bad job, the line between secret societies and important social groups like age-grades, as in some traditional societies, was not clearly drawn. The confusion seems to persist till date that to belong to a political party or some social group, one has to belong to a secret cult. And in some case, for example, the *Ozo* and *Ndi-Nze* titles' taking (Titled men) that can serve as a genuine case of inculturation can be manipulated to exclude Christians by traditional worshippers, (See Afunugo 2009: 102-103). The issue as to who is to be admitted to the *Ozo na Nze* (title said to be have originated from Umudioka, Njikoka in the present Anambra State of Nigeria (See Ihenacho 2012: 220-221) has beneath it the question of who or what group should participate or control the decision making process in the land under any guise at all: religious or political, for individual or group achievements might be at the basis of inclusion or exclusion for community leadership, (See Ibechukwuka 2012: 114-115).

The Post-modernism of the Academia

The African academia is in a state of confused consciousness for it epitomised the epistemological distortions of modernity and the cultural dis-embedment of the contemporary African. The received Western education is in crisis: because the African has discovered that its claims do not always fit his own facts; he has lost cultural roots because of his distraction with his search for Western values. Now, being at cross roads as to what is untruly African and untruly Western, he follows the dictates of what is closer to his heart – his African heritage. But African heritage and its worlds do not spell things neatly; hence the African indulges in social and religious syncretism: After all, Nkrumah has made the call in his philosophical *consciencism*, insist that *consciencism* is a map in intellectual terms, that is, a philosophical attitude that will help the African take the best from the Euro-Christian and Islamic influences and synthesize them in such a way as to forge new identity through which progress can be wrought in the present crisis or conflict of conscience of the African, (See Nkrumah 1964: 79). The new African identity is to be carved out of a crisis of conscience. There is indeed a crisis. There is, in the African universe now, a mix-mesh of African and European values and dis-values. The problem is exacerbated by futility of efforts in a world manipulated by human and invisible forces. There is the attendant psychic that whatever is the case, whatever one's effort is, success is not based on

one's power without mediation or religious, political intermediaries and godfathers. This weakens individual motivation and translates into poverty of aspiration.

One easily gives in to fate, that no matter how hard one tries, one's independent effort in any sphere of life cannot go beyond the destiny set forth by others – whether humans or divine. This has mostly killed effort to make moves to better one's condition, for matters will not be different no matter how hard one may try. Thus, some academics have been disempowered, and to survive, they enlist into the socio-political manipulative arena of the time!

V The Way Out

Demarcating the line between the Holy and the Profane

If part of the task of post-modernism is living with plurality and the divine in the atmosphere of individual freedom, then African world has to be demythologised – to separate, conceptual, the line between divine and the profane, to indicate the two spheres clearly. It should be warned that this demand for clear-cut conceptual separation is not a denial of harmony between them if they are held separately. It simply implies that if the distinction between the profane and the sacred maintained, then the bridge between them will clearly emerge; thus, one knows where the right step for religious transcendence begins, consequently the divine sphere can act as a critique to our mental, political and social creation of acts. In other words, the specific idea of the Holy is to be retrieved from present religious and social chaos within which the Divine is invoked.

Although the line between superstition, magic and religious attitudes is slender, a religious attitude is different from these other dispositions. The religious man seeks friendship and dialogue with God or the Holy -- a *mysterium tremendum*, (See Otto 1950: 12-13). The 'Holy' inspires the emotion of fear; man feels his creaturehood or self-depreciation, his impotence and general nothingness as against over-powering might of God's majesty, (See Ibid., 21) of the 'Wholly Other'; yet the encounter with the Holy is fascinating: it attracts and repels at the same time. For the religious man, as Otto rightly remarks, "the 'mystery' is for

him not merely something to be wondered at but something that entrances him; and beside that in it which bewilders and confounds, he feels a something that captivates and transports him with a strange ravishment, rising often enough to the pitch of dizzy intoxication, it is the Dionysiac-element in the *numen*,” (Ibid., 31). Being fascinated is to be drawn by the intrinsic or positive value in the Holy, which disposes one for friendship with Him. But in superstition, as has been pointed out, the Holy is kept at arm’s length; in magic, the source of power is manipulated.

A Genuine analysis of the African Universe

There is need to retrieve what is authentic in the midst of the rubble claimed to be African or its values. Certain things in the traditional society were truly bad and unprogressive; so they have to be cast aside. Kwame Anthony Appiah rightly insists that we do not swallow African culture whole and entire. He is of the view that we save elements in African culture that are worthy of intellectual consideration, while discarding those elements that have become outdated and anachronistic, then compare the cultures favourably. A distinction has to be made between part of the culture that is outdated (like oppressive elements and mythologies) and the new Africa, though one has to accept, at least by historical accident, that the African philosopher belongs to two intellectual worlds: African and Western; hence his theory of who an African is should not be detained by too much racial stereotypes, (See Appiah 1992: 157). This renaissance or reconstruction of African identity will be a product of cross-cultural pollination, “for every culture gives and takes from the other,” (Kanu 2010: 65); thus, Africa’s self-definition is a product of intercultural or inter-subjective encounter, and on equal grounds.

Kwasi Wiredu believes that truth is truth, hence there are no black or white truths; so, there are no African truths; there are some truths about Africa. But there is need to get the standard of comparisons right: African traditional ideas are to be compared with European traditional ideas, not comparing African traditional ideas with European contemporary scientific culture, (See Wiredu 1980: 39), thereby generating unfair and unequal comparison. It must be remembered that Wiredu’s major work is a collection of essays titled *Philosophy and an*

African Culture, in which he insists that we can reconstruct African traditions to unearth the philosophical thinking behind them.

Anachronistic characteristics, which are seen in the habit of holding on to values that have become outmoded, should be abandoned. People cling to them, not because these values and habits are effective in solving problems in the changing world, but rather because things have been this way. In this light, one insists, “philosophical thinking is exemplified not in the mere recording of traditions and cultures, “but in the reconstruction of contemporary Africa culture as it has been influenced by Christian and Islamic customs and ideas,” (Imbo 1998: 20).

African and Christian Identity to be genuinely put in their right perspectives

The contemporary African largely has a dual religious identity: African and Christian or African and Islamic. Here one concentrates on the African and Christian identity. If one should purge African ideas of unprogressive elements, so also one needs to identify the truth about Christian identity that has come to be confused in the chaotic belief system of African religious universe. Christian identity is located in the specific event of the incarnate Word: the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, who becomes standard reason for action. The specific Christ-event bore witness to the word of God preached by Jesus Christ and couched in the message of the Kingdom of God. The kingdom message embodied in Jesus announces the presence of the anointed One by God to bring about liberty to captives, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and declare the Lord’s year of favour (Luke 4:18-19). St. Paul summarised the content of the kingdom of God as peace, justice and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). Therefore, any Christianity that does not take Christ and his message of cross and resurrection seriously or any socio-political vision that claims to be rooted in the Christian vision but brings everything but justice, peace and joy (that is, values that build persons and communities) is a propaganda and a travesty of Christianity.

In the chaotic religious and political universe of the African, there is need for a leap to a qualitative presence to meet Africa’s contemporary needs. The qualitative presence can only be discovered by a sense of

“differentiated consciousness,” which “arises in the process of growing up,” (Lonergan 1973: 303). It is a cognitive insight of being alert in making proper judgements and distinctions as demanded by intelligence; hence Lonergan insists: “Differentiated consciousness appears when the critical exigency turns attention upon interiority, when self-appropriation is achieved, when the subject relates his different procedures to the several realms, relates the realms to one another, and consciously shifts from one realm to another by consciously changing his procedures,” (Ibid., 84). In order to arrive at a better judgment therefore, a kind of judgement that results from “reflective insight,” (Tekippe 1996: 73). If there is no differentiated consciousness, one easily lands into inaction or fanaticism or syncretism. Where consciousness is well differentiated, the social and intellectual terrains become clear, and the veil that dulls our massive sense of compassion and judgement will be lifted. The feeling of inadequacy and social hopelessness plunges the African into a state of cultural dis-embedment for one is being haunted by a vulnerable sense of identity, haunted by a culture of materialism, poverty and syncretism. A vulnerable sense of cultural identity and fragmented images produces a dis-embedment that wounds the imagination (confusion in judgement), the will (confusion on what one wants, and what one wants to bring about), and a wounded memory (the seat of what one received and wanted to impart becomes distorted). These three ‘woundednesses’ bring about cultural desolation: emptiness or wretchedness or ruin. Since human acts occur in a socio-cultural context, and if these ‘woundednesses’ are not addressed, one continues to drift – moving and not moving, praying and not praying, religious and not religious. No wonder in this social confusion precipitated by a irreligious or non-religious in religion, some kind of ‘Divine disconnect’ stares one on the face that it becomes an uphill task to designate ‘a religious fellow’ in the mass of the self-acclaimed seekers of the divine, (See Makinde 2007: 316-317).

Conclusion

The postmodernist sensibility must be anchored on a differentiated consciousness; since it is welcomed as a genuine hunger for what is beyond, and a way of living with plurality, one must make sure that the anchor is really something truly beyond and not a meeting of contingencies where individuals and communities in all kinds of pretence idolize themselves. What kind of religion, politics and so on

one is talking about must be clearly defined. Urewuchi E. Udeoliosa is correct to observe, for instance, that the modern Nigeria's Christian's journey to the so-called Pentecostal churches for spiritual freshness has actually left him more rent in spiritual life than before in the hands of fraudsters who are materialists in spiritual clothing, people whose materials quest is hidden under the cloak of offering spiritual guidance to a confused population, (See Udeolisa 2011: 6-7).

A differentiated consciousness opens up for genuine relationship in the social and religious spheres, for things through right and sound judgment take their place. Where there is an open, free and genuine encounter of subjects, the inter-subjective space releases genuine orientations and aspirations will supersede the poverty of aspirations that has bedevilled the present undifferentiated state of affairs. Since differentiated consciousness will make required judgments about structures that will sustain aspirations, poverty of opportunities will melt away; hence there will emerge many healing options for the battered conscience and delinquent state of human beings and their social and religious environment. In this way, a differentiated consciousness that must give rise to genuine judgment which will play a de-fragmentary role for so many allegiances that have emptied people's resources, depreciated their persons, wounded their spirituality and alienated their genuine commitments. The need for a concerted de-fragmentary response as a step towards a genuine healing option will bring together the bits of vision that have been dissipated in conducting religious and social functions; in terms of religion, de-fragmentation will clear-up the hard disk of people's memory that has so long been fed by superstitious and magical attitudes in the name of religion or God, strengthen monotheistic ideas in the commitment to the truth God has revealed in Jesus, while creating an environment where social hope will be consistently pursued by individuals in an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding. As Joshua L. Liebman rightly observed long ago, "Men who are inwardly tormented and emotionally unhappy can never be good partners of God; the great ideals of religion will remain unimplemented and unfulfilled so long as unhappy, distorted men and women continue to be defective transmitters of the Divine," (1946: 13).

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