

Fela's Humanism and the Crisis of Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

It is an indisputable fact that the myriad of problems in Nigeria today in the areas of politics, religion, security and economy are a reflection of dearth of good governance. There have been conceited efforts by pundits on means that could bring about a viable polity yet to no avail. The liberals have called for restructuring while the radicals believe it is outright dissolution of the Union that can ameliorate the pauperisation, exploitation and crass dehumanisation of the citizenry. However, these suggestions have not addressed the trajectory of the problem, thereby, making them limited in addressing the issues. This paper, therefore, examines the contributions of the famous Nigerian Afrobeat music maestro, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, especially as it concerns the dehumanisation of the proletariat class by the elites in Nigeria. The song, Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense among others in Fela's musical repertoire, was purposefully selected to interrogate the problematic. More so, the research adopted the hermeneutic, analytic, critical and reconstructive methods of philosophy in achieving its aim. While the method of hermeneutics helped in decoding and applying the deeply embedded messages in Fela's music, the analytic method aided in clarifying concepts like humanism, governance, exploitation, dehumanisation, and oppression. The critical method was employed to examine hitherto attempts on same issue and finally the method of reconstruction helped to situate Fela's relevance and efforts in

addressing the issue of dearth of good governance in Nigeria. The work concluded that it is only when the political leadership responds to Fela's call for class deconstruction would Nigeria witness the kind of governance that would transform the quality of lives of the citizenry.

Keywords: Dehumanization, Exploitation, Governance, Humanism, Oppression.

Introduction

Not many would argue that Nigeria is indeed at the verge of collapse. If that were to happen it will re-echo Fukuyama's great treatise 'The End of History'. It is the need to prevent this predicted end that prompted Fela to pursuing a medium of effecting an alternative to the ill-governance and maladministration that have characterised Nigeria's polity. Bad governance is characterised by corruption, electoral fraud, insecurity, poor economy and poor infrastructure among others. All these factors are endemic in Nigeria making Nigeria one of the leading nations among the poorly governed. Fela Anikulapo Kuti categorically implied that if the crisis of governance was not addressed, Nigeria would continue to retrogress in all directions. Given the fact that there are myriads of ways to contribute to nation building, Fela chose to draw attention to the crisis of governance in Nigeria through the lyrics of his songs that hit at the very core of this existential problem. Fela's activism on the need for purposeful leadership placed him on the pedestal of humanism. Fela's humanist philosophy interrogates the problematic and proffers solution to the socio-political and economic imbroglio Nigeria is immersed in.

Conceptual Clarification

Two concepts are central to this paper, 'humanism' and 'governance.' The idea of humanism is not new. J. Herrick writes that "the word has developed since its use to describe a

belief system that calls upon reason and values to enable us develop our lives and societies”¹. Most times, adjectives like ‘scientific humanism’, ‘religious humanism’, ‘ethical humanism’ etc. are used. In this paper, we shall be more concerned with ethical humanism because that best suits our purpose. When we allude to the phrase ‘Fela’s humanism’ we are invariably reflecting on the core tenets of being one’s brother’s keeper which is metaphysically entrenched in the institutions and personality of a traditional African setting. It is the knowledge that the individual in Africa is more or less tied to the community that makes the communalistic system best for traditional societies. Only few people still subscribe to African communalism the way Fela did. In a true African sense, there is always that communion among groups of people who together experience reciprocity of awareness.² The virtue of being hospitable to strangers that flows from the African spirit of solidarity and togetherness is one that places the African on the lead step to bringing about the spirit of humanism. Nyerere captures humanism better in his expression of Ujamaa when he writes that, “Ujamaa requires that the traditional attitude of the mind be projected outward to incorporate not only every Tanzanian but all mankind. Thus, the crusade will not only rediscover and revitalise native values but extend these present parochial values to the entire human race.”³

Against this background, humanism encourages humankind to strive towards being accommodating to all irrespective of their colour, religion, ethnicity or background. Humanism transcends individualism. In the African sense, it is entrenched in the words ‘I am because you are, because you are therefore, I

¹ Jim Herrick, *Humanism: An Introduction* (Ibadan: Gadfly Publishers, 2003), 1.

² C. N. Ogbuja, The Place of the ordinary person in African communalistic society. A seminar paper presented at the Nigerian Philosophical Association Conference, at the University of Ibadan, 2006. (Unpublished).

³ Alabi Yekini, “Ujamaa the Political and social Thought of Mwalimu Julius K Nyerere” in edited by Innocent Asouzu *Philosophy and Logic Today* (Calabar: University of Calabar Press, 2000), 252.

am.’ Humanism is summed up not only in the worth of an individual since that individual is equally tied to a global community. To this end, by protecting the individual we are invariably protecting ourselves since our fates are bound in the collective. Oyeshile captures this better when he writes that:

[A]s Dasien, both at the individual and ethnic group levels, survival is only possible if and only if we recognise the importance of others not as mere objects standing in the way of achieving our goal of survival, but as end in themselves who are not only important but inevitable and inescapable in the realization of our goal of survival and freedom.⁴

To sum up our analysis on humanism, we shall emphasise the point that humanism connotes freedom. It is an expression of liberty devoid of all social imposition and constraints.

Governance and Fela’s Humanism

The term ‘governance’ was first widely used by the World Bank in 1989 due to the economic crisis experienced by sub-Saharan African countries in the face of the infamous structural adjustment programmes. It was observed that this crisis was as a result of the failure of public institutions. The term was used to describe the need for institutional reform and a better and more efficient private sector in sub Saharan countries. To this end, governance can be defined as the exercise of political power to manage a nation’s affairs. Also, governance has been defined as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels.⁵ For Ogunjobi, it embodies the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligation and

⁴ Olatunji Oyeshile, *Reconciling the Self with the Other* (Ibadan: Hope Publication, 2005), 32.

⁵ B. Ogunjobi, “Good Governance: A tool for sustainable Development” Lecture Delivered on Wednesday 24th November 2004. University of Ibadan.

mediate their differences in all spheres of life. According to the perspective on African development, governance is at the heart of Africa's developmental problem⁶. So, governance refers to the actual manner of exercising control or authority over the action of subjects. It can also be said to denote how people are ruled and regulated. In the strict sense of the term, governance is about power, relationships, and processes of representation and accountability – about who has influence, who decides, and how decision-makers are held responsible and accountable.

Governance is not the same as government; rather it focuses attention on a much wider range of stakeholders and their relationships and networks including government, private sector and non-governmental organizations. This may not be unconnected with why we trifurcated governance into political governance, economic governance and corporate governance.⁷ While political governance sets the orientation of the economy and supplies both the physical and institutional infrastructure, economic governance provides the context in which corporate governance is practiced. Corporate governance in turn provides the laws under which corporations are established and the regulatory framework for the conduct of corporate affairs. As follow up from the above, Okoye holds that:

The theme of governance is of interest to any society of human beings in the world... Governance involves the exercise of state authority. The art of governance is traditionally divided into legislative, executive and judiciary acts, even though in a narrow sense, it is used to refer to the action of the executive branch.⁸

To Okoye, the relevance of governance to any society is tied to the relationship men share with fellow men in the society.

⁶ Ogunjobi, "Good Governance: A tool for sustainable Development."

⁷ Ogunjobi, "Good Governance: A tool for sustainable Development."

⁸ John Okoye, "Governance and the question of virtue," in *Philosophy, Democracy and Responsible Governance in Africa* ed. by Joseph Oguejiofor, 12-21 (New Jersey. Rutgers University Press, 2003), 12.

Lawal on his part sees governance as the manner in which power is utilised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. Ijaiya re-echoes this point when he writes that:

The traditions and institutions determine how authority is exercised in a particular country. This includes: the process by which governments are selected, held accountable, monitored and replaced; the capacity of government to manage resources efficiently and formulate, implement and enforce sound policies and regulations, and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.⁹

Both Lawal and Ijaiya see governance from the same perspective – resource management. Governance goes beyond social and economic dimensions to include all aspects of human endeavours in the society. It is imperative to state here that governance deals with society's interest with the aim of achieving the common goal. Governance is not about objects but people. It will make no meaning if governance is viewed in isolation because it must be anchored on a group of individuals with a unified purpose. Let us now have an idea of what good governance represents.

In attempting to analyse good governance, it will be germane to highlight factors that can guide us in recognizing it. These factors include; predictability, open and enlightened policy-making, a bureaucracy imbued with professional ethos and acting in furtherance of the public good; the rule of law, transparency and accountability and a strong civil society participating in public affairs. Bad governance or maladministration on the other hand is characterised by arbitrary policy-making, lack of accountability, lack of

⁹ T. Ijaiya, "Transparency in Governance and Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Cross Country Analysis," *Babcock Journal of Management and Social Sciences* 3, no.1 (2004), 75.

transparency, bureaucratic bottlenecks, unjust legal systems, the abuse of executive power, a civil society engaged in public life and wide spread corruption. More so, the elimination of maladministration through the process of the rule of law for the good and well-being of the citizens constitute good governance. Lawal clarifies further, that good governance is epitomised by among other things, predictability, openness, fostering strong but sharply delimited states capable of sustained economic and social development and the institutional growth.¹⁰ In the same vein, Oluwa avers that:

coterminous with economic and social development and determined by the quality of life and living standards and conditions of the people; it is about effective management of national resources and the formulation of policies geared towards the general welfare of the masses. Good governance is, therefore, evaluated by combination of 'misery indices' which include the provision or facilitation by government of the basic necessities of life to the people.¹¹

From the analysis above, good governance is measured by the principle of utility – the more miserable a people are, the more likely there is a dearth of good governance. Let us at this juncture analyse a few of the indicators of good governance before we attempt to subject them to Fela's criterion. The most glaring factor of good governance is accountability. The greatest import in the words of Agbaje is that – responsibility confers value on good governance. This implies that some actors have the right to hold other actors to a set of standards to judge whether they have fulfilled their responsibilities in the light of these standards, and to impose sanctions if they determine that these responsibilities have not been met. Accountability presupposes a relationship between power-wielders and those

¹⁰ G. Lawal, "Governance and Electoral process in Nigeria" *International Review of Politics and Development* June." *International Review of Politics and Development* 1, no. 2 (2003), 126.

¹¹ Lawal, "Governance and Electoral process in Nigeria," 126.

holding them accountable where there is a general recognition of legitimacy.¹² Agbaje continues further, that accountability functions to expose and sanction two sets of abuses: the unauthorised or illegitimate exercise of power and decisions that are judged by accountability holders to be unwise or unjust as is the case with the recent P & I D (Process and Industrial Development) deal in Nigeria.

Another feature worthy of mention is the principle of egalitarianism otherwise called equality. According to Eme Awa, the principle of equality implies that nobody should live under a condition of moral degradation.¹³ This also finds outlet in the works of John Rawls when he opined that inequalities are arbitrary unless it is reasonable to expect that they will work out for everyone's advantage, and provided the positions and offices to which they attach or from which they may gain are open to all. J. S. Mill also alluded to it when he holds that the greatest value or end of government is to guarantee the individual his liberty.¹⁴

Furthermore, there cannot be good governance where justice is downplayed. Aristotle, made the point that no government can stand if not founded on justice. St Augustine amplified this position when he opined that "remove justice, but what are kingdoms but gangs of thieves in a large scale".¹⁵ This implies that justice is the foundation of any viable political system. It is the hub around which good governance rotates.

Respect for the constitution is another feature that cannot be overlooked. By constitution we are referring to the laws or statutes, written or unwritten by which a people are governed.

¹² E. Agbaje, "Corruption, Accountability and Good Governance," *International Review of Politics and Development* 2, no.2 (2004), 80.

¹³ E. Awa, "Strategies for Achieving Democratization in Africa," in African Leadership Forum on Sustainment of Democratization and Good Governance in Africa. (Cotonou, 5-6 October 1992), 62.

¹⁴ Dipo Irele, *Introduction to Political Philosophy* (Ibadan: University Press, 1998), 60.

¹⁵ Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy* (USA: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 144.

In any responsible governance, it is expedient but not sufficient to have a people's constitution. Respect for the constitution is coterminous with respect for the rule of law. For Aristotle, "in all well-attempted governments, there is nothing which should be more jealously maintained than the spirit of obedience to the law."¹⁶ All over the world, the rule of law is inseparable from good governance; and that rule of law invariably points to a government established by the will of the people; one in which there are laid-down procedures for an orderly change of government, legal procedures for the settling of disputes etc.

Another essential ingredient of good governance is centred on altruism and sincerity. Altruism is mostly in conflict with ethical egoism. For the egoist, the apparent conflicts between the demands of morality and personal gain are merely conflicts between different aspects of our self-interest. Altruism acknowledges correctly that moral behaviour appears generally to be 'other-regarding'. In the analysis of good governance, altruism and sincerity are important factors- both on the part of the led and the leader.

Having examined features of good governance, it is crystal clear that Nigeria does not come anywhere close to it in practice. From accountability to altruism, from sincerity to rule of law, Nigeria has not shown serious and appreciable capacity in this regard. This is the reason Etuk in Oguejiofor expressed that, "presuming to write and speak on practical and theoretical problems in the emergence of responsible governance implies that what we have in Africa (Nigeria) is not acceptable. It also presumes that there are problems with our own version of governance."¹⁷

¹⁶ Subrata Mukherjee and Ramaswamy Sushila, *A History of Political Thought: Plato to Marx* (India: Prentice Hall, 2007), 121.

¹⁷ Udoh Etuk, "Practical and Theoretical problems in the Emergence of responsible Governance in Africa," in *Philosophy, Democracy and Responsible Governance in Africa* ed. by Joseph Oguejiofor, 121-139 (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 122.

Nigeria is currently in a state of complete disrepair. Some pundits like Larry Diamond are a sentence away from describing it as a failed state, as a result of the bad governance and disregard for the citizen's rights by those in authority. That is not to say some political entrepreneurs do not, like Squealer in *Animal Farm*, sing the praises and glory of the various ill-fated regimes. It requires integrity to look a leader in the face and tell him 'your policies are anti-masses' or 'you are corrupt' as Fela did. He distinguished himself from the bandwagon by turning himself to a voice for the downtrodden, thereby pitching him in the tent of great humanists and radicals like Thomas Sankara, Che Guevara, Steve Biko, Malcolm X, etc. even though they differ in methods.

What propelled Fela into humanism is his deep seated conviction that the state exists for the good of the citizenry. Any state that cannot meet up with this aspiration is an aberration, as such must not be respected unless it begins to do the right thing. Whereas Fela was perceived as a mere rabble-rouser, quite a chunk of Nigerians understood him as the very critique par excellence needed for the emancipation of the downtrodden. In line with this Karl Popper in his *Open Society and its Enemies* alludes that what makes for a viable democracy is the fact that it allows for criticism. Criticism is aimed at correcting the ills of the state by helping it evolve from a den of exploitation to one where justice and rule of law prevail. Any society that allows for open criticism of its style of governance is an open society. Democratic regimes flourish in societies of this kind and not the closed ones that never give room to dissenting voices. Such a society only clamps down on critics by plunging the state into crass primitivism.

For as long as leadership perpetuates injustice, for as long as there is constitutional abuse vitiating the rule of law, there will always be dire consequences for the populace. Where this continues over time without redress, the state withers and its resources shared among the key players of the exploiter class. Put differently, without a modicum of morality among the

leadership class, what remains is unchecked thievery better captured as political corruption which Gyekye defined “as unethical and unauthorised exploitation of one’s political or official position for personal gain or advantage”¹⁸. Undeniably, Nigerians are among the worse victims of political corruption. The flamboyance of the leaders against squalid and subhuman condition of the led glares at you starkly. Jean-Francois Bayart captured this in his work *The State in Africa: Politics of the Belly* (1993).

Against this background, Fela had to make himself relevant by choosing musical themes that truly captured the existential concerns of majority of the masses in the face of exclusion, exploitation, dehumanization and injustice. These themes range from his personal encounters with authority to general economic realities of the ‘ailing system’. His songs are better appreciated when they are related to everyday concerns. Analysed in isolation, one may hardly understand the point Fela makes in them. A perfect example is the telecommunication deal struck with an international telecom company during Obasanjo’s first stint as Head of state. The contract was shrouded in secrecy until issues of misappropriation began to emerge. In addressing and calling attention to that issue, Fela came up with I T T (international thief thief) where names of beneficiaries of the deal were mentioned thereby letting Nigerians into the fact that there was no transparency in the handling of that contract. It also let the government know that no matter how covert their methods might appear, ‘on a windy day the fowl’s rump would be blown open.’ By so doing, Fela was there as a watch dog waiting to pounce on erring officials of state that perpetuate acts of corruption and injustice. Though ITT was released in 1989¹⁹ its relevance in the politics of Nigeria today cannot be overemphasised. Indeed, the principle of

¹⁸ Kwame Gyekye, “Political Corruption: A Philosophical Inquiry into a Moral Problem,” in *Philosophy and Politics: Discourse on Values, Politics and power in Africa* ed. by Madubuchi Dukor (Lagos. Malthouse Press Ltd, 2003), 394.

¹⁹ Anikulapo Kuti Fela, ‘Beast of No Nation,’ Barclays Record. 1989.

accountability has been absolutely undermined in postcolonial Nigeria, since the people's commonwealth is now at the whims and caprices of those entrusted with watching over it. This is one of the many reasons why Nigeria has remained underdeveloped. In line with this, Oladipo writes that "the crisis of social order confronting the Nigerian nation and most African nations is essentially a moral crisis"²⁰. This seems to be the moral of Fela's lyrics. His interest was for the powers that be to have respect for the principle of accountability, responsibility and transparency which fall under the purview of morality. To lend her voice to Fela, Dorathy James opined that:

One lesson that history teaches with startling clarity is the fact that a nation whose government lacks moral authority is a nation adrift, vulnerable to opportunities, demagogues, and charlatans who prey upon citizens whose critical faculties are fogged by a cloud of corrosive cynicism. Government can never be value free.²¹

For Fela, what value can a government place on a people it does not care about if not to use them as means to actualizing its private ends? This underscores the lyrics of his song "*na original government we get oo! egbamio! padipadi, wayowayo...*" 'padipadi'²² refers to the painful practice of cronyism. In fact, the present and past democratic administrations are also guilty in this regard. *Wayowayo* depicts government by deceit, which is also a key factor in Nigeria politics today.

Fela was interested in being real at all times. Also he was interested in an undiluted African identity for the purpose of begetting good governance. He was however not optimistic about the performances of African leaders because they were largely caricatures of the West. This finds expression in the song

²⁰ Olusegun Oladipo, *Philosophy and the African Experience: The Contributions of Kwasi Wiredu* (Ibadan: Hope Publication, 1996), 42.

²¹ D. M. James, "The Once and Future American Consensus," *Society* 37, no. 6 (2000), 20.

²² Anikulapo Kuti Fela, 'Army Arrangement,' Barclays Record, 1985.

Mr Follow Follow. The Nigerian state, as a case in point, has been under the influence of Western liberal democratic principles for some decades. But the country is still lagging behind in the actualization of the dividends of this form of democracy in the face of gross violations of human rights, corruption, disregard for rule of law, etc. Fela thus, attempted a critique of this form of democracy in his 1986 LP, *Teacher don't teach me nonsense*. The Afrobeat maestro asked, "*which kind democracy be dis? Demonstration of craze.*"²³ Albeit, since 1999, periodic elections have been consistently held in Nigeria, the frequent escalation of violence and other forms of irregularities are pointers to the undemocratic tendencies of the ruling class. "electoral practice is well captured in his song *Ojuelegba*, where the traffic police become overwhelmed by the impatience of motorists to the extent that confusion ensues. In Fela's words 'for *Ojuelegba For Ojuelegba ... motor dey come from east, motor dey come from west, motor dey come from north, motor dey come from south. Police man dey for centre ... nakpafuka be dateo!*'²⁴ We borrow ideas from East, West, North and South and get confused in the process. That was why Nkrumah once said Africa is suffering from a crisis of conscience occasioned by the different ideologies struggling for acceptance in the continent. Whereas for Nkrumah, the many ideologies have given Africa malignant schizophrenia, for Fela it has led to confusion (*kpafuka*).

Fela calls for self-re-examination and re-evaluation to overcome the above debacle. That is why he sees and calls himself 'African man-original' and castigated those that aspire to be like the other (*you dey bleach o you dey bleach*). This is because the leaders have created a wrong picture in the minds of the masses that 'whatever is foreign is best' by the clothes they wear and the cars they drive. Wiredu condemns such an attitude saying that we have to strive to "avoiding or reversing

²³ Anikulapo Kuti Fela, 'Teacher don't teach me Nonsense,' Barclays Record, 1986.

²⁴ Anikulapo Kuti Fela, 'Confusion Break Bone,' Kalakuta Records, 1990.

through a critical conceptual self-awareness the unexamined assimilation in our thought of the conceptual framework embedded in the foreign ... that have an impact on the African".²⁵ Lack of originality in self and governance plunges us into the realm of inauthenticity. According to Heidegger, if given to external influences, man experiences a 'fallenness,' a loss of his authentic character. To be authentic requires that man recognises and affirms his own unique self with his responsibility for his every action.²⁶

Conversely, to be inauthentic is to escape from oneself by finding refuge in that which is foreign and outside of you. Fela affirms his identity and touted the leaders to also be authentic by being 'original' Africans who will put a stop to their naïve 'follow follow' that has plunged the fortunes of Nigeria into despair as exemplified by the introduction and implementation of Structural Adjustment Program and other World Bank advised policies. Leading in an in-authentic manner has led to the adoption of Euro styled capitalism instead of communalism that took care of all individuals in traditional societies. Today, there is a dearth of solidarity among citizens. This now finds outlets in kidnappings and brutal killings that have become a recurring decimal in Nigeria. This brings to mind Hobbes description of the state of nature as a state where there is no culture, no industry, no science, no society, and continual fear and danger of violent death, where the results is that the life of man is, solitary, brutish and short.²⁷ Unfortunately, these words of Hobbes find greater relevance in Nigeria today due to the dearth of good governance. Little wonder life expectancy index puts Nigeria at 53 to 55 because of insecurity.²⁸ Sorrow, tears

²⁵ Kwasi Wiredu, *The Conceptual Decolonisation in African Philosophy* (Ibadan: Hope Publication, 1995), 22.

²⁶ Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre*, 4.

²⁷ Irele, *Introduction to Political Philosophy*, 41.

²⁸ See Kunle Sanni, "Nigeria's life expectancy in 2019 third lowest in the world – UN," *Premium Times News Paper* (April 29, 2019).
<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/327565-nigerias-life-expectancy-in-2019-third-lowest-in-the-world-un>.

and blood is now the regular trademark and consequences of failure of governance.

The corollary to the identified problems of insecurity is the issue of exploitation and repression by the system. Fela refused to keep quiet in the face of exploitation and repression. These two are moral evils that if left unattended rob individuals of their humanity. According to Harris:

[R]epression is negative and dangerous not only to the repressed but to the repressors as well. It can actually promote the growth of the consciousness it wishes to repress. And, of course, consciousness in the final analysis, cannot be repressed, at least not short of total brainwashing: machine guns can stop people from acting in certain ways but not from thinking and believing in certain ways.²⁹

This assertion is quite true in the light of Fela's experiences. He refused to give into the antics of the oppressor. Fela's liberating call finds companion in the works of Paulo Freire when he said that:

[H]ow can the oppressed, as divided, unauthentic beings, participate in developing a pedagogy of their liberation? Only as (he continues) they discover themselves to be hosts of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy. As long as they live in the duality where to be is to be like, and be like is to be like the oppressor, this contribution is impossible.³⁰

Fela was well described as a liberator of the masses who used his music to open the eyes of the blind Nigerian citizenry to the oppression perpetuated by the state. Fela captured this once more in his 1978 record, *Shuffling and Shmiling*. The activist stated that '*everyday my people dey inside bus, suffering*

²⁹ Kevin Harris, *Education and Knowledge: Structural Misrepresentation of Reality* (New South Wales: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 75.

³⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), 25.

and smiling...'³¹ To the masses this seeming abnormality was normal; hence the impoverished masses were comfortable in their lack. Fela made the point obvious that it will be morally unacceptable to keep silent in the face of such abnormality. It is in this bold attempt to purge the Nigerian state of its insensitivity and disregard for the material condition of its people that Fela's music of liberation finds acceptance and relevance. The music directed itself to the core of the existential reality facing the average Nigerian making him now question what he had hitherto regarded as normal.

One of the high points of modern Western democracies is its interest and emphasis on the fundamental rights of citizens. Though enshrined in the constitution, these rights are hardly granted to any critic of the Nigerian state. The traditional attitude of the Nigerian ruling class against critics is evidential even in recent times with the attack on the democratic rights of individuals like Sowore, El-Zakzaky, Dasuki, Agba Jalingo, etc. under the Buhari-led government.

Freire advised that the oppressed and dehumanised must, from their stifled humanity, wage for both the struggle for a fuller humanity; the oppressor who is himself dehumanised because he dehumanises others cannot lead the struggle for humanisation.³² Fela understood this fact very well and went ahead to demonstrate it. He captured this in his 1989 record titled *Beasts of No Nation*. According to Aquinas, *nemo quod non habet*. Fela sounded this note of warning to all the dehumanisers in the polity '*abeg o make una hear me well well, human right na my property*. Therefore, you can't dash me my property.... *Animal can't dash me human rights*.'³³ This implies that what is mine cannot be given to me as a gift again because it is justifiably mine. To this end one who is dehumanised cannot offer rights to those already human.

³¹ Anikulapo Kuti Fela, 'Shuffling and Shimiling,' Barclays Record, 1978.

³² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 24.

³³ Fela, 'Beast of No Nation.'

While the rest of the world is making remarkable progress in science and technology, while the world is opening new frontiers, creating opportunities for their people, Nigeria is busy proliferating centres of worship. There are more churches and mosques in Nigeria than factories making it difficult to expand capacity and create jobs for youths. This is the reason there is an increase in crime and violence in the polity. In the face of joblessness and poverty, religious leaders are creating wealth at the expense of the impoverished populace, making Fela's music very relevant. He once released the lyrics '*I travel everywhere inside this country, pastors house na him dey fine pass.*'³⁴

Conclusion

Against the background of all that has been discussed, good governance cannot be feasible where there is disregard for the rule of law, accountability and transparency, justice, altruism, integrated citizenry, etc. Our analyses so far portrays that there is a lack of the above in Nigeria. We have a ruling class that is in complete disconnect with the purpose of good governance. Fela understood this tragedy, hence his liberation music philosophy that addressed this problematic. He questioned the authorities by many constructive criticisms. He used '*make I yabdem*'-which translate to, 'should I insult them' to call attention to the plight of both the oppressor and the oppressed – the oppressor to be more responsive to the needs of the people and the oppressed to be alert to their existential condition. However, if the oppressors will not dutifully wake up to the responsibility of providing good governance, they will be forced to doing just that as expressed in the song '*demno want take am, but dem take am*'³⁵ (Teacher don't Teach me Nonsense. Barclays Records) – thereby suggesting that the ruling class does not possess the monopoly of coercion.

³⁴ Anikulapo Kuti Fela, 'Coffin for Head of State,' Barclays Records, 1980.

³⁵ Fela, 'Teacher don't teach me Nonsense.'

In repudiation of the idea of external influence (*follow follow*), Fela called for a true system of government that is peculiar to Africa; a system devoid of the present demonstration of craze that will put a stop to the *international thief* that permeates the polity. Going forward, the teaming masses will reap the benefits of good governance that will put genuine smiles on their faces and not the hitherto suffering and smiling. This supposed picture of a New Jerusalem will only be feasible if the present system takes positive stride towards reconstructing a Nigeria that will harness the logic in Fela's criticisms as it tries to enthrone good governance.