

AFRICAN IDEOLOGIES AND INNOVATIVE TRENDS AND ADVANCES: HONOURING THE PAST AND SHAPING THE FUTURE

Prof. Izu Marcel Onyeocha
Department of Philosophy
Imo State University, Owerri

Preamble

It is almost inevitable to talk about African ideologies without referring to the West which seems to have created and transferred the concept to the African operational system. Western ideologies, like materialism, formalism, idealism, rationalism, empiricism, communism, socialism, individualism and collectivism, tend to dominate and even dictate most of Western thinking and action. As for African ideologies, they are guided and propelled by cosmic vital forces that navigate within the space-time dynamics. One would like to explain the concept of ideology in terms of ideas and presuppositions behind the activities, processes, procedures and outcomes underlying decisions and policies on various issues. To put things in clear perspective, let it be noted that the Western ideologies are based on dualism, while those of Africa are based on dualitism. Both dualism and dualitism represent the idea of twoness in reality. Dualism's twoness involves a contrast, while dualitism's is one of complement. In Western thinking ideologies found their way into the various isms for every given field of research and activity. Africa's thinking is oriented to and suffused with cosmology.

WESTERN DUALISM VS. AFRICAN DUALITISM

For the purpose of this presentation, the term "cosmology" is to be taken in the broadest sense of presuppositions about the unchanging nature of things, about God and the universe, and about humans and their place in the universe. This cosmological thinking covers issues of origins and operations of the human being - the visible and the

invisible world, the concrete and the abstract, the symbolic and the substantial, the mysterious and the mystical, and the *spirit-soul* and *life force*. While the Western ideologies are based on **DUALISM**, African ideologies are based on **DUALITISM**. The two concepts refer to twoness in the nature of reality. *Dualism* is operational in Plato's theory where he denies reality to physical phenomenal things in this world, which he called shadows, while retaining reality for the world beyond. Descartes' *dualism* sharply subjugated material things (*res extensa*) to thought things (*res cogitans*). Hegel's *dualism* creates a sharp contrast between *matter* and *spirit*. Early African ideologies, like Senghor's *Négritude*, Nkrumah's *Consciencism*, and Nyerere's *Ujamaa*, were Hegelian and Western-inspired. Azikiwe's *Zikism* was dubbed communalistic, while Awolowo's *Awoism* was dubbed welfaristic. Closer home, Archbishop Anthony Obinna dubbed his own ideas *Covivalism*, which in base is an admixture of welfarism and communalism. Finally, pharmacist Celestine Chima talks of *Africanism*, which is also communalistic and welfarist. Both communalism and welfarism are in base socialistic by a non-abrasive, non-cataclysmic route. They are anchored on the dualitistic mantra of **I AM BECAUSE WE ARE**.

A further development in Western dualism unfolded in the views of empiricists, pragmatists, utilitarians, positivists and neo positivists, as well as with the analytic movement, with their emphasis on verifiable things. In other words, what runs through in the Western ideology of conflict of opposites can be seen to be quite incoherent at the end. Dualism thrives on cleavage, conflict, disparity, separatism, uniqueness, superiority, conquest, overcoming, overtaking, etc. The primary thrust of intentionality is to achieve a breakthrough, make a difference, invent, conquer, dominate, and to establish superiority in matters. A dualistic society is premised on a disjunctive and exclusivistic impetus of **EITHER/OR**. It logically and necessarily engenders the natural consequence whereby to choose or prefer one option is to reject the other. It thrives on a climate of exclusivism, superiority feeling, elitism and bigotry, as the case may be.

Discrimination in society is only a natural mechanism for discerning the superior from the inferior, or the better from the worse, or the higher value from the lower in any situation. Racism, apartheid and all forms of classism are shouting examples of fallouts of a society that is founded on a dualistic ideology. Ironically, those who operate or presuppose Western ideologies relish them as values or even super values. They consider that every advancement, breakthrough, or invention they make entitles them to show indifference or undisguised disdain for the African ideologies.

AFRICAN DUALITISM EXPLAINED

In the prevailing age of artificial intelligence, they would glibly dismiss African ideologies as miserably flawed and pedestrian at best, and at worst, incoherent, meaningless and retrogressive. The African would handle the things of nature with care bordering on reverence, and would try never to degrade or devalue them. Unlike those who, driven first by curiosity and then by greed, deal with things in nature with cold and calculated detachment, the African handles them with care in the firm belief that there is a life-force propelling them and vibrating within them. Aimé Césaire is angered by the culture that rejects his own historic humanity, and he rejects the cultural arrogance that the Western ideologies brandish. He proposes values alternate to the vaunted discoveries, conquests, inventions and breakthroughs in empirical science and technology. He associates with royalty the dark African skin, which Western ideology has learnt to disdain in racism and classism. It is not base or despicable but royal! He refers to its coffee colour as “royal mahogany.” The mahogany is the quintessential tree for its strength and resilience. It is matchlessly beautiful when polished, unassailably strong in its texture, virtually incorruptible under harsh climatic conditions, and beyond the power of worms to devour.

Eia (Hurrah) for the royal mahogany!

Eia (Hurrah) for those who have never invented anything!

For those who have never discovered

*For those who have never conquered
But abandon themselves to the essence of all things
Ignorant of surfaces, but seized by the very movement of things
Not caring to conquer, but playing the game of the world
Truly the elder sons of the world, porous to all the breaths of the
world.¹*

Africa possesses an essence of which science and technology are mere aspects. This essence includes closeness to the earth, a fascination for the *very movement of things*. Césaire was not gloating over, rather than regret Africa's diminished presence in what appears to be the main arena of Western ideology. He was not hailing as a virtue the situation of failure or inability to have invented or conquered or discovered anything. Nor was he pretending that inaction, sloth, and lack of drive were noble and desirable over prompt, dynamic and effective action. In a later event, Césaire himself clarified the vision of Africa that he and those who thought like him wished to convey.

We thought that it was an immense injustice to say that Africa had done nothing; that Africa did not count in the evolution of the world, that Africa hadn't invented anything of value. And at the same time it was an enormous mistake to think that nothing of value could come out of Africa. But let me add that our loyalty to Africa did not lead to a sort of philosophy of the ghetto.²

Césaire asserted and brandished the dynamic of *Négritude* in African ideologies. One could cautiously interpret *Négritude* in the issue at hand as 'the African way'. It is no mere label but an active becoming

¹Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1962), 72.

²V.Y. Mundimbe, ed., *The Surreptitious Speech (Presence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness)* (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 24.

and a vital force that is dynamically, but patiently and stubbornly, active in the earth and the sky and the elements.³

Upon scrutiny, one discovers that the whole idea of conflict of opposites embedded in Western ideologies creates a paradox of inertia. Nevertheless, the paradox of inertia in talking about opposites lies in the fact that in the etymological and actual meaning of the words, things that oppose each other actually lean on each other. If you placed a ladder against a wall, the ladder leans on the wall. In the Igbo language, there is no precise word for opposite, oppose, opponent, opposition. The closest equivalents include *mmágídé*, *mgbàgídé*, *nnògídé*, *ndàgídé* and *mkpàgídé*. The *-gídé* suffix demonstrates the activity or property of gripping, attaching and leaning. The dictionary meaning of *to oppose* is to stand *against* and *to stand against only means to lean on, or towards* (which is obviously for support)! *Collins Thesaurus* (p. 467, on synonyms for opposite suggests the words, **corresponding, facing and fronting**. Things that are opposite or are opposed to each other go in contrary directions and have the goal of cancelling each other out.

Ede's *ifé kwúrú ifé ákwúdèbé yä* has been clearly manifested. It is quite heart-warming, both for children and for adults, to learn about and associate with their Guardian Angels, even though they cannot explain outright the mode and mechanism of the guardianship. They are confident and assured that the angel is there. Current African ideologies have inherited and acquiesced to the faulty Western educational parameters that successive educational authorities and policy makers have allowed to define their modes and operations. In **DUALITISM**, unlike in **DUALISM**, twoness does not necessarily imply contrariness, but is open to complementarity, supplementarity and

³Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal*, 72. Cf. Aimé Césaire, *Return to My Native Land*, trans. John Berger and Anna Bostock (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 75.

synergy. The following table is a collection of what I call duplets that illustrate the **DUALITISTIC** pattern in Igbo epistemological thinking that *ífé kwúrú ífé ákwúdèbé yā*. One could consider the **DUALITISTIC** principle as backbone to African ideologies. The *ífé nkwúdèbé* is a complementarity principle, an enabling permanent possibility for completion. It is there for being, for doing and for becoming. It implies neither quantity nor quality; neither parity nor disparity, neither necessity nor value differential.

DUPLETS	DUPLETS	DUPLETS
ákánri na ákáèkpè RIGHT/LEFT	íwé na ònùmà SORROW/GRIEF	ókèòkpà na nnékwú ROOSTER/HEN
áká na ìgòdò KEY/LOCK	mmá na njó GOOD/EVIL	ókú na mmírì FIRE/WATER
àkó na úchè MIND/THOUGHT	imí na ányá EYES/NOSE	ókwú na òmùmé WORD/ACTION
àkú na ùtá BOW/ARROW	Ísì na ódù HEAD/TAIL	ókwú na úkà DISPUTE/QUARREL
chí na ékè DESTINY/CREATOR	ìgùgbè na mmà-ághā File/sword	óké na nné MALE/FEMALE
dí na nwányì HUSBAND/WIFE	ìhú na àzú FRONT/BACK	ónwá na kpákpandò MOON/SUN
égbè na ùgò EAGLE/KITE	mgbágó na ndidà uphill/downhill	óká na úhèrè LENGTH/BREADTH
égbè na mmà GUN/SWORD	mmúo na mmádù SPIRIT/HUMAN	ójí na ósè KOLA/ALLIGATOR PEPPER
ógù na mmà HOE/MACHETE	ÍSIALÀ ÍKPÈRÈALÀ SUPPLICATION AND WORSHIP	ónwú na ndù DEATH/LIFE
égwú na óchì FUN/LAUGHTER	nkwú na ngwò OIL PALM/RAFFIA PALM	ònwúnwé na nchópùtā OWNERSHIP/DISCOVER Y
élú na àlà UP/DOWN	nnà na nwá (úmù) FATHER/SON	ónyeúkwú na ónyentā GREAT AND SMALL
ényì na ógò	nné na nwá (úmù)	ósó na íjè

FRIEND/IN-LAW	MOTHER/CHILD	HASTE/SLOWNESS
ényi na ényì FRIEND/FRIEND	nnú na mmánú SALT/OIL	òsá na úzè squirrel/úzè
ényí na nwánzà ELEPHANT/THORN BIRD	nnú na ósè SALT/PEPPER	ùbá na ùbiam WEALTH/POVERTY
éwú na òkúkò GOAT/CHICKEN	nrá na àgbùgbà INCITEMENT/INSTIGATION	ùbé na ókà ÙBÉ/MAIZE
ézí na úlò HOME/ABROAD	ntú na ághùghò LIES/SLANDER	ùdèlè nà àkwú VULTURE/NEST
ìhè na òchíchiri LIGHT/DARKNESS	nwókè na nwanyi MALE/FEMALE	úgwú na ndidà TOP/BOTTOM
ìhú na àzú BACK/FORTH, FRONT/BACK	òchíè na óhúru ANCIENT/MODERN	úkwú na áká HANDS/ FEET
ímí na ányá NOSE/EYES	òfó na ógù ÒFÓ NA ÓGÙ	úkwú na ntà GREAT/SMALL
íkwú na íbè KITH/KIN	óhía na úzò BUSH/ROAD	ùtó na ílú SWEET/BITTER
íkè nà èbùbè POWER/MIGHT	ògàrànyà na ógbènyè RICH/POOR	úwé na ákwà DRESSING/CLOTH
íkéókwù na íkèògù TALK POWER/WAR POWER	ógù na mmà HOE/MACHETE	úrù na ókpúkpú FLESH/BONE
jí na édè YAM/COCOYAM	ògù na mgbá FIGHT/WRESTLING	úrù na òghóm ADVANTAGE/DISADVANTAGE
ígwé na àlà SKY/SOIL	òké na ngwèrè RAT/LIZARD	ùwà na chi FATE/FORTUNE

AFRICAN DUALITISM OVERCOMES WESTERN MONOLITHISM

In dualitism, concord is favoured over cleavage, co-operation over conflict, and pluralism over monolithism. Parity is favoured over disparity, harmony over prevalence, and congress over competition. African dualitism overcomes Western monolithism, for its twoness conveys the sense of balance and stability, of supportiveness over supplantation, complementarity over contradiction, and synergy over seism. Any reality that has support stands firm, while those without support are in perpetual risk of toppling over. G. Ernest Wright explains this dualitistic dynamic in the operations of nature:

Nature is alive, and its powers are distinguished as personal because (humans have) directly experienced them. There is no such thing as the inanimate. (Humans live) in the realm of a throbbing, personal nature, the kingdom of the holy gods. (They are) caught in the interplay of gigantic forces to which (they) must integrate (their lives). (These forces) are known to (humans) because (they have) experienced them, not as objects but as personalities so much greater in power than (their) own that of necessity they worship and serve them.⁴

Dualitism is based on the interconnectedness of everything to everything else, regardless of category. The physical is connected to the physical, as well as to the nonphysical and abstract, and as well as to the simple, the sublime, and the esoteric. Similarly, the visible is connected to the visible and the invisible, to the spiritual and the psychic, and to the magical and the mystical. All are interconnected. The fact of interconnectedness is the important thing, while the mode or manner of interconnection is of secondary importance. There is thus no strict distinction or discontinuity between the sacred and the secular, between the natural and the supernatural, for nature, humans and the unseen are inseparably involved in one another in a total community. Humans have found two ways of interpreting this sense of presence, which confronts them in the world. One is that of

⁴ G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (London: SCM Press, 1950), 17.

reckoning with things as they naturally function, and another is by attributing life or an inner dynamic to everything. Gravity makes a stone thrown up to fall down, but what really makes gravity do what it does? In other words, what is the inner dynamic behind gravity?

In the fields of religion, politics, and even science itself, African ideologies navigate between tradition and modernity, between custom and convention, between the mythical and the mystical. The *dibìà áfà* functions seamlessly with the *dibìà ógwù*. There is a spiritual element for life and death, for prosperity and penury, and for power and control. The *babalawo* exists along with the medical practitioner, the preacher and the prophet. In African operations, magic and miracle blend, and the concrete and the spiritual mutually support each other. All of these are premised on the simple supposition that *ifé kwírú ifé akwùdèbé yä*. That supplies the crucial cosmological impetus which the Western ideology tragically dismisses or glibly glosses over either as superstition or as idiocy. In African ideologies, human relationships are intersubjective, governance is communal, and the family is extended. Marriage is multi-wife, knowledge and skill blend (*nkà nà úzú*), and monolithic rulership *ézè* is supplemented by (*òhà na ézè*). In African ideologies, education is practical and apprenticed, belief is without compulsion, decision making is by consensus, and religious quest is facultative to the individual and not through proselytism. In the absence of uniform liturgy and holy book, theology is expressed in clear and simple terms.

Emmanuel Edeh describes it as *ifé kwírú ifé akwùdèbé yä*. This idea is germane and seems to play out as an expatiation of the classical epistemological law of association. This law stipulates that things evoke each other when they are similar, or dissimilar, or proximate, or contrasting. *Ifé kwírú ifé akwùdèbé yä* has a cosmological core to it. If the first *ifé* is physical or material, the second *ifé* is likely to be invisible or spiritual. This cosmological core seems lost to the Western mind as he seeks to deny it as superstition, or dismiss it as

animism, or ridicule it as syncretism. What current conventional language regards as inert or lifeless, elemental or material, is alive in the African cultural assumptions. Everything is alive not in the bio cellular sense but in the sense of an inner dynamic that propels it to be what it is and do what it does in the precise way only possible with it.

CHÍ AND ÍFÉ KWÚRÚ ÍFÉ AKWÙDÈBÉ YĀ

In Igbo cosmology, *ifé kwúrú ifé akwùdèbé yā* receives its best illustration in the concept of *chí*, which refers variously to **FATE, FORTUNE, LUCK** or **DESTINY**. It is supposed to be the instrument through which every existent is able to function in the various planes. Everything, including humans and objects, has its own *chí*. *Chí* is not a religious concept at all. It is neither God *simpliciter*, as some might think, nor anti-God as such. It is only a **SPARK OF THE DIVINE**, and as such could be associated with the spiritual. The physical human frame is the most material and furthest removed from the spiritual. People would usually not identify themselves with it or with the ethereal body. The personality of an individual is contained in the soul and spirit. The real Ego, however, exists essentially in the Over-Soul. The Over-Soul itself, with the Spirit, is more in touch with God than with the body. It is not deeply influenced by events affecting its various emanations comprised in the physical, ethereal and mental forms and the shadow. Powerful as the spirits of the dead are believed to be, they are themselves subordinate to a higher (divine) power and, in almost all sub-Saharan cultures, to a Supreme Being.

Since superior or higher forces directly influence lower ones, this Supreme Being is held to be the original source of order in the world, which he generally administers through the intervention of various natural objects, such as mountains, groves, trees, rivers and lakes, where they can be summoned through the right invocations. The standard of good behaviour depends on acknowledging, maintaining, respecting and invoking such forces. A more accurate interpretation would render *chi* and *ékè* respectively in terms analogous to the Aristotelian-Thomistic terms of *essence* and *existence* of the same

reality. The former is the constitutive aspect, while the latter is the operative or functional aspect of the individual. When Thomas the Apostle encountered the risen Christ and touched the wounds on his resurrected body, he had declared: “My Lord and my God!” He was referring not to two realities but to one.

Igbo language is replete with similar conjunctionalised duplets expressing the same reality. For example, *ùwàm na chím, chím na ékèm, ikwúm na ibèm, úkwúm na ákám ihúm na àzúm*, are not itemising objects but are emphatically referring to the same immanental reality. Similarly, the expression, *ùwàm na chím* (my world and my *chí*), would refer to my existential self, my-immanent-self-and-my-destiny, every-value-I-crave-for-or-cherish, my-lot-and-my-destiny-in-life. If, on the other hand, *na* is an auxiliary verb to *ékè*—bringing-into-being, then one sole reality is involved and that reality is qualified with the act of bringing-into-being could cautiously interpret *Négritude* in the issue at hand as ‘the African way’. It is no mere label but an active becoming and a vital force that is dynamically, but patiently and stubbornly, active in the earth and the sky and the elements. It is not cold and dumb, like a rock, nor dead like a stagnant pool, nor inanimate, stiff and immobile like a tower or a cathedral. It is vibrantly alive:

My *Négritude* is *not a rock*, its deafness
hurled against the clamour of the day
My *Négritude* is *not a film of dead water*
on the dead eye of the earth
My *Négritude* is *neither a tower nor a cathedral*
It plunges into the red flesh of the earth
It plunges into the burning flesh of the sky
It pierces the opaque prostration by its upright patience.⁵

⁵Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal*, 72. Cf. Aimé Césaire, *Return to My Native Land*, trans. John Berger and Anna Bostock (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 75.

It is quite interesting to watch Nollywood movies and note the ever-recurring theme of royalty that pervades the landscape. Even huts are referred to as palaces and villages are referred to as kingdoms. Rulers and their spouses, sometimes walking barefoot, are referred to as Kings and Queens, and their offspring are referred to as princes and princesses. What stands out clearly is that the ideas of palace, kingdom, monarch, and regime are deconstructed. It is the roles assigned them, rather than the material opulence involved, that counts. The Buckingham Palace in England and the Elysée Palace in France have their material value, but the hut palace, at say Umunya Kingdom, is a palace all the same, and the king inhabits it as a king all the same. There is a free admixture of myth and modernity at various levels and in various issues about governance and the determination of policies.

Many communities and peoples of Africa think of certain snakes and some other totem animals appearing in their houses or plantations as embodiments of particular ancestors. They treat them as guests but do not worship them as such. They may venerate a stream as the ‘child’ or embodiment of a woman that died at its source – the stream is not a goddess. Trees, mountains, rocks are revered, but only as the abode of spirits that were human. Nature is not worshipped in Africa but revered, because natural objects are imbued with non-human spirits. Nature is personal because she is the medium in which human personality and will continually operate.⁶ Although an African feels himself or herself a vital force in actual, intimate and permanent *rapport with* other forces, he or she recognizes uniqueness in the force that is human.

Human means not only living men and women, but the dead also and the great ancestors and hero-spirits. The uniqueness of the human force lies in its possession of creative intelligence and will, which can directly strengthen or weaken another human in his or her life-force, can influence the force of non-human things and can control the force

⁶ John V. Taylor, 78.

of a thing to influence the life force of another person. This creative intelligence releasing the force in things is the principle underlying the use of herbal medicines, and the discovery of healing powers in non-organic substances like stones and metals.

CHÍ AS VITAL FORCE

The Aristotelian Unmoved Mover is a principle rather than a thing; or better still, as a thing-principle. Placide Tempels points out that in African conception, the world is controlled by a vital force (**FORCE VITALE**). This mode of conception does not, as some critics of Africa tend to suggest, translate into wholesale Spiritism and animism. It means that every reality possesses within its inner makeup a dynamic or impulse that propels it to be what it is, do what it does, and in precisely the way it alone can be or do. It can be compared to the Igbo concept of *chí*, which incorporates in its meaning the idea that vital force and soul coexist in the same individual. Interactions between humans and each other, between humans and nature, and between humans and God, are those between vital forces, souls and powers. Many African groups believe that the human being is innately divine, bearing either a spark of the divine fire (Akan) or holding within himself or herself the divine breath (Yoruba, Mende).

The African is acutely aware of his or her bond with nature and would shape his or her attitude to nature accordingly. He or she would at every point in time try to be in harmony both with the universe and with the things in nature. Hence, one may hear Africans saying that there are spirits in the trees, mountains and rivers. This mode of thought has been scoffed at in Western circles as superstitious, nonsensical and incoherent, since there is the mind-set that nature is inert. In saying that material things are alive, the African is consistent with his or her basic assumption about nature's dynamism. He or she understands by all this that life-force permeates the whole universe and that matter and spirit are an inseparable reality. Trees, mountains, rocks and rivers are revered and feared, but only as the abode of

spirits that were human. Nature is personal because it is the medium in which human personality and will continually operate.

Thus, behind the natural things, and intimately co-existing with them, is the non-material power - a force or vibratory energy that is dynamic and active. This life-force is impersonal and non-conscious, yet it constitutes the individuality of every living-force or individual. Every individual has his or her own life-force, and this can vary quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Humans, animals and plants share from this life-force. Spirits and divinities or mythical beings possess it, and it can be communicated to things. In the African mode of thought, life-force is under the direction or guidance of the soul. Though a force as well, the soul is a principle and does not vary either quantitatively or qualitatively. The African has no raw definition for such forces, but only describes them in terms of their function. Thus, the concept of soul would be something like the individual's will, his or her thought, conscience and judgment. The Igbo expression is "*Obi m gwaram na...*" (My mind, my conscience, my opinion is that...). The African does not even say that the soul is a kind of entity or a determinate thing that goes to heaven or hell after death. Vital force and soul coexist in the same individual. Interactions between humans and each other, between humans and nature, and between humans and God, are those between vital forces, souls and powers. Many African groups believe that the human being is innately divine, bearing either a spark of the divine fire (Akan) or holding within himself or herself the divine breath (Yoruba, Mende).

Chi-names have filled up the name-giving of children born in the 1970s and 1980s because of the confusion in the minds of the young parents of the time in thinking that all *Chi*-names refer to God. They had just been informed that they could use indigenous names to christen their children. Thus, in the names *Chiómá*, *Chidinmà*, *Chikèrè*, *Chibúzò*, *Chikàtá*, *Chínwè*, *Tóchì*, *ákáchi*, *Chètáchi*, and countless others so prefixed, the intent might well be to *Chínékè*, but the actual reference is to *chi*, which refers variously to Fate, Fortune

or Luck. The confusion did not exist in the mind of the forebears when they used such names. *Chí* did not refer to God, and they prefixed names with *Chúkwú* when they meant God! When they used *chí*, it was as much an option as when they prefixed names with *ùwà*, *ibè*, *ùmunnà* or *òhà*. In other words, *Chíkwé* had counterparts in *Úwàkwé*, *Íbèkwé*, *Úmunnàkwé* or *Òhàkwé*. The fact is that only those names that clearly spell out *Chúkwú* directly escape the confusion. Examples include, among others: *Chúkwùmà*, *Chúkwúka*, *Chúkwùèmeká*, *Chúkwúdì*, *Òdìrichúkwú*, *Úgòchúkwú* and *Ónúchùkwù*. Such *Chúkwú* names have obvious reference to God, while their *Chi*-naming refers to non-God.

Before the explosion of *Chi*-names in christening children, it was clear in the mind of the individual that named his child *Chíómá* that the reference was not to God but to his circumstances of “good fortune” or “good luck” or with “fate being favourable” in having that child. The stark contrast between *chí ómá* and *chí ójóò*, in current usage, makes it abundantly clear that *chí ómá* and *chí ójóò* clearly refer not to God, but to life’s circumstances of fate, luck, fortune or destiny. Now it is all lost in a maze of confusion, and a thoroughgoing catechesis would be necessary to get things right again. To this effect, Gregory Adibe counsels that those born blind or disabled are not necessarily *ndi chí ójóò* as such, but were born for a purpose, within the prevailing circumstance. He warns that *chi* emanating from God should not be called evil in any form.⁷

THE SKEWING OF TIME

Discussion on African ideologies will not be complete without discussing the issue of time. It must be admitted that the African has lagged behind in the industrial world because of a skewed idea of time. It has to do with the so-called African time—a misconception that seems to make culpable tardiness routine and almost a lifestyle.

⁷ Gregory Ejiofor Adibe, *Igbo Issues*, 73.

Unfortunately, some Africans have become complacent about, and complicit in, perpetuating the ugly trend of culpable tardiness by having recourse to the mantra of African time as a convenient alibi for their failure in time management. This is unacceptable, as Africans do not operate a galactic firmament different from any other people in the world. There are three types of time—chronological time of clocks of moments in succession, cyclic time of seasons and kirotic time of events.

There is no confusing one type with another. All three types are overarched by the 24-hour chronological time. While seasonal time is a successive series of 24-hours, kirotic time functions across the series. The failure of the so-called African time is the mistake of using chronological time as if it kirotic time. Industry operates strictly on chronological or 24-hour clock-based schedule into which activities must fit for things to work. If the bus leaves at 7 o'clock, passengers who neglect to be there for the departure miss it! On the other hand, if the bus fails to be there, the bus will miss the passengers who will seek alternative routes. Tardiness in whatever guise attempts to foist elements of cyclic time and kirotic time into chronological time, creating a mess. Even the cyclic season abhors tardiness. Planting or harvesting when the season is over spells disaster. Similarly, tardiness with kirotic time leads to procrastination.

All said and done, the blame for the travesty of **AFRICAN TIME** must go majorly to the Western interventionists in African lifestyle and history. Prior to that, Africans did not operate in a time vacuum, for every African had his household, his place of worship, his little consumer market, the playground, the meeting place conveniently located and accessible for effective time management. The location of the river or water source, which was a gift of nature, was not within anyone's power to locate or relocate. People went to draw water at the time that was convenient for them. Those who went late suffered the individual penalty of water shortage and it might negatively affect their mealtimes or ability to clean things up. As for markets, those

who were into merchandizing would gather their wares and find their way to such markets in far-flung places requiring long journeys. Meanwhile, consumables like vegetables and food condiments were readily available around any corner or even from vendors calling out in the neighbourhood. Whenever the need arose, meetings were summoned and punctuality and attendance were assured.

Overall, everything functioned in synergy and there was no question of absenteeism, or habitual tardiness, or the conflict of activities. Traditional Africa, as well as conventional Africa, has always placed a high premium on punctuality as well as precision in the performance of activities. Before the arrival of the mechanical clock, the African scheduled things with the cockcrow, high noon, and sundown. The West came in and zapped whatever was the *status quo*. They should have considered beginning with teaching the African the making and working of the mechanical clock if they so valued their compliance to chronological time. Prior to the Western intervention, every African had his household, his place of worship, his little consumer market, the playground, the meeting place conveniently located and accessible. The river or water source, which was a gift of nature, was not within their power to locate or relocate. As for markets for merchandise, those who were into merchandizing could find their way to such markets in far-flung places requiring long journeys.

Overall, everything functioned in synergy, and there was no question of absenteeism, or habitual tardiness, or the conflict of activities. Here is the scenario: The West came in and zapped whatever was the *status quo* in terms of time management. Ostensibly for the sake of development and ultimately for their own convenience, they set up centres in the midst of nowhere where they merged the operations of various communities in school and church. Those two items totally altered the mode of operations of the community. To attain to these, one must skip house chores, activities like farm or trade, or skill. One must reckon with the distance, the rough terrain, and the fact that all

was on foot. One must take off early and in spite of best efforts arrive late, and risk being whacked, as was in vogue at the time. Activities were scheduled to start at 6, or 8, or 9 o'clock when no one had one or knew how to read the time.

Of little help was the large slit wooden drum used to remind scholars to start coming to school or Church: ***Kom! Kom! Kom-kom-kom! GBÁHÀRÁ JÍ GBÁHÀRÁ ÉDÈ BIÀWÁ ÁKWÚKWÓ!*** Those who heeded the call and managed to arrive early enough would, unfortunately, have to wait for several minutes, and at times up to an hour, for others to arrive. As people arrived, they received their whacking and joined in the waiting for others to form a quorum. Uniformly, no one knew when what struck was 7, or 8, or 9 o'clock, because no one had a clock and no one knew how clocks worked. Somehow, the impression grew that Africans could simply not keep to time. That impression grew along with others into a prejudice so persistent that that it seems to have been allowed to stick. The true logic of "African time", and which should be highlighted and promoted, is that human activities must be accorded quality time for them to be worth any effort. Africa must take its share of the blame in its complacency and complicity.

In its true sense, therefore, "African time" is a positive concept and pertains to **THE KAIROTIC CATEGORY OF QUALITY TIME TAKEN AND DEDICATED** to midwife a becoming, or accomplish some activity or task. Because of the importance attached to the activity or task, African time turns it into an event to mark or remember. African time is a universal heritage, not exclusive to Africa. Just as chronological African time can be the travestied by culpable tardiness, kairotic African time, when travestied, results in mental confusion and indecision. This implies that except in an emergency, one is not supposed to embark on a new activity while another activity is on course until the latter has been completed. This attitude to time might, in its abuse, give the impression that the African has no value for time and has no respect for schedules. Nothing could be further from the truth. The careful scheduling of activities is an indispensable element

in time management. The African who fails to respect schedules makes a statement, not about Africa, but about his or her own inadequacies in time management. For the future, Africa has the opportunity to delve into the terrain of the paranormal, the mysterious, and the mystical and use it to provide the missing cosmological link in the thinking and acting process as it affects African ideologies, and synergise with Western ideologies. The study in the oriental world of those aspects of reality gave rise to the vibrant study and practice of parapsychology. Africa can thus contribute its own unique quota to knowledge.