Abstract

Truth is difficult to define and hard to come by. The difficulty and hardship result not only from the relativistic perspective of truth but from its willingness to allow for concessional and varied interpretations. Over the years, scholars have defined truth from correspondence to coherence through pragmatic and global perspectives.

In the sociopolitical arena, the story is even bitterer as intrigues, maneuverings and interests (self and collective) characterize activities here. A true theory for integral sociopolitical engagement is therefore very necessary. In this paper, we present and explore the ingredients of Iroegbu’s Ohacratic theory, as a model for integral sociopolitical true existence in Nigeria, in Africa, or elsewhere in our existential globe. With him we aver that Ohacracy, in origin (existence), in words (language) and in action (practice), is indeed a true and integral sociopolitical theory worthy of global attention.

Preamble

Man, as renowned authorities and scholars \(^1\) have observed, is a social and political animal. These social and political natures of man impose much challenges and implications. As a social animal, man must learn and live harmoniously with other men and his environment. As a political animal, created in the image of God, man is challenged to make use of his rationality in order to better his conditions of existence and living. This is the primary and major responsibility which God entrusted to man in the biblical genesis of creation, “Be fruitful and multiply, ... fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen.1:28). However, since man, is not the ultimate reason and sufficient meaning of his own existence, he is to model his procreative and re-designing ingenuity after his Divine creator. In the sociopolitical and economic arena, man was better-off under theocratic principles. However, due to God’s given freedom and man’s insatiable propensity for self-fulfillment and determination, man easily abandoned theocratic principles for his own-designed political models and theories such as – democracy, tupocracy, oligarchy, monarchy, timocracy, plutocracy, to mention but a few. But as these are not necessarily the designs for man by God, their practices always hit on some rocks. It is at the background of the numerous shortfalls of the different sociopolitical and economic paradigms designed by man, that we project Iroegbu’s “Ohacracy”, as a theory for integral sociopolitical true existence. Before we examine the ingredients that make up this Ohacra tic thesis as projected by Rev. Fr. Prof. P. O. Iroegbu, let us first cast a bird’s eye-view on our key concepts of discuss – “Ohacracy”, “Integral”, “Sociopolitical” and “True Existence”.

Conceptual Clarifications

Ohacracy:
dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.\(^6\)

Thus, tragedy is recognized as an imitation of some serious action with an adequate use of well decked-out language. The incidents or action in a tragedy must have some purgative or emotion-releasing effect on the audience. Besides, Aristotle plainly sees tragedy as the utilization of rhythm and harmonious song superimposed upon performance. This is simply to say that while some portions of tragedy are decked out with rapturous or charming verses, the other portions put on the trinket of “harmony-in-song-for-dance” as their garland.

4. The Plot as a Major Plank in Greek Tragedy

4.1 Parts of Tragedy

In a very striking way, Aristotle has a peculiar method of writing, and a way of explaining things, which bespeaks an ancient manner of exposition. At any rate, it is not our chief purpose in this work to analyze his pattern or style of writing. More important, he examines the parts of tragedy and first notes the presence of SPECTACLE, which has to do with the stage-appearance of the actors; there is the MELODY and DICTION, which take charge of versification rhythm and “what-is-understood-to-require-explanation” respectively; also, since the subject of tragedy is basically the actions of the agents, it necessarily follows that actors must have some CHARACTER and THOUGHT which they must exhibit: for it is through these that we can access the very quality or moral purpose of their actions. As Aristotle would say, with particular reference to these personages, “there are in the natural order of things, therefore, two cause, thought and character, of their actions, and consequently of their success or failure in their lives.”\(^7\) To crown it all, whatever is manifest in a play is the handiwork of FABLE or PLOT. Aristotle explains the plot or fable in this manner:

> The Fable, in our present sense of the term, is simply this, the combination of the incidents [series of events] or things done in the story... \(^8\)

Therefore, there are six concrete parts to every tragedy: fable or plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and melody. According to Aristotle, two of them are as a result of MEANS, one is as a result of MANNER, and three are as a result of OBJECT. But it is not in our place to discuss this here.

4.2 The Centrality of Plot

As we have already known, tragedy does somewhat imitate persons by their actions and life. Aristotle boldly notes that it is virtually in our actions that we are either happy or miserable. Inasmuch as character adds only quality or morality, it is simply added for the sake of the action(s). It is expressly these actions that constitute the whole lot of what Aristotle regarded as the Fable or Plot. Of those six parts, the plot is evidently of primal importance. This is why Aristotle crowned it the end-purpose or chief-thing in every tragic drama (just as it is an essential feature in both comedy and the epic tales). In supporting this claim, Aristotle noted the tragic blunder committed by some “modernist” playwrights of his own time who created a new strand of tragedy that concentrated much lavished effort.
on beauteous diction and bright thought, but failed woefully in the constructions of the plot. For Aristotle, there is nothing more debilitating than this; for still,

One will have much better success with a tragedy which, however inferior in those respects, has a plot, a [good] combination of incidents, in it.®

Overall, the plot is a conditio sine qua non for every dramatic performance or play. "We maintain, therefore, that the first essential, the life and soul, so to speak, of Tragedy is the plot; and that the character comes second...third come ...thought, i.e. the power of saying whatever can be said or what is appropriate to the occasion." Belonging to thought: some older poets represented their personages as speaking like statesmen or politicians, but "modern poets" (in Aristotle's own words) represented them as speaking like rhetoricians or glib speakers. On its own part, diction simply is "the expression of their thoughts in words, which is practically the same thing with verse as with prose". 11 For the remaining two of the six parts, Aristotle categorically stipulates that, in spite of its ranking, melody is the most pleasurable of all the accessories of tragedy. Spectacle, on the other hand, is the least in the order of importance, precisely because it is not part of the art of the playwright, but that of the costumier. Aristotle insists that tragic effects can be achieved with or without public performance of any play by actors.

4.3 Proportionality in Plot

Tragedy, precisely as that art which involves a complete action, must have a requisite magnitude proportional to its unique fascination. Granted, not all "wholes" have magnitude per se; but Aristotle, from his literary balcony, describes something that has a "whole" as possessing a Beginning, a Middle, and an End. We may find some modern equivalents (in tragic drama) of the idea of a beginning, a middle, and end, in such structural arrangement as: Exposition, Conflict, and Resolution; or Introduction, Rising action, Climax, Falling action, and Catastrophe. Thus Aristotle explains:

A beginning is that which is not itself necessarily after anything else, and which has naturally something else after it; an end is that which is naturally after something itself, either as its necessary or usual consequent and with nothing else after it; and a middle that which is by nature after one thing and has also another after it.®

Of necessity, a good plot does not begin and end anyhow without some measure of proportionality. A living example of this, according to Aristotle, is that any living creature that is to be considered beautiful must possess or have a reasonable magnitude in addition to a perfectly stream-lined or orderly arranged integral parts: for "beauty is a matter of size and order, and therefore impossible either (1) in a very minute creature, since our perception becomes indistinct as it approaches instantaneity; or (2) in a creature of vast size - one say, 1,000 miles long - as in that case, instead of the object being seen at once, the unity and wholeness of it is lost to the beholder."®

So should it be with any perfect story or plot in tragedy: it must be of a certain length to be absorbed in one full slide view by the memory. But "as for the limit of its
length, so far as that is relative to public performances and spectators it does not fall within
the theory of poetry[i.e., drama]. If they [the actors] had to perform a hundred tragedies,
they would be timed by water-clocks, as they are said to have been at one period”.

Afterward, Aristotle presented a rough or make-shift formula with special regard to
the length limit for any tragic performance. He surmised that the length of a tragic action
should be at least that which allows the hero to move systematically from one state of
disposition to the next - for instance, transiting from fortune or happiness to misfortune or
disaster. Notably, the major cause of this change or transition is the “tragic flaw” (which
Aristotle originally called hamartia: This is a mistake resulting from an error in judgement,
a moral fall or sin, as the case may be). The hero may have in him the vice of hubris or
pride, or even some kind of virtue to an excessive degree. This is precisely why Aristotle
cautions in his Ethical theory that virtue must stand in the middle (In Medio Virtue Stat) –
the law of “Golden Mean” or average, the work of moderation.

Given the nature of tragedy so far, each one for himself, night and day (pro se
quisque, noctes atque dies), must somewhat realize that the pivotal pillar, or the inertia of
every dramatic plot is “conflict” of whatever form, be it the opposition among some persons
or opposition with oneself or some forces (natural or supernatural). In other words, it is
this conflicting situation that keeps the captivating wheel of dramatic actions going, but
always there is a culminating or climactic point which ends in Resolution, which brings the
catharsis (emotional overflow or purgation) to full bloom.

In the meandering of the drama and its conflict, the UNITY of a tragic plot should
be maintained. With due consideration to length, good poets like Homer, “whether by art or
instinct,” gave a much better insight to unity than did most bad poets, who thought that all
that befalls one man is what is involved in the plot of tragic action. In other words, this
entails that plot is not a complete biography of any personage or a mere multiplicity or
plurality of stories. Thus,

[Homer] in writing ... Odyssey, did not make the poem cover all
that ever befell his hero... [For] in poetry the story, as an imitation
of action, must represent one action, a complete whole, with its
several incidents so closely connected that the transposal or
withdrawal of any one of them will disjoin or dislocate the whole.
For that which makes no perceptible difference by its presence or
absence is no real part of the whole.  

4.4 Types of Plot

Now, plot swiftly branches off into two main types: the simple plot and the
complex plot. In this regard, Aristotle writes:

I call simple, when the change in the hero’s fortune takes place
without Peripety or Discovery; and complex, when it involves one
or the other, or both. These should each of them arise out of the
structure of the plot itself...
(of the actor) to its bridal opposite – for example, from poverty to affluence, or happiness to sorrow, as the case may be. Discovery, on the other hand, implies a certain revelation, which involves a change from ignorance to knowledge. At the moment, Aristotle insists that, “...the finest form of discovery is one attended by Peripeties...”\(^\text{17}\)

Eventually, there is yet a third element of plot, which Aristotle calls Suffering, and “which we may define as an action of a destructive or painful nature, such as murders on the stage, tortures, ‘woundings’, and the like.”\(^\text{18}\)

Having briefly looked at the meanings of the elements of plot, it is pertinent then to raise the following question: What must the playwrights do, or aim at, or avoid, so to create a true tragic effect? In an attempt to answer this crucial question, Aristotle employs the process of elimination (via negativa) and enunciates the three forms of peripety to be avoided:

(1) A good man must not be seen passing from happiness to misery, or (2) a bad man from misery to happiness. The first situation is not fear-inspiring or piteous, but simply odious to us. The second is the most untragic that can be; it has no one of the requisites of tragedy; it does not appeal either to the human feeling in us, or our pity or to our fears. Nor, on the other hand should (3) an extremely bad man be seen falling from happiness to misery. Such a story may arouse the human feeling in us, but it will not move us to either pity or fear; pity is occasioned by undeserved misfortune, and fear by that of one like ourselves; so that there will be nothing either piteous or fear-inspiring in the situation.\(^\text{19}\)

It follows, therefore, – taking the above quoted strategies into proper consideration – that tragic pleasure, which comprises pity and fear should be arrived at through a well-framed plot or peripety, to be specific; so-much-so that even when one does not see the actual stage performance (i.e., its spectacle), one would still succeed in sharing the horrifying and piteous effects of a tragic tale if narrated.

Thus far, we plod our way to the complex tragic element of discovery. In Greek literature, there are six species of discovery to get further illumination from Aristotle. The first of these arises out of lack of artistic ingenuity (or acumen) on the part of some inferior or lesser poets or playwrights, to be precise. It is the discovery made through signs, streaks or marks found on the body of an actor, or that made through the use, or presence, of instrument or such external tokens as necklaces, trinkets, etc. A scar found on the chest or face of someone may help another recognize the person even when the contour of his face has changed with years. The second species of discovery is the one purposely and directly made by the playwright. We see this, for instance, in “Orestes’ discovery of himself in Iphigenia: whereas his sister reveals who she is by letter, Orestes is made to say himself what the poet rather than the story demands”.\(^\text{20}\) For this very reason, it is less artistic as the first type. Next, comes what Aristotle signifies as the discovery made through memory. In this case a man is awoken to consciousness and remembrance by what he sees or immediately perceives. The fourth kind is that which is made through reasoning alone. An example of it could be seen in the following speech: “One like me is here; there is no one
Integrative Humanism Journal - Ghana

Vol. 1 No. 1

[Origin (existence); word (language) and action (practice)]

Ohacracy is a theoretical cum practical concept that implies “society-centered” projects, programs and plans, which in turn does not lose sight of God, the ultimate principle and designer of all essences and existents in existence. For Prof. P. O. Iroegbu, “Ohacracy” is an “ethical-political theory” which is “community-centered”, and is capable of solving “the long predicamental situation of African countries” (and indeed the whole lot of human society) (Iroegbu 1997:3).

Etymologically, “Ohacracy” is a compound word derived from two words – “Oha” (Igbo) and “cracy” (Greek). From their different etymologies, “Oha” (Igbo word) means “community”, “society”, “an assembly or gathering of people”; while “cracy” (from Greek word “kratos”) literally means “the rule of”. Thus, from etymological perspective, Ohacracy can conveniently be defined as the rule by the people or community (of God) over themselves for their integral existential welfare.

The concept “Ohacracy” necessitates, in practice, wisdom, knowledge and reasonableness. It is well known (especially among the Igbo’s of Nigeria) that though an individual can make mistake in several instances, the entire society (human community) can rarely make mistake simultaneously. Thus, an “Ohocratic opinion”, just like in democracy (rulership by the people), should prevail over individual’s or group’s opinion or performances. Thus, the saying goes – “Oha nwe Eze” (the people/community/society owns the king). But unlike democracy, “Ohacracy”, in practice, recognizes and establishes Divine prerogatives over the “Oha” or community of people.

Integral:

The word “Integral” means “entire or whole”, “not fractional or involving fractions”, but “relating to integrals”, “unimpaired, intrinsic”, and “belonging as a part to the whole”, made up of its parts” (Kirkpatrick 1983:654). The word “Integral” has its roots in the mathematical word – “integer”, which means a whole or “whole number” (Ozumba, 2010:11). In our usage here, the word integral can also imply “comprehensiveness” or “completeness”: this is the sense in which Professor G. O. Ozumba also employed it in his recent thought-provoking methodological challenge – “Philosophy and Method of Integrative Humanism”.

Consequently, when we talk of “integral sociopolitical existence”, we imply the entire network of social existence and its political challenges. Put in other words, by “integral sociopolitical existence”, we mean the en semble (or totality) of political challenges which man grapples with in his community or societal existence, especially as they pertain to life in an organized civil society called the state. By using the word – “integral”, we also wish to underscore the fact that human existence whether sociopolitical, economic, cultural, religious, etc. is interwoven, and one may not successfully treat the exigencies of one aspect in isolation of the others.

Sociopolitical issues are so fundamental to human existence that, at times, some scholars are tempted to reduce the entire gamut of human mystique (mystery) to sociopolitical and material factors. In our “Integral” or holistic examination of sociopolitical existence and its challenges, we shall see how our versatile and erudite philosopher cum theologian – Iroegbu, tried to fuse these seemingly disjointed integers into his sociopolitical ideology of “Ohacracy”. This integral compartmentalization of sociopolitical exigencies in the theory of “Ohacracy”, akin to democracy, is, perhaps, one of Africa’s greatest sociopolitical legacies in the age of globalization.
Sociopolitical:

The word "sociopolitical" is the adjective of the compound words social and political, which in turn is derived from two nouns — "society" and "politics" respectively. "Society", as we intend to use it here, is an association of human beings and suggests the whole complex of the relations of man to his fellows. It consists of the complicated network of groups and institutions expressing human association". (Appadorai 1975:13). Thus, when we mean society here we do not just mean the state (although it is not excluded), but we mean the entire gamut of man's relationship with fellow man in his Divine terrestrial domain.

On the other hand, "Politics", as we use it here, is the art and science of managing and administering human affairs. It is, as we noted elsewhere, "a science that deals with the intricacies and maneuverings in sociopolitical and economic existence and living", which by so doing "tries to find out the ideal structure of human-environmental sustenance" (Nwankwor 2006:35). In politics, more than anywhere else, man is challenged to make optimum use of his God's-given rationality in solving or finding solutions to his existential questions and quandaries. That is why A. Appadorai defines politics as "the science concerned with the state and of the conditions essential to its existence and development", which also treats of "the foundations of the state and the principles of government" (Appadorai 4). For the purpose of this work, Ohacracy (as defined by Iroegbu), is our choice theory or set of principles for human sociopolitical and economic survival and true existence.

True Existence (2)

Existence is essentially an ontological concept, category, or entity engulfed in definitional, linguistic and ontological polemics, as other metaphysical terminologies. However, our contextual definitions and clarifications will save us the rigors of this academic gymnastics. In this regard, Bittle, C. N. in his work, The Domain of Being, has defined existence as a state of being in virtue "of which a being is present as an actuality and not merely as possibility, distinct from the mind, and if it be a produced being, distinct from its producing cause" (Iroegbu 48). The key points of this definition are that existence implies "being in actuality, not being in potency", and that existence connotes "being in reality, not possible being in the mind or in thought". Thus, Fr. Prof. P. O. Iroegbu defines existence in these impeccable terms:

Existence means that which is in reality or which has true, actual being. It is that which we see and touch or know to be here or there or somewhere else. What makes this reality is the act of existing, its perfection, "concrescence". It is what makes a thing be in reality, from not-being to being, in other words, from nothing to something. (48)

We may add that a metaphysical discussion on existence or an existent (the real subject of existence) usually imply that of the "essence", that is, "the quidity" or "whatness" of a thing. Thus, when we discuss an existent or being, we normally ask: what kind of an existent or being is it? What makes it what it is (its nature or creator)? and what is it,
different from other existents or beings?; in other words, what is it designed to be, what is its prototype or archetype?

Thus, an existent (the real subject of existence), in essence, has full and perfect meaning in terms of its creator or designer and in terms of what it is created for or designed to be. Existence, as an intelligible act, is purposive, it always has essence. Therefore, in contradiction to modern existentialism, I would even say that essence, ontologically, precedes existence because it is the meaning and purpose of existence, that defines same. True existence then implies existing for the actual purpose for which a thing is made, created or fashioned. The truth or veracity in sociopolitical existence will then imply existing for the purpose of sociopolitical order and harmony. By this clarification, we intend to underscore the fact that any existence (sociopolitical, economic, cultural, etc.) or existent (the real subject of existence) which does not foster its ontological essence and purpose is false. Thus, human existence is true when it concerns all man’s integral aspects and dimensions. The emphasis on “true” is necessary because there could be false existence, pretended existence or existence that is not worth the salt.

The true sociopolitical man is an integral humanity, interacting with his fellow men and variables of his existence, having an ever-refreshing interaction and reference to his Supreme cause, designer and maker. It is when man relates integrally and responsibly in his existence and with other existents and his creator, that he can be said to be involved in true sociopolitical and meta-politics of existence.

Iroegbu: Sketch of Life and Legacy of Integral Human Development

Rev. Fr. Professor Pantaleon Osonduagwuike Iroegbu is one of the finest intellectual gifts of God to the Eastern Region of Nigeria in West Africa. Fr. Iroegbu has his roots in Umueze-Umunumo, in Ehime Mbano Local Government Area, in the present Imo State of Nigeria. This child of distinction was born on 31st October 1951 to Nze Chief Titus and Lolo Nneoma Mary Iroegbu of Umueze Umunumo. Professor P. O. Iroegbu is the first, and perhaps the tallest, of the eight children (5 males, 3 females) of these glorious parents of Umunumo, Ehime Mbano, in present day Okigwe Catholic Diocese of Nigeria.

Fr. Prof. P. O. Iroegbu possesses one of the most enviable social and educational enlightenment and insights one can ever hope to acquire. This humble luminary star had his primary education at St. Charles’ School, Umunumo between 1959 and 1965, graduating with Distinction, a rare record then. Upon primary graduation, he moved to Immaculate Conception Seminary in Umuahia, where he had his Secondary education between 1966 and 1971. He cleared seven papers in the London G.C.E. O’level examinations, and thereafter was appointed Prefect/Teacher in his “alma mater”. While working in his alma mater, he also completed his London G.C.E. A’level examinations with an excellent result in 1972.

Having successfully and satisfactorily completed his Secondary education and perfecting in the minor Seminary, the young Pantaleon, in furtherance to his yes to Divine call for service, proceeded to Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu, in 1973 for his studies in Philosophy and Theology. In 1976, he bagged a Diploma in Philosophy, as the Seminary did not offer a degree programme in Philosophy then. Subsequently in 1980, he completed his first degree studies in Theology, with First Class Honours in the B.D. (Bachelor of Divinity) examination. The first phase of Pantaleon’s formal education and formation ended with his elevation to the order of Presbytery by Late Bishop Anthony G. Nwedo, C.S.Sp., of Umuahia at St. Columba’s Parish, Nsu-Mbano on July 5th, 1980. He was to serve God and humanity in this capacity for twenty-five years and seven months.
However, the formal education and formation of Pantaleon Iroegbu did not stop with his priestly ordination, he was to commence **intensive and integral further studies overseas** in 1985. These studies, done mainly in the prestigious University of Louvain-la-Neuve and Leuven, lasted for six years (1985 - 1991). Within this short period, the brilliant Fr. Pantaleon acquired unimaginable chains of degrees. Between 1985 and 1987, he bagged the Master of Arts Degree in Philosophy. From 1986 – 1988 also, he got his Master of Arts Degree in Ecclesiastical Sciences. Not yet done, he pursued his Doctorate Degree studies in Philosophy between 1988 and 1989, coming out with yet another First Class Honours. From 1990 - 1991, having got the highest degree in Philosophy with laudable accolade, he then transferred to the Flemish/English speaking section of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, for further studies in theological Sciences. In 1990, he added yet another feather to his already over-crowded academic crowns, with the Master of Arts Degree in Theology (M. Theol.). This excellent mind in Philosophy and Theology then pursued Doctorate degree programme in Dogmatic Theology with his thesis titled: “Theology and Community: Through Narrative Theology to an African Ecclesiology.” Before he could complete his Doctorate programme in Theology, “he was requested to return home for the work of forming young priests and of development” (Ukagba 2007:264). Like the “obedient lamb”, he wasted no time, and packed for home. However, his doctorate thesis in theology, having been “rated highly as innovative in the thought and practice of theology has been published, as a standard theological book in January, 1996, by International University Press, Owerri, Nigeria with a modified title: “Appropriate Ecclesiology: Through Narrative Theology to an African Church” (Ukagba 264). So far is the academic journey of Iroegbu and the numerous intellectual laurels he acquired. We shall further examine briefly how he puts these intellectual attainments into practice.

Iroegbu’s existential significance in the third millennium A.D. and beyond would perhaps be the re-definition of existential necessity, imperatives and prerogatives in modern day languages, cultural perspectives and deep existential dimensions. He is one man who, according to Professor Olusegun Oladipo, has brought home nearer to our cultural sensibility the Socratic dictum: “man know thyself; for an unexamined life is not worth living” (Ukagba 2005:37). The peculiar way he did this is through his enwisdomization (“nkuziology of amamihe”) which according to Iroegbu himself is “a theory of action (ethics) based on wisdom (Sophia) of the particular being in question (ontic)...it is wisdom of being in action” (Iroegbu 1994:21). In consideration of this deep knowledge and unique existential insights, Professor Oladipo has apodictically classified him (Iroegbu) among his contemporary thus:

Indeed, it is his rare combination of theoretical depth with a keen awareness of the fact that philosophy is nothing if it does not preserve the link between scholarship and life that makes Iroegbu’s practice of philosophy a refreshing departure from the dominant trends in contemporary Nigerian philosophy (Ukagba 2005:36-37).

The truism of this erudite Professor’s observation in terms of the “preservation of the link between scholarship and life”, is evident in the life of the man – Fr. Pantaleon Iroegbu. From his pastoral ministry, through his numerous academic engagements, to his keen concern for community development and progress, one sees in Iroegbu a man deeply
engaged in self-enwisdomization and public enlightenment. Above all, Iroegbu undertook all his existential responsibilities with thorough knowledge that he was created by God, and sent to earth for the purpose of serving and loving Him (God) in his fellow human beings, in order to be with Him (God) in eternity. This is effulgentely encapsulated in his personal motto: “omnia de Deo, in Deo, et pro Deo” (All from God, in God, and for God).

Immediately after his ordination to the catholic priesthood, Fr. Iroegbu was posted to the Immaculate Conception Seminary, Ahiaeke, 1980 – 1982, to help in the formation of future priests. Without asking for the material gains or asking for some rest after strenuous formation in the Seminary, he went to the field of work with greatest determinetion and zeal. He combined this mental sapping duty with being the Parish priest of St. Anne’s Parish, Ahiaeke, Ibeku. When Okigwe Diocese was created, he was transferred to St. Peter’s Seminary, Ihitte, 1982 – 1983, with the hectic responsibility of being the Rector. He left with zeal, without delay. Soon after he was re-assigned to St. Joseph Major Seminary, Ikot Ekpene to become the Administrative Dean and a Lecturer in Metaphysics and Liturgy. Again, he left, full of zeal and determination to serve – publishing his first book – “Nigerianism”, there.

Between 1985 and 1991, as we noted earlier, Fr. Iroegbu was sent to Europe for further studies. He left without delay; and there made history for himself, his Diocese, Nigeria, and indeed began his massive and integral influence on his generation and those yet to come. On his call back from Europe, he was posted to lecture at Seat of Wisdom Major Seminary, Owerri, where he also served as the 2nd Vice Rector and Director of Library Resources. Concurrent with this, he was offered part time lecturing appointment at the Missionary Seminary of St. Paul, Abuja and was made the Parish Priest of St. Theresa’s Parish, Umunakana, Owerri. Fr. Iroegbu carried all these responsibilities with cheerfulness and diligence that one can hardly recognize, on physical encounter with him, that he has such profundity of concerns.

Fr. Iroegbu was appointed visiting Professor at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve under Chair Hoover Fellowship in May 1997 and this appointment was renewed for the years 1998 – 2000. He received the honour of Hoover Fellowship of the University for 1997-1998 academic year. Recalled home in October 2000, as “a voice with intellect that matters”, he became a lecturer and formator at All Saints Major Seminary, Ekpoma, Edo State. In Ekpoma, he was the Dean of Studies, Director of Library as well as co-ordinator of Postgraduate programme with University of Benin, Benin City. It was while strenuously rendering services to humanity from here that the cold hands of death caught him on Friday, 24th February, 2006. Thus, Fr. Iroegbu, among so many other things, would be remembered for keeping the Kantian maxim of “duty for duty sake”. He worked so selflessly and faithfully that what St. Paul says of himself can equally apply to him (Iroegbu): “Bonum certamen certavi, cursum contumavi, fidem servavi” (I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith) (Ukagba 2007:268).

Apart from his numerous pastoral and academic services, Fr. Iroegbu, the “enwisdomizer” and “kpimizer” of philosophy and theology, also used his deep scholarly insights for social and community relevance. He seems to share the views of Karl Marx that the philosophical interpretation of the world should necessarily lead to its reformation, transformation and perfection. He parts ways with those who consider philosophical relevance only at the theoretical not practical dimensions. Nor does he share the views of those who (like Karl Marx) think that the relevance of philosophy is only for material utility or pragmatic services. He has a balanced and integral view of philosophy which links it to theology and daily existential experiences.
His practical sensibility and community consciousness, led to his formation of "Uju-Ngozi Forum" for development initiative, and the establishment of "Skills Acquisition College, Umunumo (SACU) in partnership with Bersenbruck, Germany, a Government Approved Technical College, for college students and youths to acquire "varied sustainable occupational skills for private, public and self-employment endeavours". He dug boreholes for his people to alleviate their water problems; and he is known to be sponsoring the training of several students at home and abroad for the purpose of their personal improvement and continuation of ohacratic (community) development. In the academic field, his primary constituency, he is known for his several initiatives, oratorical skills and infectious reasoning. His numerous publications which include about 24 books and about 64 international and local journal publications are sound testimonies of the depth of his scholarship and overwhelming influence in public affairs. Iroegbu, indeed, is an integrally developed personality, and he is involved in integral development of personalities. Perhaps, when Pantaleonism is fully appreciated, this scholarly Saint, would rank among the greatest legacies human existence has witnessed, especially in the third millennium A.D.

The Option of Ohacracy for Integral Sociopolitical True Existence

In a seminal paper by Oliver Iwuchukwu, he notes the fraud of Western imposition of liberal-democracy as equating specie (liberal democracy) to a genus (democracy). Agreed that the principles of democracy in general are acceptable, to impose liberal-democracy, which is just a brand among many brands of democracies, smacks of autocracy. It is indefensible and introduces "the rest of us" to the paternalistic conjectures of the West. It is on this ground that the option for a home-grown, indigenous democracy (leadership by the people) which can articulate African problems from African background (and indeed global sociopolitical problems from African perspectives) is necessary. Thus, the option of "Ohacracy" (4) by Rev. Fr. Prof. Pantaleon O. Iroegbu is simply "ad rem" (to the issue) in our global human society today.

However, we need to point out that before Iroegbu, E. N. Njaka in his "Igbo political Culture" and Prof. F. U. Okafor in his "Igbo Philosophy of Law", have articulated the concept of "Ohacracy". "Ohacracy" for Prof. F. U. Okafor is "an anglicized Igbo term coined by the combination of "Oha" (Igbo term for general assembly) and the suffix (sic) - "cracy" which is the Greek word for "ruling" (Okafor 1992:9). (5)

Rev. Fr. Prof. Pantaleon Iroegbu in his public lecture delivered at the University of Louvain, Belgium, presented an ethical-political theory which he calls "Ohacracy", as a socio-political lee-way to the resolution of what he calls the "African vicious triangles". He notes that the three vicious triangles of problems which form the roots of African malaise are: (1) Religious, moral and human (macro-triangular) problem; (2) Political, economic and social (medio-triangular) problem; and (3) Ignorance, poverty and disease (micro-triangular) problem. He observes that "The micro-triangular problem lies within the medio-triangular problem which in turn lie within the macro-triangular problem"; and though these triangles are separate in terms of problematic, there is still, "a general osmosis of influence of one triangle on the others". What this means in less technical terms is that: first our "religious disintegration" leads to our "moral inauthenticity", which eventually leads to "our low human integrity" (Iroegbu 1997:3).

Secondly, "our political mumbo-jumbo irresponsibility (or stupidity)" leads to "economic morass" which eventually yields "tragic social cannibalism". This is very

~ 132 ~
evident in the activities of most of our politicians who always look outside or overseas for blueprints for their actions, choices and political decisions. Lastly, our culpable "ignorance", Iroegbu avers, condemns us to "gruesome poverty" which in turn leaves us "helpless in the face of disease" (Iroegbu 1997:3). Little wonder foreign experts are needed to harness our natural resources and solve the minutest of our existential, sociopolitical and economic challenges.

Having diagnosed the problems, as he does, Iroegbu then opts for Ohacracy which he believes will "succeed in building a just society". This "Ohacracy", which he calls "the African model of democracy", is defined as "the practical conception of societal order and governance in which the community determines the praxis of the socio-political life of the people, while taking into account basic individual and group peculiarities" (Iroegbu 5). In this "Ohacracy", the "Fellowership is as important as the leadership. In it, leadership is neither a one-man show, nor a matter of hierarchical or aristocratic machinations" (Iroegbu 5). True leadership would imply the choice of the best, tested and trusted, manpower and energy for the organization and management of sociopolitical and economic affairs. It would also entail the employment and utilization of able and capable, true and reliable, hardworking and industrious, knowledgeable and wise, God-fearing human resources for the re-ordering, re-organization and re-structuring of the present sociopolitical, economic and cultural debris.

Unlike Prof. Chinua Achebe who argued that the problem of Nigeria or Africa in general is simply and squarely that of leadership, Iroegbu locates the problem with both the leaders and the followers. In fact,

In Ohacracy understood as a political theory, there must be a set up that would guarantee the participation of individuals in the various aspects of socio-political life that is theirs as a people, a nation, or a region. Both in constructing via jobs and offices and in distributing (sharing) via wages and allocations, the individual must be seen as an end in him/herself and not as a means to an end (he/she must be treated holistically and integrally).

How "Ohacracy" can help in disentangling the three vicious triangles which Iroegbu identified as the roots of African problematic he shows in two practical ways – the micro (individual) and the macro (community) waves. In the micro wave which concerns mainly individual actions, Iroegbu succinctly argues:

Each person must decidedly light a candle in the vast darkness. To light one candle is to undertake some concrete exemplary action that will promote the good religious, political and educational life of the people. Such a candle-light will lead to moral, economic and welfare survival of our people. Example, the contractor must fully utilize the fund given him by the state or company and do the job contracted to him (Iroegbu 6).

Iroegbu has no doubt that if each individual does this exemplary-giving assignment, the society at large will witness "human, social and health welfare of all". Thus he thinks that "several individual lights of devotedness to duty will bring a lip forward in the society" (Iroegbu 10). If each individual carries on his own duty dutifully, this, "when coordinated with the positive efforts of others", "will shine out more, and carry more substantive
weight” (Iroegbu 10). In such coordinated actions, we shall be our brothers-keepers and not wolves to each other. Leadership then would gear towards global human existential excellence not sectarian profit-oriented enterprise. Thus, he concludes that the effect of these individual co-operative and positive actions where “many candles lit together as members acting integrally, will be the blossoming into mighty light of life and success”, (Iroegbu 10) of the entire human species and genus.

On the macro or communal wave, Iroegbu seems to argue that what is necessary is massive conscientization or educational and formative programmes. He opined, in line with J. K. Nyerere, that “Ohacric group could be formed to concretize this wave in view of giving it continued effectiveness” (Iroegbu 10).

This Ohacric group or movement will eventually “form the fulcrum of an internal revolution” that will work against the general viciousness of corruption, stupor, carelessness, greed, et cetera. Through the common goals set for the “Ohacric” groups or movements, public virtues (virtuousness) such as honesty, agility, respect and patriotism will be achieved. Finally, one will only have the right to share in the communal good, if he had earlier contributed to it. This then, is a model prolegomena to the solution of the internal problem of authority and freedom. However, the external problem that brings African continent face-to-face with global realities and world situation still needs to be addressed.

In the external forum, the need for the formation of inter-African and pro-African social, political and economic organizations such as O.A.U. and ECOWAS cannot be overemphasized. The formation of these organizations, no doubt, will extricate Africa from the clutches of external domination and exploitation. Some of these organizations can also foster internal equilibrium apart from maintaining external decorum. And without these organizations, Africa can hardly liberate herself from the burden of foreign imperialism and subjugation. It is in virtue of some of these organizations especially the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) that most of African countries gained their political independence in the heydays of nationalist struggles. These organizations have their tentacles spread across a number of objectives that are of benefit to African continent. We must point out here that political organizations are very necessary, but must be geared towards global human sustenance, survival and improvement. Thus, all sociopolitical associations that foster clandestine, anti-human legalizations and activities which do not promote Divine-human-existential-essence, are, ipso facto, obsolete.

In the past, the activities which the organizations of African Unity, for instance, undertook include: organizing diplomatic support and channeling financial, military and logistic aid to liberation movements. The African International Organization Directory has this to say on O.A.U.:

Liberation movements recognized by the O.A.U. include South West Africa People’s Organizations (SWAPO); Namibia and African National Congress (ANC), South Africa. It has been instrumental in persuading the United Nations to accept liberation struggles as legitimate, and to grant observer status to liberation movements at the United Nation. To lend financial support to liberation movements in the continent, it maintains a special Fund through which international support is channeled...needy nations.(6)

Apart from settling external problems between African states and other nations, the O.A.U. (as we noted earlier) also settles disputes among member nations. It is on these grounds, as articulated, that we can hope for a practical resolution of the problem of authority and freedom in Africa especially in this era of globalization. However, the unity of African nations is as important as the unity of the entire human race of the same homogenous specie, from the same Divine source. The era of global armament for internal security should give way to a millennium of international peace, security, justice, and global understanding of our common brotherhood and sisterhood in the self-same Divinity.

Globalization has turned the world into a global village and the economic forces determine the worth of a nation or a continent. Ibeanu in Onuoha writes: “According to Sawyrr, the core feature of globalization is the unprecedented integration of cross-border organization of economic and financial activity across the globe (1988:2)” (Onuoha 1998:167). The characteristics of globalization according to Sawyrr as Ibeanu noted in Onuoha are as follows:

- Massive dispersal and integration of production across the globe.
- Rise in financier and speculators who are able to move large amount of short-term money from one jurisdiction to another in an instant.
- Massive flows of trade and finance across national borders.
- Communications revolution which has made possible both the speedy and safe transportation of materials and parts to all corners of the world.
- A media explosion, which has increased the range of messages carried across the globe, and given the uni-directional flow of images and information, there is a strong tendency towards the homogenization of culture and thinking (Onuoha 167).

Given this background of globalization, African continent cannot survive except it uses her strength in organizational bargaining (via O.A.U., ECOWAS, G.77, non-aligned movements, etc.) to push across her own aims and objectives which should not be antithetical to the essence of man as a rational creature of God.

Of course we have said earlier that liberal democracy which is the basis of this globalization does not necessarily benefit Africa, as it is presently operated on anti-Divine goals. Although Africa (and other less developed economies) cannot close her eyes against developments around her (in the outside world), she has to be wary in adapting to new realities because all of them do not foster her holistic socio-cultural, political, and religious objectives. The baits of free market enterprise and the anti-state proclivities of globalization have to be swallowed with a little bit of caution by African and third world organizational pressure groups like ECOWAS, O.A.U., G.77, non-aligned movements, etc. The implications are not for Africa alone, but for all reasonable peoples, nations and continents.

Consequently, the current economic privatization which has been forced down on Africa and third world countries by virtue of globalization should be critically examined to appreciate its short-term and long-term effects on African sociopolitical, economic and global development. No economic principle may altogether be bad, but its ideological underpinnings may need spiritual purification so that materialism is not over-bloated beyond necessity. Democratic principles and democratization need keen spiritual pruning.

What Africa and third world countries should realize is that the end of the cold war with the demise of socialism does not mean that exploitation and subjugation or even
ideological persuasions have died. No. On the contrary, the world is strongly divided into
the north and the south without any more flexibility as was the case in cold war days. Today
America and the rich countries of the world that have gathered under the umbrella of G8
(Group of eight developed nations) now unleash their outlandish economic arsenal to the
“rest of us”. Determined to have their economic “pound of flesh”, the rich countries of the
world now determine the political, socio-economic and cultural life and priorities of the
least developed or the so-called underdeveloped states of the world. The danger is not in the
establishment of their economic strength, but in the imposition of non-theistic and atheistic
principles and ideologies that are capable of eclipsing the essence and existence of entire
humanity. This is why it is important for Africa (and developing economies) to rise and
brace up to these millennial challenges.

But what can be said is that the globalised market economy under the control of the
transnational corporations has left states, both in the north and south, without sovereignty.
There is no more controlling force as all barriers have been broken by “laissez faire”
economic policy. However, Yash Tandon notes: “The North still remains in control of the
world’s resources, many of which lie in the south” (Yash Tandon 1998:9). It is against this
exploitative tendency and ideological manipulations that African continent and the rest of us
are called to rise up in wise actions. We suggest the formation of political organizations
(O.A.U., ECOWAS, G.77, non-aligned movements, etc.) to champion these nascent
challenges posed by globalization and new economic realities. Through their collective
sociopolitical activities, we can hope for a global balance between authority and freedom in
the international forum. This, in essence, is what pre-occupied Iroegbu when he opted for
Ohacracy for Africa and developing economies (and we may add: for enlightened
humanity).

Evaluative Appraisal

There is no gainsaying the fact that Iroegbu’s option of Ohacracy for integral sociopolitical
order is both desirable and satisfactory in the light of current global exigencies in Nigeria,
Africa and the world at large. That humanity, whether in Nigeria, Africa or elsewhere, has
common and homogenous origin in God can hardly be doubted now. The “Big Bang”
theory, the “Evolutionist” theory, the “Paternalistic” theory or any other theories of human
existence has neither really opposed nor contradicted this our common origin. It is on the
strength of this homogeneity of origin that ohacratic thesis has great appeal. As Oha
(community) of related origin, we have the natural responsibility of preserving our specie.
In our sociopolitical, economic and other affairs we ought to exhibit a sense of this
knowledge of our self-same identity, essence and meaningfulness. It is only when we are in
Oha (community) that our individual identity can be made manifest and flourish in its
dignified nature. The wisdom of this ohaic (community-like) essence is emphasized in the
fact that we are created (made) to be among beings-of-our-kind. So Iroegbu’s ohacratic
option has relevance in pointing out this homogenous identity of humanity.

Furthermore, Iroegbu is forthright in pointing out to the fact that the present
sociopolitical disorder originates from ideological confusion and misappropriation of the
true goals of democracy by the present practice of liberal democracy. It is on this ground
that his theoretical analysis has un-equaled merit. In the same vein, his prescriptions and
sagacious insights are invaluable contributions for a better human society and integral
sociopolitical true existence. His definition of leadership as community responsibility and
global (social) vanguard for excellence (which is epitomized in his own person) is one of his glorious intellectual legacies to humanity. His sharp brain and acute pen that function like the Ockham razor in difficulties and intricate issues are his finest attributes.

Furthermore, we must commend Iroegbu for his sociopolitical, ethical, economic and cultural sensitivity which led him to projecting “Ohacracy” as panacea. His theory which is “community-centered, community-based and community-related” speaks eloquently for itself. This theory, if properly appropriated, would easily lead to integral human development – morally, religiously, mentally/intellectually, spiritually, culturally, psychologically and educationally. In a nutshell, the merits of Iroegbu’s “ethical-political” theory lie in its integrality, belongingness, intellectual satisfaction, African identity, priority and values.

Be that as it may, we wish to observe that Prof. Iroegbu should have streamlined his ohacratic theory to align with his general vision of Ontology, very well exposed in his Uwa (African) Ontology in his epochal work – Metaphysics: the Kpim of Philosophy. Again, one should have expected Prof. Iroegbu to harmonize his ohacratic theory with his general anthropological and theological views. In his bid to establish the relevance of Ohacracy in sociopolitical, economic and ethical practices, Iroegbu did not take time to expose the nature of man, which goodness he projects in this his fine political option.

Furthermore, in his lecture under review, Iroegbu did not establish the relationship of man and Divinity especially in sociopolitical and ethical practices. He did not argue here (as he strongly held) that man is from God, and as such, his sociopolitical, economic, ethical principles, theories and practices (praxis), should mirror his origin and foster the prerogatives of his essence in Divinity. This would have added fine integrative, comprehensive and excellent polishing to his “Ohacracy” that still presents as one of the finest African intellectual contributions to sociopolitical debates. These “theoretical lacunae” make it difficult to understand the source and sustenance of his ethical-political paradigm. One should have expected Iroegbu to underscore the type of “Oha” (people or community) he is talking about and the nature or mode of their being and existence.

Conclusion

However, the above observations are my considered personal theoretical perspectives which, in essence, do not affect the efficacy and relevance of the erudite scholar’s insights and sagacity. We note that these observations are geared towards enhancing the credibility of the ideological option of this African intellectual guru. Iroegbu’s ohacratic theory possesses insightful persuasions which commend it for global attention, especially in our millennium. Given the background that Western liberal democracy has as yet not answered so much of our sociopolitical problems, the option of Ohacracy (community leadership), which could be re-defined in “Ohachicracy” (community-of-God leadership), is indeed an alternative and meritorious intellectual offer which could be explored and developed for integral sociopolitical development and existence in the third millennium A.D. and beyond.

End Notes

(1) These views on man are held by Aristotle, Boethius, Aquinas, et cetera.

(2) This portion of the work is a modified adaptation from our work: Feminism and Meta-politics of Existence in The Kpim of Feminism (Issues and Women in a
(3) Karl Marx seems to have introduced the idea that philosophers have interpreted the world, but what remains is to change it. However, Karl Marx limited this change materialistically to issues pertaining to space and time.

(4) For full definition of “Ohacracy” by Iroegbu, see P. O. Iroegbu, “African Vicious Triangles (A Plea for ‘Ohacracy’: The Socio-Political Lee-way)”, p.5, a public lecture delivered in the University of Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, as Chair Hoover Fellow, on 12th November 1997.


(6) Addition and highlight mine.

(7) This was quoted by Okechukwu Ibeanu (Ph.D.) in “Reflections on Globalization and American Pragmatism”, p.167, a paper presented at the International Conference on American Pragmatism: Implications for Democratization and Development in Nigeria, held at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, from November 4 – 5, 1998. Edited by Dr. Jonah Unuoha.

Works Cited


Iroegbu, Pantaleon Osondu. “African Vicious Triangles (A Plea for Ohacracy: The Sociopolitical Lee-way,)” Unpublished Public Lecture, delivered at the University of Louvain, as a Visiting Professor, Fellow to the Hoover Chair, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, Nov., 12, 1997.


