

Materialism and the Materialistic IncurSION into Modern African Societies: Consequences for the African Personality and Society (Nigerian Experience)

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ABSTRACT: Western liberal capitalist mode of development and the Marxist/communist paradigm inspite of their differences share one similarity namely they are basically anchored on materialistic philosophy, given their heavy emphasis on developing the material forces and improving the material condition of the people, accumulation and wealth creation, making the economy the driving force of development and the determinant of other values in the society. Thanks to their tremendous economic success through the instrumentality of technology, the two ideologies have exported this materialistic orientated model of development to most of the countries in the world, Africa inclusive. . This article aims at articulating and taking stock of the consequences of this materialist incurSION on the African personality and societies with a view to alerting the African peoples on the dangers of an uncritical absorption of the materialist ideology in the quality of African personality and society.

Keywords: Materialism, Scientism, Economism, Values, African Culture, Technology, Spiritual, Liberal capitalism, Communism.

1. The Philosophical history and Evolution of the idea of Materialism:

We will start this work with an analysis of the idea of materialism and how it evolved in the history of philosophy and development.

Materialism is the name given to a family of doctrines concerning the nature of the world which gives to matter a primary position and assign to the Spirit a secondary dependent reality or even none at all. "In short, it is a philosophical position that regards matter as the authentic reality and its transformations, a philosophical opposite to spiritualism".¹ Man is a bundle of matter. So it espouses the conviction of the primacy and the superiority of the material and places the spiritual and the human person and moral values in a position of subordination to material reality. This is a doctrine that has repercussions at various levels: in Metaphysics, in value theory (Ethics), in Epistemology, in Psychology, and in historical explanation. Materialism is thus an umbrella term, or a family of doctrines because of the various forms it has emerged and taken in history; depending on the various interpretations of the word 'matter' and the area of life or interest under consideration.

Materialism appeared in the form of naturalism in the early Ionian philosophers, who sought to explain all things in terms of one basic material principle. I.e. the belief that all phenomena can be explained in terms of natural causation, no supernatural realm, no God, no Spirit. By the 5th century BC, the Atomists Leucippus and Democritus tried to reduce all reality to material atoms in blind motion and collision. The soul is nothing but mere fiery atoms. Epicurus and Lucretius accepted the basic Atomist thesis that only bodies exist and Lucretius

in his *“De Rerum Natura”* launched an impassioned attack on religion, dispensed with God and tried to disprove the immortality of the soul.

Hobbes developed pure materialism in the 7th century in his *Leviathan*, when he said that the substance of anything is body, all change in the universe is motion of bodies. Incorporeal substance is a contradiction in terms. He despised the soul, angels, the God of theology. He reduced everything including man to matter in motion.² In the 18th century, J.O. De la Mettrie, in his book *“L’homme Machine”* (1748) and Holbach *“Le Systeme De la Nature”* (1776); both espoused a kind of materialistic determinism. Holbach did away with evil, guilt, disorder, and claimed that freed of illusions, man could take his fate and his future into his own hand. He could forge his own happiness. With God, immortality, faith and the fear of a future life set aside, the way seemed open for a full development of man.

Evolutionary materialism emerged with Darwin proposing that men had evolved from and within nature by regular behavioral processes, by a long process of natural selection which are still operative in nature³. This will influence Freud in his Psychoanalytic theory; which will make man a mere bundle of instincts or sexual energies⁴.

In the 19th century, Feuerbach transformed Hegel’s Absolute Idealism into materialistic humanism and prepared the way for the dialectical/historical materialism of Marx and Engels. For him, man belongs to the essence of nature. Man is what he eats. Dialectical/historical materialism originated by Marx and Engels places a dialectical process within man and uses this to explain the evolution of thought and man’s history. Dialectical materialism is a philosophy of history that implies a strong faith in the meaningful development of history. The laws at work in history are the laws of historical materialism by which the economic substructure and the technical factors in the mode of production of the material conditions of human existence necessarily determine the course of all human activities, cultural superstructures and social institutions. Human circumstances were dependent on material reality, that human beings were producers but also able to reflect on their lives. Dialectical/historical materialism offers hope and promise of a perfect society, quasi perfect, economic structures, relationships and processes that would produce the perfect man—stemming from an earthly messianism and emphasis on the scientific aspect of economic determinism that should produce finally the classless society. Marx was an economic determinist. Marxists of course promoted materialistic atheistic trend.⁵

It should not be forgotten that the word “Materialism” was used for the first time by Robert Boyle in the 17th century, the English founder of Chemistry as a science, who attacked the theory of the four elements of Aristotle but defended the Christian faith against atheism.⁶

Atheistic materialistic trend gathered momentum later, promoted by the conclusions of the mechanistic natural sciences. The natural sciences tended to make God superfluous the more they seek to unravel the possibilities of man.

The arrogance and claim of some scientists was such that one of them, Pierre-Simon De la Place, responding to a question on the place of God in creation while presenting the first volume of his work *“Celestial Mechanics”* to Napoleon replied: “Sire, I had no need of this hypothesis”. This attitude is reflective of positivism, a form of materialism employed since Auguste Comte to designate an organized theory of reality which holds that valid knowledge must be based exclusively upon the methods and results of science.

Finally, we have also to mention behaviorism, a psychological version of materialism. J.B. Watson’s behaviorism was an extreme form of materialism. The message of this behaviorist programme is essentially materialistic. For him the subject to which it is appropriate to attribute behavior is a physical object: the body.⁷

2. The Core Positions of materialism

Despite the differences, all these forms of materialism share a certain common core beliefs and convictions

1. That what we call mental events are really certain complicated physical events;
2. That mental events are completely determined by physical processes;
3. That the course of history is determined by the interaction of masses of people and masses of material things, in such a way as to be predictable without reference to the higher process of thought and will; opposed

to belief in God, in disembodied spirits, in free will (though some contemporary ones are opposed to determinism).

Our analysis of materialism in its theoretical and philosophical expressions, leads us to these conclusions:

Metaphysically, materialism makes matter ultimate reality. Economically, it makes the productive material forces and condition a determinant of man's social-political condition.

Ethically, pleasure and pain becomes essentially the calculus for action. Higher motives for action beyond the material become illusory.

Anthropologically, man becomes like any other material entity, and possibly subject to the same manipulation.

Epistemologically, scientific and technological rationality becomes the superior tool for the understanding and unlocking the mystery of reality.

Ideologically, social-political life becomes a way of incarnating the values of materialism by which power is attained by materialistic means, administered by materialist techniques; and policies and programmes influenced by a certain materialist conception of man.

We have gone so far in our analysis of materialism so as to disabuse ourselves of a certain populist and naïve conception which reduces materialism to a mere psychological disposition to grab money and tangible goods.

For the sake of this work, materialism will be understood theoretically and practically.

Theoretical materialism will be formal adherence to the materialist philosophy, which makes materiality supreme, that is, a materialism judged capable of satisfying men's needs on the grounds of premises, derived from materialist theory (as in former communist countries and somehow in pure capitalism). Practical materialism, on the other hand, is based on a particular way of evaluating things, on the grounds of a certain hierarchy of goods based on the greater immediate attractiveness of what is material.⁸

3. MATERIALIST VALUES IN WESTERN AND COMMUNIST SOCIETIES

Before we can talk of materialism in the African existential space, precisely in Nigerian socio-economic, cultural and political life, it will be nice to see how materialism manifested itself in Western societies and even, the former Soviet Union where materialism has moved from the theoretical to the practical, and as a way of life in society; where the basic implications of materialism are being played out in all aspects of life, the social, the political, the economic and the ideological. Such materialist cultures would be a mirror with which to see our own African Societies and peoples with a view to assessing the level of the influences of materialism here.

3.1. THE OPERATION OF MATERIALIST IDEOLOGIES

The two principal ideologies which have dominated the world are market Capitalism and Communism. Both however, remain essentially materialist ideologies. For both are materialistic philosophies which reduce man to the spheres of economics and the satisfaction of material needs, and marginalization of spiritual values. They both consider the person as an instrument of production, a means of efficiency that the human person is subject to the mechanical laws of economic determinism. When man is reduced to his function as a producer, he is evaluated in terms of what he does rather than what he is. One dimensional man surrenders his openness to the personal absolute and imprisons himself in the categories of exploitation and the management of resources. He becomes an undervalued being. In contemporary society, productivity is the supreme value.⁹ So these ideologies condemned these societies to the ravaging fire of a materialism which has had both positive and negative returns.

3.2. ECONOMISM

The materialist economic ideologies propagate and promote economism, in which the only imperatives are maximizing profits in order to maximize power, or maximizing power to maximize profits. Human relations come to be mainly defined in terms of profitability and the competitive pursuit of material acquisition; to the vast neglect of the spiritual and ethical which form the grandeur and dignity of man. The slogan is 'money rules'. The dollar takes an almighty status. Hence there is the systematic commoditization of man and a material price is placed on all that man stands for, his human creations, his power, his intelligence.

There is the gradual 'thingification' of man, where man becomes an object with a price, measured by what he has than what he is. Hence the depersonalization of man.

3.3. CONSUMERISM

The good life is defined in materialistic terms and man is called upon to defend an order simply because it fulfils consumer demands and the promise of even more affluences. Such a conception could only lead to a culture of hedonism, marked by prodigality and waste, with no other horizon than the multiplication and continual replacement of the things already owned with others still better, leading to pure consumerism and gross materialism.¹⁰

Freedom now means the unrestrained, unbridled use of money and of the goods money can obtain. Development means possessing even more material things, extending markets and transforming the whole world into a business centre and a stock exchange. The person is reduced to a means, a means of consumption. There is no more neighbor but only profit to be made, capital to be increased. Everything that makes up the dignity of the person, his capacity to love, to serve, to accept, to be compassionate seems to be eliminated.¹¹

3.4. SECULARISM/LOSS OF THE SENSE OF GOD

Materialistic societies are graduating from religious and cultural pluralistic societies where the public space or political space is not occupied by a particular religion or God, to a society where God is persona-non-grata; where there is increased desacralization. Here society is stripped of its religious outlook.

There is an eclipse of the sense of God; a secularism marked by a will totally to dominate human life in the name of mere technical and scientific rationality, and the danger of confusing good with evil. The whole vocabulary of religion (creation, faith, freedom, brotherhood, absolute) has been reapplied to the horizontal level.

There is a greater assertion of an immanence that excludes all transcendence; a territorialization of Eschatology, or salvation seen merely in terms of material abundance.

3.5. TECHNOLOGICAL RATIONALITY/FUNCTIONALISM.

The efficient tool and power of the materialist incursion and economic success is its reliance on the scientific and technological rationality.

Hence we have the triumph of technical rationality and scientism. Man's attitude to nature is now mediated by experimentation, verification and mathematical analysis whatever that cannot be validated by science is regarded as not valid and non-knowledge. Pragmatism, functionalism, workability becomes the basic determinant of action. The future of man is the future of his economic and political management of reality and of his technological progress.¹²

Practical materialism according to Pope John Paul II, seriously impoverishes interpersonal relations. "The criterion of personal dignity – which demands respect, generosity and service – is replaced by the criterion of efficiency, functionality and usefulness. This is the supremacy of the strong over the weak".¹³

3.6. "CULTURE OF DEATH"

The "Death of God" which materialism aims at, inevitably leads to the "Death of Man" and the enthronement of what John Paul II called 'the culture of death'. When the sense of God is lost, there is also a tendency to lose the sense of man.¹⁴ This is what one notices today by way human life is manipulated and often disregarded under various guises. This culture of death according to John Paul II, is deep cultural crisis whose key notes are materialism and individualism. The only criterion that counts thus becomes the quality of life interpreted primarily or exclusively as economic efficiency, inordinate consumerism, physical beauty, and pleasure, while neglecting or denying the deeper dimensions – interpersonal, spiritual and religious experience.¹⁵

Thus having, becomes more important than being, pleasure becomes the only reasonable goal to pursue; suffering is regarded as useless or threatening, while any sacrifice for others appears unjustified.

In this atmosphere, nothing is sacred, even human life. Life can even be terminated or manipulated, since everything is only a type of matter; the ultimate consequence is the 'thingification' of man and the triumph of

pure technicity. The power over life made possible by new medical technologies is a case in point. The problems pertaining to abortion, experiments on embryos, euthanasia, cloning, genetic manipulations of all forms, are areas where materialism is having an upper hand.

3.7.CULT OF THE BODY (SEXUALITY)

There is the emergence of the Freudian culture. The body is no longer perceived as a property of personal reality, a sign and place of relations with others, with God, and with the world. It is reduced to pure materiality. It is simply a complex of organs functions and energies to be used according to the sole criteria of pleasure and efficiency. Consequently, sexuality too is depersonalized and exploited.¹⁶The sexual revolution and the eroticization of much of the human life in these recent years, thanks to the materialistic orientation of the world, gives the impression that sexual activity is central to human life and that maximum personal pleasure is its main goal.¹⁷ In short, there is the culture of hedonism, or a hedonistic mentality unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality. Sexual liberation presented itself as a bold affirmation of the senses and of undeniable natural impulse against the traditional puritanical heritage, social conventions and repressions.

This cult of the body is further buttressed by the valorization of activities and others linked with the promotion of sex and those engaged in the exercise of bodily energies. e.g. the sportsmen, show-business, actors and actresses. These are more appreciated than those engaged in other traditionally noble activities like the intellectuals, the spiritual and even the political. The tidal wave of pornographies is the creature of these artificial cravings.

4. MATERIALISTIC INCURSIONS INTO THE AFRICAN WORLD AND VALUE (NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE): SYMBOLS AND MANIFESTATIONS

Though materialism has not assumed the overwhelming conquest and influence in the African societies as it has assumed in the Western world, yet it is already ravaging the landscape and upsetting in an alarming pace, the values and belief systems, systems of relationships and interests.

This, no doubt is expected, given the fact that the formerly colonized African nations and peoples have in the main, remained appendices to their erstwhile colonial masters and mentors. They are heavily influenced and affected by what happens in the home of the former colonizing countries (Western Countries) and entrapped in their economic political, ideological, cultural and technological dynamics. Globalization has come to mean globalization of cultures and practices and idiosyncrasies from the more advanced countries who through their technology exercised unequal and dominating influences in the global society. African nations have become the dumping ground of Western tastes, ideologies, values and experimentations. This puts the materialist incursion into African societies on a fast track, eroding local values and cultures.

Like other non-western world societies, we are already under the hegemonic influence of the materialist ideologies of capitalism and even communism which have been dominating the entire universe. In the name of economic globalization, African societies are being forced into the so called world economic order which is based on pure economism, consumerism, and the so called market forces. For as an author said, trade is not only about economic goods and services, it is also about political structures and power and above all values. All world cultures are being aggressively reshaped by the commercial expansion of capitalist materialist culture.

Materialism is tied to the apron of the growing Westernization of our society. Technology a great tool of Westernization equally is not value free. Each technology carries with it some new elements, new needs, new wants, new powers and changes in interpersonal relationships. As long as we continue to import foreign technologies, we are equally importing value systems.

Technology has radical repercussions on the economic, cultural and social life of the people, both the tempo, style of life, value system, and serves at times as an instrument for the perpetuation of neo-colonialism which makes consumer countries dependent. Thanks to the information or communication technologies, what is happening in one part of the world can become our instant possessions, beamed in our bedrooms, sitting rooms, and in our refectories. So we are consciously or unconsciously but surely absorbing the values and

cultures of these Western societies which are becoming very materialistic, with emphasis placed on having, on material aspects of life and the erosion of the spiritual: indeed, the entire culture of hedonism.

Transport technologies make us to be in contact with the rest of the world as readily as we can and able to do. So there is an effect of demonstration in operation, where we are imitating and copying what is going on in the industrialized countries. It appears that the whole orientation is to be like the Western man: we want to laugh his laugh, eat his food, cough his cough, speak his tongue, and indeed thus become he.

Let us re-iterate here that, we are identifying both the ideology and economic orientation of both liberal-capitalism and communism as materialistic because their model of development powered by the scientific and technological imperative, and the idea of the good life lay more emphasis on the material condition of existence, and the economic well-being, takes precedence over other values since the emergence of Western modernity.

Whether for good or for bad, materialism and materialistic philosophies defend certain core values which are in conflict with many traditional values and practices, which are highly cherished by African societies and therefore, has made a revolutionary impact on African societies and peoples. We will articulate these, in this part of this work under the name of materialistic symbols and values in African societies today.

MATERIALISTIC SYMBOLS AND VALUES IN AFRICAN SOCIETIES:

4.1. MONEY POWER

Money is gradually assuming a disproportionate status in the Nigerian political world. Everything seems to be based on the calculus of and for money. Political offices are just there for the highest bidder. Political offices, promotion, ministerial appointments, managerial offices, are now commoditized, offered in terms of the quantity of money that exchanged hands. Wole Soyinka commenting on a presidential election in Nigeria, said: "The world knows this space known as Aso Rock was recently put up for rent and it has duly gone to the highest bidder."¹⁸

Many whose intelligence and natural ability could not lead them beyond an elementary school teacher status, find themselves perching at the apex of power. And their own qualification is in function of the fatness of their bank account and wealth acquired often through dubious means.

Thus people seek political offices for materialistic purposes, people attain power by materialistic inducements, retain power by still more materialistic inducements with the commoditization of political power. Politics is now almost left in the hands of political contractors instead of the political class. Matthew Hassan Kukah has called the kind of government in place in Nigeria "Contractocracy". "This is a government of contract, for contractors, by contractors and with contractors".¹⁹

4.2. MATERIAL POWER

Like money power, there is a growing tendency to place premium in material success by the Nigerian society. Men of affluence are given more recognition than men of character and virtue. There is the tendency to measure people's worth in terms of their material possessions or material contributions. Economism is making its way by which material wealth is sung and recognized over the more noble traditional spiritual, moral and intellectual values. The economic values of survival of the fittest and money-valued relationships are gradually replacing the traditional values of co-responsibility and co-operation, given the extended family culture. There is no doubt borrowing the words of Bertrand Russell, that today, material possession and desire dominate our outlook usually to the exclusion of all generous and creative impulse.²⁰ The areas of collective environment, cultural and spiritual dimensions are neglected or downgraded in a world that emphasizes competition, individualism, profit and accumulation of wealth, and where laws are so formulated as to exclude determined goals. Many areas of life which fall outside restricted economic concerns, are treated with levity or a blind eye.

The materialistic individualistic pursuits are winning over the time-honoured inclusive values. The time-honoured and noble values of hospitality, solidarity, social responsibility are being threatened by the economic values of profitability and the rule of the market forces – the zero-sum game.

There is no other way of showing the growing power of pure material success than in the phenomenon of 419 fraudsters, increasing internet fraudsters, and other forms get-rich-quick and obtention by tricks techniques where ignorant and purely irresponsible young men who make fortunes through crooked means become instant celebrities in society. Even the traditional rulers who should be the last bastions of people's morality and integrity of their traditional values, bastardized and desacralized the traditional offices, for material aggrandizement and gratification from these dubious nouveau-riches; Thus "legitimizing" roguery and dishonest acquisitions by conferring on these dubious men traditional titles and respectability. This creates a sad situation whereby people's social standing and status are measured in terms of what they have than what they are. Even people's right to speech or to be heard are now being measured in terms of material contributions. Most painful of all, is that most hallowed institutions and sanctuaries are now being threatened under the invading forces of materialistic inclinations and inducements; the judiciary, the churches, the schools, etc. Nothing is sacred any longer. Every where is the emergence of the new "religion" of materialism or "gospel" of prosperity where some so-called religious leaders proudly and with complete fulfillment display or tout their material wealth as a sign of divine approval. Thus religion itself is being materialized and "heaven" appears to have descended to the material.

4.3. SEX POWER

The materialistic culture has invaded African societies with the so called liberalization of sex with its many attendants' negative consequences: There is the emphasis as Greg. Njoku would put it, on the pursuit of sexual pleasure "Spontaneous sex" free love, sex liberty and all expressions that equate human sexual relationship with "The mating of dogs, cattle, and birds". With all these are sexual aberrations and crimes, rapes, invasion of pornographies, nudity, cyber sex of all forms and shapes.²¹ The invasion of this sex liberalization is of course a prolongation of material power by other means – the cult of the body.

It appears that today sex has become an instant means for access to jobs, promotions and even at times ascendancy to power. It is an unfortunate situation whereby directors and high officials use their women subordinates as sex objects, employed to minister to their sexual cravings. Is this not the culture of hedonism in the workplace? Lamenting on this sexual perversion Pope Francis said "In our day sexuality risks being poisoned by the mentality of "use and discard". The body of the other is often viewed as an object to be used as long as it offers satisfaction and rejected once it is no longer appealing. Can we really ignore or overlook the continuing forms of domination, arrogance, sexual perversion and violence that are the product of warped understanding of sexuality"²²

4.4. GROWING CONSUMERIST HABITS AND OSTENTATIOUS DISPLAY OF AFFLUENCE

Most people in Nigeria like in many other African Countries are still very poor, hardly able to satisfy their basic material necessities. However, in the midst of this general hard condition, few especially those who have access to the public purse, their cronies and the rich engage in scandalous display of opulence, ostentatious consumption, flamboyant celebrations and official profligacy. This means that while many are in material penury, the few and the powerful are wallowing in deep materialism. They move in the most state-of-art cars, live in houses with extravagant decorations, furnishings and the latest that modern technology can afford. They live with the best of material sophistication, accumulation and consumption. This ostentatious display and appetite for the material is gradually simmering down to the lower cadres in society, who in spite of their poverty, are gradually developing a voracious appetite for material pleasure more than ever. This emerging ostentatious display draws many especially the young people to seek any corrupt way to be rich quick, in order to join the "materialist club"

4.5. INFLUENCE OF MATERIALIST PHILOSOPHIES AND IDEOLOGIES

There is no doubt that the Nigerian society, like many other African societies is still bubbling with religious activities and ceremonies. But underneath this is a growing "this-worldly" current, where more emphasis is placed on the material than the spiritual; the "here and now" than on "the hereafter". We hear people make light of the promises of religion, heaven and hell. These attitudes are gradually entering into the area of the conduct of life. We hear protesting workers shout "we want our reward here on earth".

The market economy being imposed under the name of S A P (Structural Adjustment Programme) by the World Bank on Nigeria and many other African countries brings with it materialistic attitudes, orientations and goals; which inevitably places the material over the spiritual; “having” over being, the “market” over the church, or the society.

There is the gradual erosion of our school education by materialistic philosophies where Karl Marx, Adam Smith, are emphasized over Christ or Mohammed; where pragmatism is preferred over principles of morality, where the educational culture has been overtaken by the culture of secret societies, secret cults having a purely materialistic goal; where materialistic philosophers like Darwin, Freud, Nietzsche, Hobbes are called intellectual heroes over traditional philosophers like Thomas Aquinas, Gandhi, John Henry Newman, Fulton Sheen, Vladimir S. Soloviev, Jacques Maritain, Martin Luther King; where the materialistic values of the calculating mentality, technicity, functionality of pragmatism and utilitarianism reign over the humane values of compassion, love, altruism and the exalted ideals of solidarity, the pursuit of truth, hard work and honesty. Most unfortunately, there is a growing eclipse of the sense of God or religious education in our schools, and with it a growing meaninglessness in the life of the youth, with the grave consequences in the fact that the educational culture has been invaded by the culture of secret societies, occult groups and fraternities inspired by a materialistic vision of life and values. We are almost in a situation whereby some young men take pride in being identified as “Young Marxists”, “the new liberals”, “the young socialists” than being called Christians or Moslems. With these the seeds of secularism are being planted and nourished.

5. DESTRUCTIVE CONSEQUENCES OF MATERIALISM IN AFRICA SOCIETIES AND PERSONALITY: (The Nigeria Experience)

There is no doubt that this materialistic orientation of development as pursued in the Western capitalistic world and even in the communist countries of China and former Soviet Union (Russia) has led to an enormous increase in the material productivity and prosperity of the world including the African countries. One notices vast improvement in food and agricultural production, technological innovations, scientific breakthroughs, improved medical services and more efficient health delivery systems, better housing conditions, more advanced transport and telecommunication technologies, more luxurious living, introduction of lifestyles, values, rules that promote wealth creation and suppress others that hampers material development and improvement in life expectancy. So we can say that the materialistic mode of production with its scientific technological instrumentality has lifted millions who would have still remained in abject poverty including Africans

The Marxist/Communist revolt against the oppression of workers, who according to them were exploited and asked to seek their reward in heaven, helped to put in motion processes and movement in capitalist countries and other institutions that eventually contributed in bringing about reforms for workers rights, and formation of trade unions which drastically improved the fortunes of workers all over the world. The above examples show how the materialistic philosophies, ideologies and policies have played positive roles in the world and even in African societies.

These positive impact notwithstanding, we can unequivocally say that the negative impact of materialism on African societies and peoples have been devastating at all levels: the spiritual, the political, the social, the moral, the cultural, the environmental and on the individual level. Some examples will be in order here.

5.1. CORRUPT LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWERSHIP

Poor leadership starts from the fact that men and women unqualified for political office are brought to the leadership position due to the corruptive material inducement. The pursuit of materialist values has constituted one of the chief sources of corruption and official kleptocracy in Nigeria today. Everything is done to satisfy the consumerist mentality and appetite. Hence the tendency for leaders and public office holders to adopt policies and programmes which offer them the greatest personal material advantages. Bribery is the order of the day. The “ten-percent” syndrome, inflated contracts and the looting of the public treasure which

has brought African nations to the brim of bankruptcy, are partly due to the practice of using public office for the pursuit of materialistic goals.

5.2. ENTHRONEMENT OF THE CULTURE OF MEDIOCRITY AND GENERAL INEFFICIENCY

When occupants of important political and leadership positions are determined mostly by one's material status; when promotion to places of trust are dependent by other factors other than merit and qualification, then the stage is prepared for the enthronement of the culture of mediocrity in our polity, general inefficiency in our public service, and gross unproductivity in our economic initiatives. This explains the reason for our stunted political growth and the planlessness that have bedeviled our whole national life. Round pegs can do nothing in square holes.

5.3. DECLINE OF CHERISHED SOCIAL VALUES AND GROWING SOCIAL INDISCIPLINE

With the gradual deterioration of the time-honoured traditional values of brotherhood, respect of human life, sense community and fear of God, due to the materialist forces of profitability, individualism and calculating rationality, one notices the emerging culture of violence, rivalry and suspicion on the ascendancy. A materialist society is a violent society. Since the only values that matter is the material, there will be no more other value motivations, to live on than the material, consequently the values of sacrifice, self-constraint or even tolerance will no longer matter, and the individuals will then seek any means to have whatever they want. This is why recourse to violence will be a ready and easy solution to grievances and the pursuit of rights for some people though a bad and fruitless path indeed. No wonder a huge chunk of the world wealth goes to Security matters, internal and external, because as the world has become the arena for an endless pursuit of material interest, spiritual values of the sense of humanity, altruism, compassion, and the sacredness of the human person are relegated to the background.

This violence is at various levels: the consumptive and acquisitive forces cause violence at the level of nature which is perceived as merely there to serve man's infinite appetite, an attitude which causes disequilibrium in nature itself. Hence the increasing environmental and ecological problem of our day.²³

In Africa today due to imprudent and greedy exploitation of natural resources, symptomatic of the unrestrained and greedy capitalist mode of exploitation of our day. There are noticeable environmental and ecological disasters on the increase so also are climate change, desertification, deforestation, pollution of drinking water which of course, increases poverty among the masses.

There is also violence at the level of the individual who is reduced to a commodity with a price tag emptied of his value and whose worth seen to be dependent on his economic viability and potentiality. Is it surprising today that old people are now seen as parasitic in some quarters? Euthanasia is being proposed by some as the solution for sick old people.

There is violence at the level of society. Justice, peace and love and mutual responsibility are fast becoming things of the past in our society. The cultures of material determinism and economism in some quarters are tearing families and communities down, and killing the spirit of altruism and sacrifice and causing violence at the society level with the erosion of time-honored traditional, social, and community values, as economic, individual and material interests are given greater attention. This is provoking more jealousies and more conflicts in families and Communities. In some places it is provoking community conflicts and wars as they battle for scarce resources, changing landscapes, and diminishing land and water resources due to pollution etc.²⁴

5.4. INVASION OF THE RULE OF LAW

One of the dangerous areas where the invasion of materialism has telling consequences in the Nigerian polity is the corruption of our judiciary through official graft and materialistic motivations. The judiciary is the only guarantee for justice and protection of people's right within the political order. Where the judiciary is impeded from performing its cherished role, the consequence is the collapse of the rule of law, and the invasion of human rights. Who today thinks that he can obtain justice in the Nigerian judicial system and in many other African nations except those who have the wherewithal to buy their way through? No polity will survive where

justice is reserved for the highest bidder, or material inducements or expectations. The quality and direction of laws are moving on the wrong direction since material inducements have become a big determining factor and the motive in electing lawmakers and parliamentary representations and not competence.

The quality of laws thus made, and representations are very poor, and do not in many cases respond to the real needs and challenges of the people, and when they do, they are directed towards the economic and material interest areas. The non-economic issues like fellow-feeling, human sentiments of friendship and sympathy, are seen to be against economic ethics and regarded as anachronistic.

6. HOW TO REVISE THE MATERIALISTIC TRENDS;

6.1. The pursuit of Integral Development.

The basic antidote to materialism is the pursuit of integral development of man: Man is more than the material body. He is an embodied spirit, bodily and spiritual, matter and spirit. The human body, our material component points beyond itself to the spirit and invisible dimension. In short to the spiritual reality or innermost dimension of the human personality.²⁵The human being who manifests activities which are material and spiritual, exterior and interior, cannot be treated as a mere fattened pig, which would ultimately be the materialist mentality.

The traditional African man sees himself as a religious being intimately related to God, and as it is said, he acts and works religiously. Of course man's spiritual dimension is more than being religious or going to churches and mosques to pray and worship. It is also an attitude to life and values which the one cherishes and promotes, and one's self-conception and his destiny.. The concept of integral development means that development must be holistic, caring for the whole man, promoting goals worthy of the human person. Material development is a sine qua non for the survival of the nation, but materialism is a disease that wrecks her soul. So a right equilibrium must be sought for a holistic development. The pursuit of spiritual values demands that the society pays attention to qualitative living and the realization of those values which go beyond material possession and acquisition, such as qualities that accord with nobility, goodness, truthfulness and sense of humanity and the sacredness and dignity of the human person.

True Development relates to man, total human being. Though man is material but he is capable of transcendence and has spiritual attributes which go beyond the potency of matter. True development will promote the multi-dimensional man: as a physical being, a Spiritual being, an intellectual being, a moral being, a cultural being, a social being. In short, it must combat against the poverty of the human person which includes material poverty, Spiritual poverty, and moral poverty etc. Materialism amputates man and robs him of his true humanity, and makes human society less human, and promotes values that at the long run impoverish our humanity.

The advice of Pope John Paul II is instructive here:

“The true model for progress is not one that extols material values only, but one that recognizes the priority of the spiritual. Great and rapid changes are taking place in the social fabric of many nations working together for a better future for their citizens. But no social change will constitute a true and lasting enrichment of the people if it sacrifices or loses the supreme values of the spirit”.

Development will be one-sided and lacking in humanity if materialism, the profit motive or the selfish pursuit of wealth and power, take the place of the values that are so highly practiced in African society- Values such as mutual concern, solidarity and the recognition of God's presence in all life, a growing sense of brotherhood, of social love, of justice, the banishing of every form of discrimination and oppression, the fostering of individual and collective responsibility, respect for the sanctity of human life from its very conception, the preservation of a strong family spirit – these will be the hallmark of successful development and the strength of the people as they move towards the third millennium.²⁶

6.2. SOCIAL AND MORAL CONSCIENTIZATION

Ignorance is the greatest handicap to building a sound social and political order. A people must vigorously conscientize to realize that the human society is more than a market society, and that money cannot buy everything.

People should be made to realize the devastating effects of materialism on the society and its dehumanizing influences. People should be made to realize that we must put people in leadership positions who have the capacity and will to work for the total good of the citizens not driven by greed, avarice, and acquisitive spirit. We need people who have the moral capacity to lead people into the path of virtue and compassion, and able to devise policies that can restore to society economic prosperity, moral integrity and spiritual wellbeing.

To this Dr. Herbart Shambeck said “since in a parliamentary democracy the representatives of the people can in their law – making establish what is right only if they had been legitimated through elections, it is essential that the people understand the necessity of discerning values and that they elect parliamentarians who recognize these values: “In choosing politicians also for their ethical stance, so that they may carry out political activity within the state for the good of society and of each individual.”²⁷

Hence the need for serious social and moral conscientization by all men and women with any serious concern for the health of the nation and by other moral institutions like the church, human right groups; non-governmental organizations for various causes etc.

Of very urgent importance is restoring sanity to our schools so as to inculcate in the young sound moral principles in order to make right moral choices, and keep their priorities right.

“Yet everywhere modern education is being drained of moral content through the movement which is known as secularism. It has been said that education of the soul is the soul of education. Therefore, when education tries to thrive in a religious and moral vacuum, and does not aspire to impart a set of principles and hierarchy of values, it degenerates into a dead and deadening juxtaposition of facts. Similarly, education must inculcate a religious and moral outlook, or it will become a materialistic one. And there is no word for dignity in the dictionary of materialism”.²⁸

The implication is that ethics should take precedence over politics and Economics.

6.3. CURBING NEGATIVE FOREIGN CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The media has become a powerful instrument for influencing the thought, tastes, attitudes and indeed the culture of peoples and nations. Thus with the dominating monopoly of all the potent means of communication in their hands, the Western world is using the media as ready means of propagating their materialistic values and ideologies. Hence the need for the national authorities to scrutinize and monitor the type of images, the programs that are being disseminated by the foreign media in African societies, and must discourage national media houses from being tools and dumping ground for ideologies inimical to moral and spiritual health of the citizenry, and sound and deeply cherished elements of African cultural heritage and values.

7. CONCLUSION

African civilization and cultures extol and promote cherished values like: respect for the sacredness of human life, fear of God, social solidarity, moral integrity, sexual decency, hospitality and human relationships which are great anti-dotes to the materialistic onslaught on Africa. While the economic and material productivity and efficiency remain indispensable conditions for human survival, yet human and social existence and wellbeing, are more than economic wellbeing or material opulence. The society and the world order cannot be merely reduced to a place for mere economic communication and exchanges. According to Okun the economy is only one aspect of society and which must be embedded into a successful society²⁹

In fact materialism appears to be the most foreign and most unafican ideology and way of life ever imported into Africa. It is completely antithetical to the most cherished elements, of African culture and values. African Societies cherish their communal values of solidarity and extended family spirit; it upholds environmental harmony and integrity; it upholds ontological harmony of beings at all levels; of which materiality is only an element; it has a holistic vision of life. It has a deep sense of Religion, a deep belief in God, and the sacredness of human life. All these are being eroded by materialistic values and philosophies. As Pope Francis said “There is a need to respect the rights of peoples and cultures and appreciate that the development of a social group presupposes an historical process which takes place within a cultural contact and demands the constant and active involvement of local people from within their proper culture. Nor can the notion of the quality of life be

imposed from without, for quality of life must be understood with the world of symbols and custom proper to each human group.³⁰

Materialism alienates the African and cuts him off from his root. It should be strenuously combated at all levels: politically, locally, morally and philosophically. Africa must find a way to harness the mechanics and techniques of wealth creation available in our time to ensure the economic viability of her people and improve their economic welfare and the same time take seriously the need to develop efficient processes and means of inculcating and promoting those human values and practices that ensure human integral development. Happiness as Pope Francis would go to say means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish us and being open to the many different possibilities which life can offer.³¹

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