

AFRICAN MORAL PHILOSOPHY: A CASE STUDY OF IGBO ETHICS

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Abstract

Until recently, what has been so far common to the early African writers, and anthropologists is the tendency to define human "evil" (aru) and "abomination" more as an offence against the earth goddess ("ala") and ancestors ("ndi-ichie) than an evil against man. The problem arising from this is that this ascription has over the years been given a wrong impression that 'Igbo morality' is no different from Igbo traditional religion where the earth goddess plays a similar role. In other words, it will lead us to the question of what is in the good action that makes the African to recognize it as such? What is in a good man that makes an African to classify him as such? What makes an action praiseworthy and another condemnable? What is the philosophy of African moral evaluations? It is for this reason that analytical investigation becomes a veritable tool towards African ethical self-recovery, and awareness. The findings showcase the fact that in Africa, morality and religion are intertwined. Effort is made in this paper towards offering a rational foundation and meaning to African moral tendencies, and exigencies. All these will help us to understand the nature of morality in Africa which is encapsulated in the idea of justice-in-communalism.

Keywords: African, Morality, Igbo Ethics, Justice, Communalism

Introduction

For a better presentation of the rationality of African moral tendencies, we shall use Igbo -cultural experience as a case study. The first part in the paper will identify two major factors that denied, or distorted the nature of Igbo moral philosophy. The second part is an effort to offer the nature and dimensions of Igbo Ethics, built around communal justice. Africans are moral people if not highly moral. This is because of their high sense of justice anchored on the principle of tit for tat. That really made everybody to feel secured in the presence of the other, without any risk of harm from any angle. Hence this is the true meaning of justice for them. Africans believe

strongly in the natural laws of karma and nemesis and that strongly shapes their morality. Even the very idea of reincarnation plays an important role in the shaping of their morality for every African longs to join the ancestors at one's demise with the befitting burial to be given by one's loved ones; on the basis of one's moral life. Of course there were certain taboos hedged around certain actions and observing them to the latter was identical with being an African. In African society before now, there was no need of police, army, court, prison, or any of such force institution because everybody kept to the rules of morality. And by so doing, everybody was his brother's keeper: i-am because we-are. That brings about the idea of *Justice as co-existence, Justice as acceptance, Justice as care, and Justice as concern*. But before proceeding, let us look at some wrong beliefs that breed prejudice and bias with regards to African moral philosophy.

Wrong Beliefs

There are two major sources of prejudice (information) concerning the existence of African moral philosophy, namely:

- (a) Colonial misrepresentation,
- (b) Anthro - religious mythologies

(a) *Colonial misrepresentation*: This reflects all the negative views expressed in connection with either African or Igbo traditional moral philosophy as it concerns its nature and existence. In his book, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*, G.T, Basden(1983:34) stated that: "The word 'morality' has no significance in the Ibo (Igbo) vocabulary; and where the natives have remained untouched by outside influence, there is nothing exactly corresponding to the social evil of European life ". It becomes necessary to examine the implications of this view directed against the Igbo nations of African, which has never lived without their ethical norms and customs. In the above assertions, Basden appears to be judging the Igbo traditional morality with the paradigms of its western counterparts. More precisely, he uses the concept of the "social evil" of European life to evaluate the meaningfulness of Igbo morality. His main argument is that, since the Igbo morality lacks the exact image of social evil of European life, it is meaningless and devoid of any significance even

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in its Igbo original cultural habitat. The inherent prejudice found in these unwarranted comparisons and judgment comes nearer to what T.U. Nwala(1985: 8) characterizes as the 'travelers tales', since it qualifies as what many Africans would rather regard as the prejudice of the white man. Again, the assertion betrays G.T. Basden as not being cognizance of the relationship that exists between the culture of a people and their sense of value. In other words, every value is a value of a given culture. And every culture determines what it regards as its values and meant for every member of that culture to acknowledge and appreciate.

If culture is directly responsible for the values a particular people share, and since there are as many cultures as there are peoples, it then means that, no one value can strictly speaking, satisfy the existing multifarious cultural peoples in the world. A value is a value of a particular people who possess it, and not necessarily the value of all the cultures of the world. In effect, this means that the 'Igbo morality' as a unique cultural value of the Igbo, does not have to possess the unique value of the social evil of European life any more than the white man possessing the black skin and vice versa. And if Basden means by the assertion, to insinuate that the Igbo have no morality at all, it then means that he has lost sight of Franz Boas(1927:104) classic statement, shared today by most scholars that, "in the main, the mental characteristics of man are the same all over the world". And since morality is a product of man's reason, or man's mental characteristic, it then means that man all over the world has never failed to employ it (reason) in generating principles of (moral) action in solving the problems of human limitations, powerlessness, and ambivalence. Again, considering the concept 'social evil', one would easily believe that every culture in time and place abhors such evils as stealing, murder, injustice, oppression, and exploitation whether explicitly or implicitly. The history of cultures is better defined as being synonymous with the concept 'approved' and 'disapproved', 'allowed' and 'disallowed' - a sine qua non, for social cohesion and harmony. The Igbo cannot therefore justifiably be said not to have possessed a sense of a "social evil" at any point in time.

Apart from G.T, Basden, I.A Correia(1923:880) admitted that the Igbo possess moral heritage, like the Africans in general. But he derogatorily classified it under "the lowest grade of moral consciousness'. Here, while accepting the moral nature of man as such, Correia introduced the hierarchy of moral consciousness analogous to Levy Bruhl's thesis on pre-logical mentality of the primitive man, as apposed to the scientific mind of the modern man. But what objective criteria can be effectively employed in measuring moral consciousness of a particular people or age vis-a-vis the other? In his turn, Lord Lugard (1921:437), after some years of service in Nigeria during the colonial period, referred to people of southern part of Nigeria as those with "no system of ethics and no principle of conduct". This is no less misguiding than Correia's classification of moral consciousness of people. All these positions are better grouped under colonial misrepresentations.

(b) *Religious Mythologies and their impact:* There is an impact of religious mythologies in the interpretation of Igbo morality and its philosophy. This mythological incursion into Igbo moral philosophy is mostly found in the works of many European/African anthropologists and religious historians writing on African traditional culture as a whole. Here, the earth goddess (*ala*) and the ancestors (*ndi-ichie*) are stereotyped, being projected to supplant the role of reason in the formulation of moral principles and norms.

In his book *Christianity and Igbo culture*, Prof. E. Ilogu (1974:35-36) pointed out that, in Igbo traditional morality, "there is the existence of moral code built up from the injunctions of earth goddess (*ala*) through the ancestors (*Ndi-ichie* or *Ndebunze*)". He goes on to say that these injunctions, which are made up of approved observances and prohibitions constitute what the Igbo call '*omenani*'. He observes that "the moral code of Ibo (Igbo) land or '*omenani*' is believed to be handed down from the earth goddess from time immemorial, with the prohibitions (*nso ala*) which seem to predominate." The problem is, which prohibitions? Who are the ancestors to whom the moral code was handed down to? Was it handed down to one of them or to many of them at the same time; and when, and where did the hand over take place? And the earth-goddess, on the other hand, was responsible for handing over the

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moral code, and is therefore also stereotyped as the guardian of Igbo morality (35-36).

But the problem is that there is a general belief that the gods are invisible, and that there is no one ever with a direct cognitive experience of them (S.B Oluwole, 1992:73). This aside, when did the earth goddess ever formulate the moral laws as to become its guardian? Is the earth goddess the guardian of morality in other African / Igbo community outside her direct domain and influence? (JC Ekei, 2001:8) Added to this is the fact that the Igbo religion as the Africans in general, is "not a revealed religion as Christianity, Islamism, or Judaism. If African religion is not a revealed religion, it may be anachronistic talking about revealed moral code coming from the earth goddess to the ancestors and then, to the man in the community. All these problems and more are enough to compel the thinking mind to look for foundation-question of African/Igbo morality elsewhere.

There are others, who in the footsteps of Mbiti, believe that Igbo traditional morality is only a part of Igbo religion and therefore, cannot claim a separate existence. In his book *Igbo Philosophy of Law*, Prof. F.U. Okafor (1992:46) considers Igbo religion and (Igbo) morality as being "closely interwoven to the extent that they are not only complementary but also inseparable. In fact, this view implies claim that Igbo ethics is a religious ethics. But man, by nature, is a religious animal (*homo religiosus*) without ceasing to be a moral being. Both of these departments of man's life presuppose freedom and rationality. To say Igbo religion and morality are inseparable cannot imply the denial of either religion or morality for religion is different from morality. Otherwise, it would mean that a people are denied moral exigencies and expression which they bear the imprints of. For instance, the urge to come to the aids of the needy is more of a moral urge than of a religious injunction. And even in Igbo traditional society, people were known to come together to wrestle with the problems of human limitations, scarcity, and human ambivalence. Here, human reason tells him that, it is one person's turn today and another's tomorrow. And that rational provision seems to motivate the subsequent actions towards the actual

amelioration of the ugly predicaments. But apart from this model that carries the note of utilitarian reciprocations, wholesome moral action is equally motivated by the fact of what man stand for - as 'a beauty of creation' (*mma-ndu*). This emphasis corresponds to "Kant's conception of moral being', or the 'Aristotle's man as such'. Before we consider the ethical foundation of this privileged consideration given exclusively to man as such, let us examine briefly the import of our use of analytic-hermeneutical investigation.

Analytic-Hermeneutical Investigation

Every statement one makes is a statement of a context. A person speaks from, and not completely outside his own background and his very '*sitz im lebem*'. That is what Paul Ricoeur meant when he said that 'nobody speaks from nowhere. To speak therefore is to express ones point of view together with a certain amount of inherited prejudice \ beliefs, principles, and presuppositions offered by a given context and culture. Hermeneutics is a principle of interpretation and proper investigation which imposes on man, the obligation to examine his options, his views about things, including his stereotyped and inherited beliefs, mostly cultural, as to find out if these views (*Weltanschauung*) have a rational foundation, and if a reasonable person is justified in adhering to them. Analysis on the other hand is the process of breaking these ideas into smaller bits for deeper understanding. Here, philosophy as hermeneutics does not necessarily insist that every belief, for instance, must be established by reason. In the very words of William Ernest Hooking (1958:6), "It does not assert that we have no right to believe what we cannot prove. What it does is to enquire what the grounds are on which beliefs are held, and what grounds are good grounds."

In this way, hermeneutics helps to unveil and discern the hidden meaning behind the mythical-elements of culture, thereby laying bare the truth behind the apparent meaning offered by culture. In our own case, the hermeneutical investigation is applied from the foregoing discussions to re-evaluate the foundation of African / Igbo moral Philosophy as earlier presented by the western and African anthropologists. On both sources of information, we discovered two seeming factors of distortion based on colonial misrepresentations,

Nnadiabube Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 2 (2), 2018 and mythological-misinterpretation. If the traditional African was attested to be human as any other people of the world, then he was no less equipped with moral capacity than his counterparts in the world. Although religion played a tremendous role in African Igbo existence as a whole, it never beclouded the basic moral tendencies of the African Igbo. Otherwise, does the urge to come to the aid of the needy (which morality enjoins and which was a practice even in traditional setting) arise from the gods, or from man's rational convictions as to what is beneficial to a fellow human being?

Nature of Igbo Moral Philosophy

Because of Igbo traditional unitary view of the universe in which both the visible and the invisible order of realities are seen only as different faces of the same coin, justice is hence considered as a central moral principle that is better suited than any other moral norm, to strike a balance between the two orders of existence. Besides, it is a virtue that establishes a proper relationship between man and man, man and woman, animate and inanimate, natural and supernatural, sensible and supra-sensible realities. Consequently, the Igbo worldview implies two basic beliefs, which include the unity of all things, and the ordered relationship among all beings in the universe (T.U Nwala, 1985:54). Justice, or the 'ordered relationship' is so central to Igbo morality that it is even mystified in *ofò* symbol, a symbol of moral justice. It is equally stereotyped in personal names, wise-sayings, and proverbs to underscore its singular ethical relevance within the communal traditional setting such as *Oguejiofo*, *ofonagoro*, *ofò n'ogu*, *ejiofo ga-ana* and so on. Justice is that disposition that establishes equality and fair play among people. It is such that one can easily summarize the general trend of Igbo moral philosophy as justice, in a communal setting, that is, justice-in-communalism as emphasized by John Ekei (2001:175), corresponding to the 'ordered relationship' and 'unity' that mark the Igbo worldview. Under this justice, practiced even before the advent of colonialism, people found its expressions in living together, and sharing their fortunes and misfortunes together, especially through mutual reciprocity founded on a principle of: Let the right hand wash the left hand, and the left hand wash the right hand, (*onye biri, ibe ya biri; egbe belu, ugo belu*). It is this basic principle of justice

Nnadiabube Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 2 (2), 2018 that seemed to sustain communal building of roads and bridges, thatch houses, market squares, pathways to the streams and shrines. There is no gainsaying therefore, that justice-in-communalism was a prevalent moral disposition among the traditional Africans/Igbo and as a moral category, it presents various interesting features. Let us briefly consider these features:

Justice-In-Communalism: Expressions, Dimensions, and Perspectives.

(a) Its Expressions:

In its distinctive features from western expressions of justice, it is important to note that justice-in-communalism is not determined, just in one level of relationship as "giving to everyone what is his due". It does not focus exclusively in relating to man and man, but with man and the entire realities as noted earlier. Justice derived from this relationship is basically elementary and dynamic, according man the status of being 'a person', 'a human being' and 'responsible'. It implies a relationship between a whole and its parts and between the parts as individual entities. Here, there is an expectation of justice based on the principle of *I-am* because *we-are* and since *we are*, therefore, *I-am*. The moral justice arising from this basic relationship is better articulated under four essential moments: *Justice as co-existence, Justice as acceptance, Justice as care, and Justice as concern.*

(i) Justice as co-existence: This simply implies that communal justice is expressed in the active belongingness of man. The ability to live together with others is, in itself an expression of (communal) justice in so far as 'I-am' because 'we-are' and vice versa. Describing the unique feature of an African, C.B, Okolo (1993:5) remarks that he is "not just a human being but essentially '*a being-with*', the very basis of his claim to the title, "African". Here, the essence of African 'being-with' is that of man's co-existence with his fellowmen within the communal setting. Co-existence implies not just living in the community but participating actively in its life and activities. Hence, "man is not truly man" according to Nze (1989:7), "than where he lives, and acts as a recognize citizen of the community". Tempels

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(1959:103) equally observes this unique characterization of the African (Bantu) when he writes that:

Just as Bantu (black Africa) ontology is opposed to the European concept of individuated things existing in themselves, isolated from others, so Bantu psychology cannot conceive of man as an individual, as a force existing by itself and apart from its ontological relationship with other living beings and from its connection with animals or inanimate forces around it.

In the above assertion, the author identifies 'ontological relationship' as an essential predicate of the communal African as opposed to the European concept of 'individuated things'. Just as individualism is sometimes used to back a claim in justice, especially in capitalist society, co-existence or the fact of belongingness gives a person a ground for just claims, for complaints against interference. It gives a legitimate right to complaint against a certain denial of attention or right, for instance, at the time of misfortune, of bereavement, setbacks, of sickness, disaster, and the like, especially in communal settings.

(ii) *Justice-as-acceptance*: Acceptance as a positive disposition implies some degrees of readiness voluntarily to act desirably; to do well, and to uphold sound moral principles out of human and rational conviction. In traditional African communities, the acceptance of moral obligations is facilitated by a set of rituals, which have come to be called 'life crisis ritual' or 'rites of passage'. Here, we have a passage from childhood to adulthood, including puberty rite, adolescent phase, rite of marriage, fatherhood/motherhood rites, and so on. The ethical significance of this phenomenon is that it is an act of the will to accept, freely all the moral obligations which a new status imposes on the individual for the welfare of the larger community. It means, as it were, to choose voluntarily responsibilities, which the society deems fit to obligate the individual due to the status he assumed. In its natural tendency, acceptance like the 'will' tends towards choosing for its own sake

and not for others' sake. In other word, one tends naturally to choose and to consent to what will benefit oneself. But when this natural tendency is 'supplemented by the positive disposition to accept the interests of others on a par with one's own, then one is said to possess the virtue of justice'(C.B Okolo,1993:6). Hence, acceptance is an expression of justice, that is, justice as acceptance.

(iii) *Justice-as-care*: This is yet another feature of Igbo expressions of communal justice. In fact, it is an integral part of moral justice. To be described as a caring personality is a plus in stating that one upholds the virtue of justice. For it is one thing to accept the communal forms of life in terms of moral obligations and quite a different thing to care, and to continue to maintain its observances. While acceptance pertains to the positive disposition of the will of moral agent, caring concerns the actual performance of the obligation. For instance, in the first moment, man accepts moral obligation to accommodate the physically handicapped out of moral justice.

In the second moment, he draws up the day-to-day programmes of how to effect the caring, and actually begins to implement it. This phase of justice is no longer in the cognitive and volutive realms but in the practical realm. For G.J. Warnock (1976:40), Caring seems synonymous with expansion of sympathy, or the general object of morality. It excludes other negative tendencies as unfairness, non-benevolence, and deception. Thus, justice as care has both the positive and negative dimensions. In caring, the traditional Igbo organize themselves to wrestle with the problems, which ordinarily are beyond individual capacities. For instance, there is a collective effort in building (mud) houses, and in erecting thatches upon them; in its negative dimension, caring helps to dissuade the ugly tendencies of evil arising from human ambivalence. This is observed through collective efforts in wresting with crimes, abominations, taboos and the like.

(iv) *Justice-as concern*: Justice-as-concern is chiefly directed towards the least advantaged members of the community. It has as its focal point the unfortunate members of the community, including the physically

handicapped, the poor, the destitute, and the indigents. These and more, belong to the class of concern in the community. In fact, the Igbo literal meaning of the poor, '*Ogbe-enye*' implies that these groups are at the very mercy of the community for their material and moral sustenance. While every individual needs a certain amount of communal care due to moral justice for his survival and flourishing, justice-as-concern aims principally towards the less advantaged. Concern has to do with compassion, with sympathy, with fairness given exclusively to the marginalized segments of the community. It is a type of justice demanded this time by their natural fortunes, or social circumstances.

Consequently, justice-as-concern comes under deferent types of expressions as during different rites of passage, including the time of birth, the rite of puberty, marriage, fatherhood, life, and death. Justice-as-concern is also shown during various festivities, celebrations and ceremonies. Different types of concern are shown during the events of misfortune, sickness, accidents, death and bereavements. In the former occasions, justice as concern is expressed by way of rejoicing with the hosts, the celebrants. In the second category, the same justice as concern is this time, by way of commiserating with the person. In both occasions, concern in terms of justice is expressed but the mood of such expressions certainly differs. While the former is expressed with joy, the later is done with sympathy. There is no gainsaying that this mutual communal expression of justice which has its own moral character was part of African traditional lifestyle even before the incursions of colonialism and missionary enterprises in Africa as a whole. Neither has this mode of expression anything to do with the dictates of the earth goddess or the ancestors, not even of religion, if anything these expressions are based on man's rational convictions as to what is conducive and beneficial to his fellow human being. Since it is one man's turn today and (it will be) another's tomorrow.

(b) Dimensions of Communal Justice: Communal justice has four basic dimensions, namely: personal, social, cosmic, and metaphysical dimensions. Suffice us to consider these aspects briefly.

(i) *Personal dimension*: In his book, *What Is To Be African*, C.B. Okolo (1993:5) writes that 'what is easily said about self in African metaphysics is that its horizon is essentially towards others'. In other words, 'self is often seen in the context of others, the 'being - with'. But in a sober reflection, one easily notices that self is always self. It will always remain a basic human affirmation and a veritable foundation of a - being with. Although in African metaphysics the essential focus of self is towards others but that could not have been possible if self has not first focused on him/herself, at least slightly. It means we-are because I-am, transposing the words of Mbiti. Besides, any attempt to deny the basic demands of self is always contradicted by the basic instinct of self preservations observed in all mortals. In other words, the personal dimension of communal justice is no doubt evident in every man, helping him to sustain the other dimensions.

(ii) *Social dimension*: The most commonly accepted dimension of communal justice is the social dimension, easily derivable from the integrative and unitary worldview of African in which every reality is considered in terms of collectivity and not as individuals. In other words, it is in co-existence that the individual becomes real in African ontology and communalism. And this co-existence remains the essential aspect of the social dimension of communal justice. The other aspect is the actual participation in social life of the community. This is because for C.B.Nze (1989:7), 'man is not- truly a man... than where he lives and acts as a recognized citizen of the community'. In fact, to be considered a "man," a "person," and, as "responsible," man is not only meant to live - with - others, but also to accept, and to care for the (moral) obligations 'entrusted (implicitly) to him by the community. By living-with, caring, and being concerned for himself, and for others, man is ipso facto a-being-with, as he is a social being.

(iii) *Cosmic dimension*: The cosmic dimension of communal justice means that man has also the responsibility to accept, to care, and to be concerned with the cosmic, and metaphysical order of reality, which form part and parcel of African/Igbo worldview. In fact, there are two basic principles guiding this world vision. These include the unity of all things, the visible and invisible, the material and the spiritual, the tangible and intangible. It means in effect, the

unity of the inanimate objects, animate and supra-natural realities. All these levels constitute the communal ambient of relationships, and therefore, a veritable scope of communal expressions of justice.

(iv) *Metaphysical dimension*: Metaphysical dimension of Igbo communal justice is easily understood from the basic concept of meta-physics which means, 'beyond the physical', 'beyond material', 'beyond visibility'. It implies justice rendered to the realities considered as; or to the realm of immaterial, intangible, spiritual, in-experiential. In other words, it means justice extended to the invisible realities. Generally, there are on the part of man, certain compelling attentions given to such realities notwithstanding the varied names ascribed to them by different cultures. Down the history, man has always found it necessary to establish some kind of relationship with the transcendence on different levels and varied capacities; he has therefore certain obligations in justice towards them, and vice versa. That is what we consider here as metaphysical communal justice.

In African\Igbo, such compelling need extends not only to the gods, but also to the ancestors, earth goddess, the spirits with attendant worship, sacrifices, restitutions, cleansing. These metaphysical realities are often associated with concepts through which justice is rendered to them as abomination, taboo, shrines, and sacrifices. Like man in the community, the gods and the ancestors cherish goodness/appreciations and abhor evil and oppressions. Therefore, justice done to man, as to the gods, has two dialectical perspectives as we now consider in our next section.

(c). **Perspectives of Communal Justice**: In the perspective of communal justice, the emphasis is now shifted to-the 'targets' or the 'outlook' of justice as such. This may be better brought out with the basic question that seeks to know the main objectives of justice. What is justice meant to achieve in the community? Aristotle defines justice, not only as "giving to everyone what is due his (right), or positive justice", but also as "refraining from 'pleonexia", or its negative outlook. That is, "refraining from gaining some advantage, for oneself by seizing what belongs to another, his property, his rewards, his office. There is therefore, in the concept of justice, .the

'positive' and the 'negative' perspectives. While the positive prescribes what should be done in the attainment of justice, the negative proscribes what should be avoided. This classification corresponds to what is known in Igbo moral setting as 'custom/tradition' - ('*ome-na-ala*'), as opposed to 'abomination' - ('*nso-ala*'). The custom concerns what ought-to-be-done in the land, while abomination - ('*nso-ala*') refers to what -is - abominable, and reprehensible in the land.

Every Igbo African community teaches each and every member of that community what *Nso Ala* (abomination) means. This is a major responsibility of the elders so that nobody may hide under ignorance to commit or omit any act. This is because African gods do not listen to such excuses like 'acting in ignorance, being forced to act', or such alibi that ordinarily reduce the gravity and inputability of an offence to the victim (M. Obiajulu, 2013:20). The gods lack patience and so the community that owns them also lacks patience in bringing any victim to book. The community's application of justice in moral judgment is anchored on this belief and there is no appellate court where anything better can be obtained. Alternatively, if one feels offended by the moral judgment and its imminent punitive measures, one has the option of committing suicide, or run to embrace *Arusi* (shrine) for protection and automatically becomes *osu*, or go for self exile in far distant community.

For B.E Idowu (1962:146), the ancient Africa was far from being an abode of *laissez faire* morality. There were strict moral principles and determined code of conduct. Custom laid down the code of law which established the nature of right doings and penalties attached to taboos against defaulters. Okonkwo in things fall apart, should not have beaten his wife during the week of peace. Ezeani, the prince of peace told him: "the evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give increase, and we shall perish" (C. Achebe, 1978:27-28). African gods are god of retributive justice based on the principle of tit for tat, and as Africans own these gods, they are bound to behave in the same manner with their gods, as the gods are representative of community (general) will and spirit. The gods do the bidding of their owners. If

the community has a preponderant influence over their gods, it implies the community is the basis of African morality. Since there is no community without persons, morality in Africa becomes a matter of convention.

Conclusion

From our discussion above, one can deduce that Africans are moral people if not highly moral. This is because of their high sense of justice anchored on the principle of tit for tat. That really made everybody to feel secured in the presence of the other, without any risk of harm from any angle. Africans believe strongly in the natural laws of karma and nemesis and that strongly influences their morality. Even the very idea of reincarnation plays an important role in the shaping of their morality for every African longs to join the ancestors at one's demise with the befitting burial to be given by one's loved ones; on the basis of one's moral life. Of course there were certain taboos hedged around certain actions and observing them to the latter was identical with being an African. In African society before now, there was no need of police, army, court, prison, or any of such force institution because everybody kept to the rules of morality. And by so doing, everybody was his brother's keeper: i-am because we-are.

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