

PAULIN HOUNTONDJI'S NOTION OF CULTURAL PLURALISM: A PANACEA TO NIGERIAN PROBLEM OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

All humans are gifted differently and there is no iota of doubt about that. Some have what others do not have and vice versa. This then behooves on us humans to engage in complementing each other in different areas of lack. Unfortunately, some people take advantage of this lack in human lives to claim superiority over others. This was the case in 19th and 20th centuries when Europeans tried to subjugate, suppress and undermine the third world countries in a bid to enthrone their culture and ideas as supreme over them. This is referred to as Eurocentrism. This action triggered reactions that brought about the birth of cultural pluralism which seeks peaceful coexistence between various cultures and respect for each other. From the third world countries, the idea of nationalism was born as a counter measure. Hountondji on the contrary sees Eurocentrism and nationalism as extremes. Accordingly, he advocates for cultural pluralism in his work, "Pluralism – True and False". His position is simply clear: that there should be peaceful coexistence between different cultures, there should be recognition of this plurality and this plurality should be affirmed as a good thing. Hence, this paper establishes that Hountondji's idea of cultural pluralism encourages people to accept the fact that we are all different and this difference and plurality are good values and ingredients for peace and great development in the society. The paper concludes that, cultural pluralism as proposed by Hountondji is a panacea to the challenge of Nigerian underdevelopment if properly applied.

Keywords: Cultural Pluralism, Eurocentrism, Traditionalism, Relativism, underdevelopment.

Introduction

In 19th and 20th centuries there was an ethnocentric attitude expressed by the Europeans which exults above all civilizations the superiority of European culture thereby undermining other ones. This was done in a bid to exploit and colonize them. This imperialist movement met its waterloo when most scholars began to refute the claim by asserting that western civilization or culture is not the only culture that there are other cultures. Thus, European culture is only one

way among other ways by which human beings organize their relationship with one another. This claim brought about the recognition of the plurality of cultures. According to Hountondji, cultural pluralism means three things:

1. The fact of cultural plurality, considered as the co-existence of cultures which, in principle at least, belong to different geographical areas;
2. The acknowledgement of the fact of this plurality;
3. The affirmation that this plurality is a good thing, and the desire to make something of it in one way or another, either by preserving the various cultures in an individual sense in order to avoid any kind of reciprocal contamination, or, conversely, by organising between them a kind of peaceful dialogue with a view to their mutual enrichment (Hountondji, 1973: 101).

Apart from Hountondji's reaction to the question of Eurocentrism, there are other arguments about the issue of superiority of cultures. As the western ethnologists championed the superiority of their culture over other cultures in order to gain from it, so did some African nationalists who uphold vehemently the African traditional culture tend to deny this plurality of cultures and argue that the Africans should push aside every culture and regain their authentic identity. According to Hountondji, this point of view is referred to as culturalism.

Hountondji went further to stress that culturalism is an ideological system because it indirectly produces political effect, which is to obscure on a primary level effective national liberation, and on the secondary level, the problem of the class struggle. For him, cultural nationalism “simplifies the national culture, schematizes and smoothes it out in order to oppose it to the culture of the colonizer and to usher in this imaginary cultural opposition before the real political and economic conflict” (Hountondji, 1973: 109). Also, countries which are independent, cultural nationalism “deaden the national culture by reducing its internal pluralism and its historical depth, in order to swerve the attention of the exploited classes away from the real economic and political conflicts which divide them from the ruling classes, under the false pretext of their common participation in the national culture” (Hountondji, 1973: 110). On this note, Hountondji encourages transnational and cultural debates because it promotes “feelings of solidarity between people and groups of people who are fighting for the same opinions and the same cultural styles” (Hountondji, 1973: 116). Hountondji also advocates for global intellectual exchange in the midst of those who are of the same class or equals but was not realizable in the colonial period. Colonialism was a stumbling block to African cultures, minimized their internal pluralism and weakened the tensions they had (Hountondji, 1976: 114).

Hountondji Culture as Pluralism

In an early article entitled “Pluralism - True and false” in 1973, Hountondji elaborates on the idea of “culture” in the context of the debate on cultural pluralism. According to his analysis, culture changes over time, and is characterized by heterogeneity, which is nothing negative, in need of being suppressed or avoided, but an indispensable driving force for cultural prosperity. Hountondji assumes that contestations between diverging views and competing norms keep cultures alive. Conversely, he rejects the ideas of “culture” seen as a homogenous, static essence that a people can always return to in order to find its authentic roots. Instead of focusing on the differences between cultures, we should rather focus on the internal differences within each culture. Philosophy therefore should aim at deconstructing false

dichotomies, and acknowledge the internal dialectics of cultural difference. Furthermore, at the beginning of Hountondji's work, he made effort to differentiate between three senses of cultural pluralism: (1) It means the existence of different cultures from different places, (2) the awareness as well as acceptance of the existence of this plurality and (3) the acknowledgment of this plurality as something that is positive and good. This goes with the yearning to get something out of it "either by preserving the various cultures in an individual sense in order to avoid any kind of reciprocal contamination, or, conversely, by organizing between them a kind of peaceful dialogue, with a view to their mutual enrichment." (Hountondji, 1973: 101). In the 19th century, some relevant philosophers asserted the claim of the superiority of European way of life over others. Against this background, some scholars, both in Africa and Europe, reacted to this by challenging the claim. They advocated for cultural pluralism which supports either the preservation of current cultures which are existing or the peaceful mutual enrichment of different cultural traditions. The communitarian philosophical school projects certain philosophers who defend their school of thought. However, Hountondji argues against the communitarian view by indicating that African culture is characterized by different contestations and pluralism over norms internally. In other words, different cultures struggle with themselves as subcultures. Hountondji consistently asserts that African culture "is not a closed system in which one can enclose oneself or could be enclosed; it is on the contrary, the unfinished history of the same contradictory debates" (Hountondji, 1973: 108). Based on this, any effort made to make either the western or African tradition one will only be a simple construction which serves as a tool for external interests (Hountondji, 1973: 107). It is clear that Hountondji is concerned with clashes within and these debates and clashes are productive, and can bring about positive social transformation.

Cultural pluralism: Some authors perspectives

In the past, some scholars have advocated for cultural pluralism as an imperative for national development and at this juncture we shall take a brief look at some of their views:

William R. Hazard in his work *Cultural Pluralism and Schooling* attempts to clarify the confusion between cultural pluralism as a current reality and as a societal goal when he asserts that "Cultural Pluralism is both a fact and a concept (goal) which has not been given due recognition. The fact that the United States includes citizens of diverse cultures cannot be challenged. The extent to which the non-White cultures have been disenfranchised or made invisible varies but their existence is a fact" (Hazard and Stent, 1973:13). Hazard also stressed that cultural pluralism treated as bare fact, means very little. But the movement from fact to concept (goal) however, opens the door to useful examination. Hazard is among many scholars who admit and accept the reality of the existence of diverse cultures or cultural pluralism. Hountondji and Hazard are on the same page on the acceptance of the existence of cultural pluralism. However, while Hountondji's analysis focuses more on European countries and third world countries Hazard focuses more on the cultural pluralism in the United States.

Mary Parker Follet in her work *The New State: Group Organization of the Solution of Popular Government* writes that the hope of democracy is in its inequalities. By this she means, indifferences between the citizens (Follet, 1918: 39). She further advocates for cultural pluralism that is integrated or melioritic in the sense of James and Adams, rather than a view

where separate cultures keep to themselves. Follett puts it differently when she asserts that, unity, not uniformity, must be our aim. We attain unity only through variety. Differences must be integrated, not annihilated, nor absorbed. Anarchy means unorganized, unrelated difference; coordinated, unified difference belongs to our ideal of a perfect social order. We don't want to avoid our adversary but to “agree with him quickly”; we must, however, learn the technique of agreeing. As long as we think of difference as that which divides us, we shall dislike it; when we think of it as that which unites us, we shall cherish it. Instead of shutting out what is different, we should welcome it because it is different and through its difference will make a richer content of life” (Follet, 1918: 40).

She added by asserting that, the act of ignoring the differences is the biggest mistake in industry, politics or international life. Follett and Hountondji agree on the point that different cultures should be made to peacefully coexist and live in unity rather than in uniformity. They both encourage that cultural pluralism should be seen and accepted as something good that will bring about development rather than division.

Horace Kallen in his work *Democracy versus the Melting-Pot* holds that differences side by side is valuable as against the imposition of oversimplified straightjackets on the inherent complexity of reality. Kallen in 1915 (the first person to use the term) envisioned a nation of European multi-ethnic nations residing within an “American Civilization” and utilizing the English language as a common language. Kallen's desired objective is stated as “. . . the outlines of a possible great and truly democratic commonwealth become discernible. Its form would be that of the federal republic; its substance a democracy of nationalities, cooperating voluntarily and autonomously through common institutions in the enterprise of self-realization through the perfection of men according to their kind” (Kallen, 1964:142-143). He further stressed that the acceptance of diverse cultures coexisting in the United States strengthened, rather than jeopardized, American solidarity. If one culture is insistent on dominating other ones the result would be nothing else than continuous disunity and trouble. He added that assimilationists not only misrepresented the contributions of immigrant groups but also ignored fundamental American constitutional principles of equality and justice.

Hountondji and Kallen agree on the points that cultural diversity should be accepted and embraced as something of value that is good. They both encourage peaceful coexistence of different cultures. Kallen was critical of the assimilationists in the United States that fight for uniformity rather than unity while Hountondji was critical of European ethnologists with their eurocentric view and he was critical of the nationalists from third world countries who with politicians employ the idea of nationality as a tool for diversion of the attention of the citizens of their country from their failure in governance.

Randolf Bourne in his work *Trans-National American* rejects the Melting-Pot theory and does not see immigrants assimilating easily to another cultures (Hassen, 1977:13). Bourne's notion of nationality was concerned with the connection between a person and their spiritual country, in other words, their culture. He further stressed that people would hold dearly to the culture and literature of their country of origin even when they lived in another country. For Bourne,

this is also true for many immigrants to the United States. It is on this note that Bourne could not see immigrants from various parts of the world assimilating to the Anglo-Saxon traditions, which were seen as American traditions.

According to Bourne, America gives a unique liberty of opportunity and can still give traditional isolation, where he thinks could bring about a cosmopolitan enterprise. Bourne thinks that with this great mix of cultures and people, America would be able to grow into a trans-national nation, which would be able to gain interconnecting cultural fiber with other countries. He felt America would grow more as a country by broadening people's ideas to include immigrants' ways instead of conforming or forcing everyone to the melting-pot ideal. This broadening of the views of the people would later bring about a nation where all who live in it are united, and will definitely push the country towards greatness. Hountondji and Bourne see cultural pluralism as something good that if properly harnessed can promote growth and development within a state. Bourne and Hountondji emphasized on dialogue between cultures and respect for each other.

Leopold Sedar Senghor in his work *Freedom 1: Negritude and Humanism* defines negritude simply as the sum of the cultural values of the black world as expressed in the life, the institutions, and the works of black men; the sum of the values of the civilization of the black world” (Senghor, 1964: 9). According to him, negritude is in fact a culture. It is a collection of economic, political, intellectual, moral, artistic and social values of the African people and Black minorities in America, Asia and Oceania” (Mabana, 1-9). For Senghor, negritude “is neither racialism nor self-negation. Yet it is not just affirmation; it is rooting oneself in oneself, and self-confirmation: of one's being. It is nothing more or less than what some English-speaking Africans have called the African personally” (Senghor, 1964: 9). The idea behind the inclusion of Black people from all over the world resonates well with the common struggle of the people of African descent in every society around the world where they have been subjected to racial discrimination and other forms of oppression.

Senghor advocated for assimilation, but a form of assimilation that allowed for cultural miscegenation of Black and White. Senghor also promoted a rediscovery and celebration of African beliefs and values and the establishment of an authentic black self; he also imagined a new racial consciousness in which a dual black and white cultural background could work forward a place of mutual enlightenment, a “give-and-take.”

Senghor's view is that of self-rediscovery, self-affirmation, and self-confirmation of one's being, beliefs, values and culture in order to enhance effective coexistence with other cultures rather than ethnocentric fight between cultures on the basis of superiority. Hountondji's stand on cultural pluralism is in agreement with the point Senghor just made. This is because cultural pluralism according to Hountondji upholds the continuous existence of every culture, peaceful coexistence and respect among cultures in order to enhance development among them.

Kwame Nkrumah in his work *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization* addressed his dissatisfaction with the confusion that reigns supreme in Africa owing to the interplay of the traditional, the western, and the Islamic segments of the African society. For

him, the three do not have a peaceful co-existence. In fact, Nkrumah viewed African identity as being in crisis, because of the co-existence of opposing ideologies and religions brought about by migration and colonialism. This is owing to the fact that the principles that guide them are in conflict with one another. For instance, according to Nkrumah, the evil of capitalism lies in the fact that it alienates the fruit of labour from those who with the toil of their body and the sweat of their brow produce this fruit. Hence, it is irreconcilable with the basic principles which are found in traditional African society. On this note, Nkrumah asserts that it is unjust and alien to us. However, socialism studies and masters nature but with a human touch which is not aimed at making profit rather to bring enough satisfaction to the greater number of people both spiritually and materially. Based on this, Nkrumah claims that materialism which suggests socialist philosophy that agrees more readily with African humanist, egalitarian principles should be embraced by Africans. He also asserts that, western and Islamic segments of African society, “in order to be rightly seen, must be accommodated only as experiences of the traditional African society. If we fail to do this our society will be racked by the most malignant schizophrenia”(Nkrumah, 1970:78).

The point of disagreement between Nkrumah and Hountondji is clear. Nkrumah's philosophy of consciencism aims at having homogenous culture because he viewed African identity as being in crisis, because of the co-existence of opposing ideologies and religions brought about by migration and colonialism. On the contrary, Hountondji disagrees with him by asserting that plurality in African continent is not a cause for crisis rather it is a blessing that should be harnessed for African development, thus, should not be eradicated in favour of unity and synthesis.

Bruce Gaarder in his work *Cultural Pluralism and the United States Office of Education* defines Cultural Pluralism as that which implies social justice, but goes far beyond. It means the co-existence, preferably in a status of mutual respect and encouragement within the same state or nation, of two or more cultures which are significantly distinct from one and other in their patterns of belief and behavior including, as the case may be, different languages. Gaarder stressed that “cultural pluralism is not an assimilated posture; it is a negation of assimilation. It is a posture which maintains that there is more than one legitimate way of being human without paying the penalties of second class citizenship, and that this pluralism would enrich and strengthen the nation”(Gaarder, 1971:). Bruce shares the same views with Hountondji as regards their definition of cultural pluralism. Both of them admit that cultural pluralism has to do with the acceptance of the fact that there exist diverse cultures. They both encourage the coexistence of these numerous cultures. Finally, Hountondji and Bruce in their views promote the idea of mutual respect between cultures. Having looked at other perspectives on cultural pluralism let us see other views of Hountondji as regards cultural pluralism.

Culturalism and Traditionalism as Political Strategies

According to Hountondji, the term culture has come to be used in two ways in Africa: first, through cultural imperialism in the era of colonialism and neocolonialism, second, through cultural nationalism during the period of liberation struggle in 1960s. For Hountondji, the first is first order ethnocentrism which is against the second one which is defensive ethnocentrism (Hountondji, 2000: 19–22). Cultural imperialism, on one hand, thrives on a collective sense of

superiority. Defensive ethnocentrism on the other hand, is uncritical and is the excessive response to the first one. Hountondji stressed that colonial racism and all the theories which were used to grade civilization were the reasons on which the imperial project was executed. In reaction to that, scholars from colonized countries in the early period of their liberation created a narrative which was meant to show how authentic their culture is and that served as a medium of refutation of the claims for imperialism. However, Hountondji holds that:

the focus on “culture” diverted attention from the class struggle, from exploitation, and neocolonial superimpositions, within African societies, too. Proponents of cultural nationalism constructed identities which had never existed in this pure form, such as “whiteness,” “blackness,” or “authenticity.” The related narratives of return embraced “black authenticity,” which expressed a desire for a lost age where immutable laws governed peaceful social interaction. Culture has, according to this analysis, served as a discursive battlefield in Africa, both during the colonial subjugation, and during anti-colonial struggles. Colonialism's projections of racist inferiority and primitive unanimity reduced the complexity of a socially rich continent to a flattened and static image. As a response to the racist subjugation and denigration of African civilizational achievements, political anti- and postcolonial leaders such as Léopold Sédar Senghor (1964) or Kwame Nkrumah (2005) used African culture as a discursive arena through which they sought to rehabilitate African identity (Dubgen and Skupien, 2019:138).

They were precisely particular about cultural nationalism as a medium of accomplishing unity among Africans. On the contrary, Hountondji saw this trend to have continued after the colonial era up to the point that it brought about the rise of cultural nationalism and novel kinds of chauvinism. In this regard, Hountondji acknowledges that the philosophies of authenticity may have had a liberating effect in the early wake of liberation, in so far as they contested the hierarchies attached to cultural difference (Hountondji, 1981: 132–147).

Some African scholars like Senghor affirm the differences brought about by the colonizers on a positive note. Hountondji (1996: 159) went on to accuse Senghor with a “garrulous negrism” that served to avoid the relevant political and socio-economic problems of postcolonial Africa by focusing on black metaphysics and the so-called 'Negro soul.' Likewise, Hountondji criticized Nkrumah's (2005:50) philosophy of consciencism which, equally, made allusion to an idea of homogenous culture. Nkrumah viewed African identity as being in crisis, because of the co-existence of opposing ideologies and religions brought about by migration and colonialism. Hountondji attacked Nkrumah for taking the plurality on the African continent as a cause for crisis, and trying to eradicate this plurality in favour of unity and synthesis. Hountondji ended by saying that “[t]he crucial weakness of the project resides in the basic assumption that Africa *needs* a collective philosophy” (Hountondji, 1996: 149). In order to defend his idea of cultural pluralism as the best way a society can live and grow Hountondji continued his critique of traditionalism and relativism.

Traditionalism and Relativism

Hountondji asserts that traditionalism shows some form of relativism that describes some particular norms and values based in certain environment which is against what universalism

stands for. This type of categorization suggests that morality is only valid based on where it is formed or it originates from, and that this culture has right over certain norms. Here, Hountondji tries to show that the “Europeanness” or “Africanness” are mere accidents and not original and necessary. On this note, we cannot base the validity of values and norms on only tradition but they have to be philosophically discussed on reasons that are not based on an unchanging idea of cultural difference. Every culture according to him should make effort to engage on global discussion that is founded on rules that encourage cross national boundary interactions. Hountondji encourages transnational and cultural debates because it promotes “feelings of solidarity between people and groups of people who are fighting for the same opinions and the same cultural styles” (Hountondji, 1973: 116). Hountondji also advocates for global intellectual exchange in the midst of those who are of the same class or equals but was not realizable in the colonial period. In fact, colonialism for him was a stumbling block to African cultures, minimized their internal pluralism and weakened the tensions African cultures had (Hountondji, 1973: 114). Also, Hountondji stressed that the growth and development of African countries cannot be possible if it promotes and applies the principles of identity politics because it has a lot of weaknesses which will not help for African development.

Pitfalls of Identity Politics

On the question of identity politics, Hountondji asserts that it hinders social change, hence, should not be encouraged. It also diverts attention of the citizens from the failures of their leaders thereby hindering development in the society. To illustrate this, Hountondji gave instances in reference to the practice done in Abomey which is known to be a part of the present day Benin Republic. Back then, they bury together with a king certain number of his wives who they carefully select as accompaniment of the king to the other world. Hountondji elaborated this in the article “Tradition: Hindrance or Inspiration?” and in a catalogue text on the occasion of a display devoted to the King Béhanzin (1844–1906) of Dahomey by the Museum Branley in Paris. Hountondji refers specifically to this practice of human sacrifice, and the need for a serious historical re-examination. He encourages an in-depth study of the personality of King Béhanzin. For him, he has to be seen as a supporter of anti-colonial struggle who led the French Army to defend his people, a king who practiced human sacrifice till his death and a man who conquered neighbouring people. Hountondji encourages that “both sides of the character must be apprehended in a single sweep in order to hold aloft both adoration and disdain, gawking rapture and rejection” (Hountondji, 2006: 48–60). Hountondji advocates that this temptation must be rejected above all: “one which entails, in order to redeem the legacy and preserve the admiration, to justify the unjustifiable with unbearable sophisms or at the cost of elementary ethics” (Hountondji, 2006: 48–60).

Furthermore, Hountondji recounted an experience he had as a professor while he was in Zaire during the 1970s; he asserts that the government used the idea of national identity or philosophy of authenticity in a bid to reinforce Mobutu's draconian presidency. In other words, they used government of authenticity “[b]y appealing to Zairians to be themselves, and to reclaim a threatened cultural identity, the 'philosophy of authenticity,' the state's official

doctrine, managed to reduce this identity to the most superficial and abjectly folkloristic level” (Hountondji, 1973: 112).

Limitations of Hountondji's view on Cultural Pluralism

There are certain weaknesses inherent in Hountondji's idea of cultural pluralism. However, they are not serious challenges to the effective application of his proposal of cultural pluralism as a panacea to Nigerian Underdevelopment. First among the challenges is ethnocentrism. Notwithstanding Hountondji's criticism of the ethnocentric mindset of the Europeans and the nationalist mindset of the third world countries while he subscribes to pluralism of cultures still. He failed to effectively deal with the problem of ethnocentrism which stands as a huge challenge to the functional operation of his views on cultural pluralism. Firstly, the unique nature of every culture has an overbearing influence on those who profess such a culture. In a bid to preserve such a culture and their cultural identity they choose their culture ahead of other ones making respectful, peaceful coexistence and mutual dialogue for the enrichment of each other impossible. The fact is that, it is a natural thing for man to choose what he values all the time. Also, the preservation instinct should not be taken for granted because it means a lot to the practice of cultural pluralism. According to Asouzu(2007: 57) “the tendency to seek self-preservation in a unilateral exclusive manner is the root cause of racism, tribalism, ethnicity, and all manners of segregative tendencies.” Therefore, ethnocentrism is a dangerous element which has hindered the goals of interculturality. Many people in the interchange of cultures are seriously attached to their culture, with no plan of identifying or appreciating the good qualities of other cultures. This pervasive element is nothing but a challenge which must be changed for a progressive cultural interaction.

Secondly, hegemonism is another challenge to Hountondji's view on cultural pluralism. Hegemonism is the quest of one culture to dominate other ones. Such a culture expresses superiority mindset and always tries to control others. This comes from the false mindset that “it has the obligation to teach and instruct all, that its prerogative is to set the pace for others to follow” (Asouzu 2007: 57).

Hountondji's Cultural Pluralism as a panacea to the challenge Nigerian Underdevelopment

Nigeria gained political independence from the British on October 1, 1960 and became a republic on October 1, 1963. The Federal Republic of Nigeria is made up of thirty-six states and the federal capital territory. As a West African country Nigeria has an area of 923,768 km² and 356,667 sq mile; surrounded by Benin Republic in the west, Chad and Cameroun in the east, Niger Republic in the north, and the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean in the south. Its Lingual Franca is English Language, and has over 250 ethnic groups with about 520 languages. After Nigerian political independence, it has had twenty-four years of wasteful and unsatisfactory civilian rule and thirty years of cruel military dictatorship.

Nigeria has numerous natural and human resources that if well managed will certainly make its citizenry wealthy and flourish. In spite of the enormous wealth in terms of natural and human resources Nigeria has, in 2018 Nigeria took over the status of the country with the highest number of poor people in the world from India which was occupying that spot before now (Adebayo, 2018). Close to 87 million Nigerians which are about half of the country's

populations are poor. They actually live on less than \$1.90 a day as at 2018 (Adebayo, 2018). Indeed, the level of underdevelopment in all facets of the Nigerian state is alarming. Amidst these challenges, corruption has eaten deep into the Nigerian system crumbling the whole system while religious tensions are ubiquitous. Ethnicism has become very endemic. Farmers and headers clashes have become prevalent. Banditry, kidnappings and all forms of violence have become banal, whereas poverty is the doom of the preponderance of Nigerians.

Due to corruption, injustice, nepotism, identity politics, tribalism and religious difference Nigeria has been unable to make any meaningful development in spite of the enormous natural resources and large population Nigeria has. Nigeria currently is deeply divided along poverty, riches, ethnic, religious and regional lines. Identity politics has become the order of the day. Certain ethnic groups and regions have taken exclusive right to power in Nigeria. This has hindered certain geopolitical zones and ethnic groups to take up leadership positions at the federal level thereby depriving them the opportunity to express themselves and contribute their skills and wealth of knowledge to the development of the Nigeria. It is on this basis the need for the application of the tenets of Hountondji's cultural pluralism to the Nigerian state arose.

There are a lot of positive ideas one can deduce from Hountondji's view on cultural pluralism which if properly applied to the Nigerian situation will go a long way in dealing with the current ethnic, regional and religious challenges that have brought about underdevelopment in Nigeria. First of all, Hountondji understands cultural pluralism as three things:

1. The coexistence of cultures from different geographical areas.
2. Recognizing the existence of this plurality,
3. The recognition of the fact that it is good, and the desire to preserve various individual cultures from contamination or arrange peaceful dialogue between them for their improvement.¹⁹

These various meanings of cultural pluralism admit to the single reality of cultural diversity among human beings as against a biased universal culture that was being imposed on other cultures by European ethnologists and the extreme nationalist movements that continue to stick to traditionalism. This means, there is no one way of thinking rather we should accept other ways of thinking and doing things such that we do not suppress any culture as inferior while claiming superiority of our culture over theirs. Since philosophy is the search for wisdom and what we love is what we search for, it therefore means we have not arrived at grasping fully this wisdom. This being the case, it is an ongoing search which is not limited to any particular culture or hindered by spatial or temporary changes so we have to engage in a mutual, respectful, and peaceful exchange of ideas and values between different cultures.

Secondly, Hountondji's meanings of cultural pluralism lean towards the promotion of interculturality which is the process by which different cultures engage in a dialogue for the mutual enrichment of each other. Based on this, Hountondji's views on cultural pluralism promote fundamentally, dialogue of cultures or polylogue. Dialogue in this case gives opportunity to allow cultures to interface with each other for the aim of enriching each other. Dialogue or polylog which is a method employed in intercultural philosophy, insist on making philosophy or culture more open. Openness then becomes the core value of interculturality and the search for ways of a more inclusive culture.

Hountondji's effort to show that cultural pluralism can be interpreted in relation to interculturality is a condemnation of inadequate and false universalisms that ignore the specific issues and challenges of periphery cultures. It is also a rejection of the condemnation of one's own culture, as it was during Africa's colonial encounter with Europe. It is an attempt to make one's unique experience count, and to question the 'truth' spoken by those who have the power to impose their views as normative. It is an insistence for the need for shared beliefs and strategies that affect the human condition.

Hountondji's analysis of culturalism exposes the strategy by politicians of using cultural topics to divert attention from important economic and political issues. In other words, Hountondji's ideas on cultural pluralism bring to the fore and to the consciousness of the sleeping minds of citizens of third world countries who have been suppressed, denied of their basic human needs and deprived of their economic, social, and political rights. The awareness of the idea that nationalism canvassed by our political leaders is only a ploy to divert our attention from their inefficiency and incompetence in government is very common in Nigerian political space.

Hountondji's prescriptive notion of "culture" is that which is marked by internal heterogeneity and whose function is to stimulate progressive social change. This is a view that promotes development and growth in all ramifications of the society. This is implied in his stand against the static and essentialist notion of culture that leans towards traditionalism championed by contemporary nationalists and identitarian movements that lead to a society's stagnation and enclosure.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Hountondji's idea of cultural pluralism does not only promote development and growth in all societies, it encourages unity and inclusiveness among people of different cultures and ethnic groups. It promotes tolerance and respect for different people's ways of life, belief and religion. It encourages peaceful coexistence and that will create room for mutual exchange of knowledge that can engender development in the society. Finally, it encourages people to accept the fact that we are all different and this difference and plurality are good values and ingredients for peace and great development in the society. It is founded on these obvious features of Hountondji's cultural pluralism this work concludes that, if properly applied to the ethnic and religious challenges that have brought about serious underdevelopment in the Nigerian society there will be huge transformation that will help Nigerians to coexist peacefully, engage in polylog (in form of national conferences to help promote democratic tenets, tolerance, solidarity and exchange of knowledge), respect each other's ways of thinking and acting in order for Nigerian citizens to flourish and thrive.

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