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## An Appraisal of Intercultural Philosophy and Social Capital as a Panacea for Nigerian National Development

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### Abstract

This paper appraises intercultural philosophy and social capital as panaceas for national development in Nigeria. Intercultural philosophy is the science of cultural evaluation and promotion of new ideas towards national transformation and peace. It promotes mutually beneficial dialogue between various worldviews, cultures, and religions. Social capital refers to a means of understanding the role that values and norms play in economic life. This article indicates the role of intercultural philosophy and social capital in Nigeria today, especially how they interact in national development and how they contribute to economic growth and poverty alleviation. The paper used secondary materials and the theory of interculturality to advance its findings. The study found that both intercultural philosophy and social capital help individuals unite to defend

their interests and organise to support the collective needs of a country. Again, intercultural philosophy contributes to the understanding, explanation, and future management of current political, ethnic, and religious conflicts in Nigeria. This paper recommends intercultural philosophy and social capital as a path for the management of numerous nation-building challenges in Nigeria. This is because intercultural philosophy paves the way for decline in all forms of ethnic conflicts, social dichotomies, religious fundamentalism, etc. within the Nigerian state.

**Keywords:** *Intercultural Philosophy, Social Capital, Development, Trust, Value.*

## **Introduction**

Intercultural studies in philosophy originated in the comparative study of religions that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among those who began the crusade of intercultural philosophy, its practitioners include James Frazer, Max Muller, and E. B. Tylor. Philosophical discourse emanates from a culture, and no particular culture has a monopoly on wisdom. Thus, there is a need for an intercultural examination of issues. This is why in Nigeria, the need to have increased representative worldviews remains the fundamental driver of marginalisation by smaller ethnic groups as a way of enhancing nation-building and the Nigerian social capital status. The concept of social capital puts both policies and institutions in their proper cultural context and guards the citizenry from certain naïve expectations that policy will lead inevitably to economic growth (Fukuyama, 2002). In Nigeria, the quest for shared national norms has remained elusive, except during football competitions.

Philosophising begins in a culture and transcends it. One's societal influence affects his or her critical approach to issues. This points to the fact that one's method of philosophising is often determined by his or her societal and cultural influence. Philosophy is a means or tool that humans use to address the mysteries of nature. Since the ancient era, scholars have always tried to comprehend the composition of human nature and the entire universe. Apart from the universal problems of humans, each continent has its own peculiar problems. In the same vein, philosophy as a tool for providing solutions to man's problems exists on different continents of the world with its own peculiarities. This is why one's response to the contact of different cultures and traditions during the past century has been the proposal of an intercultural philosophy. In

the domain of intercultural philosophy, philosophers from different cultures or traditions actively engage each other with mutual respect towards the recognition that one's own philosophical views are not complete. Thus, there are other legitimate philosophical views, and one's own cultural view (whether it is that of the Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, or Fulani) may need rearticulation or even revision to accommodate the views of others in the nation-building process. Intercultural philosophy aspires to achieve or prove that contact among cultures (philosophically) leads to comprehensive mutuality, reciprocity, and equality (United Church of Canada, 2011), and such mutuality, reciprocity, and equality are currently lacking in Nigeria.

However, several puzzles confront this new culture of philosophizing. For instance, what obstacles may hinder a peaceful meeting and constructive exchange between cultures as found in Nigeria, systems of thought, and scientific concepts, and how are they constituted? Intercultural philosophy grants this subject precedence over philosophical tradition. This is because intercultural philosophy is best understood as an unending process not centred on obtaining a specific result in the consciousness of a permanently positioned positionlessness of philosophy (Yousefi, 2007, p. 107).

This research appraises the concept of intercultural philosophy and social capital as panaceas for Nigerian national development. The methodology used was the analysis of secondary materials on intercultural philosophy and social capital, while noting that practical case studies of the topic are beyond the scope of this study as such studies grow from comparative cultural studies (Raju, 1962).

In tracing the foundation of intercultural philosophy, there is a need to be conscious of cultural tendencies, which inherently dictate the 'tertium comparationis' in all areas of science for all comparisons and communication (Yousefi, 2017). This principle has led to some teachings and theories that resulted in violence, such as colonialism, expansionism, imperialism, and the modern-day attempt to impose democracy. Intercultural philosophy is philosophy that is based on the mutual exchange of philosophical ideas emanating from different cultures. It is an integration of influences from philosophical cultural traditions, for instance, African, Asian, and Western philosophy, etc. It is the integration of these philosophical worldviews from different cultures that is referred to as intercultural philosophy. Previously, the West argued that philosophy originated in Athens. Other continents, such as Africa, argued that they have their own philosophy from the onset, independent

of Western ones. It is the arguments of different continents on the origin of philosophy rooted in their culture that birthed intercultural philosophy. Intercultural philosophy promotes mutual understanding, dialogue, and respect among various cultural and philosophical ideologies. Philosophers engage in intercultural philosophy to enable them to harness the different philosophical approaches used in probing into the nature of reality, the meaning of life, and the question of knowledge. This is geared towards building a better society.

Social capital is a wide range of networks of relationships. It promotes the idea that social relations, shared norms, values, and trust enhance cooperation among people. It is a philosophical (ethics) concept. It is also a concept that is widely used in Sociology, Political Science, and Economics. It is a concept that has long gained widespread usage. According to Field (2003: 166), the key thesis of social capital is that social networks are a valuable asset. This points to the adage that “a tree cannot make a forest”. It is the cooperation of people ranging from village to village, community to community, state to state, and country to country that can make man conquer the world. Social capital preaches relationships that are based on trust and cooperation among people. This is because it plays a vital role in the growth of a society. This is why Putman (2000: 289) says that in a place where there is trust, the people are trustworthy, and the people are in steady relationship with each other, everyday business and social transactions are cheap.

Nigeria is a multicultural nation with many languages. There are three major ethnic groups with three different cultural and political backgrounds in Nigeria. The inability of its leaders and stakeholders to promote and explore the diverse cultural perspectives towards unity and cooperation has kept the nation in a state of discor since its forced marriage. Thus, there is a need for the application of the approaches of intercultural philosophy and social capital to harness the values inherent in the diverse cultures in Nigeria. Social capital will foster the needed cooperation and constant interactions that will enable peaceful coexistence and development. Intercultural philosophy and social capital are connected because they produce societies with strong positive values, which include trust in others and ties that bind people to each other. This will assist the people to have more powerful values of generalised reciprocity and cooperation that lead to inclusive and sustainable development.

## **Intercultural Philosophy**

Intercultural philosophy studies the philosophical views of different cultures and critically analyses their common features and differences. Chen (2014: 67) investigates intercultural philosophy through various philosophical opinions around the globe. And by so doing, it aims to solve the problem of ethnocentrism and cultivate global cultural views in philosophy. According to Chimakonam and Ofana (2022), intercultural philosophy may become an instrument for social development and unity, especially when the concept of unity is stretched to account for transnational engagements without destroying the interacting cultural identities. Every culture has its positive values, and there is no culture that has enough norms independent of others to guarantee the needs of the people. This is why culture is dynamic in nature and, as such, keeps evolving. In integrating cultures, none should be seen as superior or inferior because every culture has something to offer society. The main idea here is that it will be in the global interest to appreciate, respect, and acknowledge the various cultural diversities. It solves the epistemic claim that Western philosophy is the original philosophy while others emanate from there. It is fallacious to claim that Western philosophy is the origin of philosophy. This is because philosophy emanates from culture, and every tribe has its own cultural heritage. Thus, the existence of culture indicates the existence of the philosophy that comes from it. This is to say that the source of philosophy is in its culture of origin, and as such, it cannot be isolated from its origin. This is factual because language, values, and norms are deeply rooted in culture, and it is from these that philosophers find particular epistemic problems to engage themselves. However, what is certain is the variance in the methodic approaches applied in philosophising. The integration of the different methods, which is the goal of intercultural philosophy, is geared towards a world view of the epistemic problem that confronts man.

Western philosophy transversed widely because it was properly documented. And one has to note that intercultural philosophy points to the fact that there may be an exchange of ideas among philosophers when they encounter each other. Western philosophy was communicated in China by Jesuit philosophers in the seventeenth century and the result of this, according to Sweet (2014: 182), was a kind of Aristotle in Chinese that reflected the interests and concerns of Chinese people. A similar

encounter took place in India, where philosophers reflected on both Western ideas and Indian traditions. More so, the common features found in Western and Buddhist ethical ideas point to the drive towards intercultural philosophy. These examples show the fact that when two cultures encounter each other, a change must occur. It is a matter of time. This is because a culture cannot totally embrace new ideas without integration. A level of change must occur. The occurrence of this change also translates to a change in development. Cultural advancement is inseparable from economic and technological growth.

## **Social Capital**

Social capital is not a new concept, but what is considered to be new in it is associational participation and sociability, which serve as a stock of capital at the micro level and as a unique principle. According to Bourdieu (1983: 249), social capital is the whole sum of the real or intending resources that are connected to the acquisition of a durable network of institutionalised cooperations of mutual recognition and acquittal. Social capital can also be explained as coming together as a group, trusting themselves, and working towards creating opportunities for themselves and others by using their finances and human capital. Coleman (1988: 258): social capital can be broadly described as a range of entities that share two common characteristics: they incorporate elements of social structure and enable specific actions by individuals embedded within that structure. According to the concept of social capital, Been (1999: 311) believes that communities that possess a strong foundation of social connections are believed to experience various positive outcomes such as reduced crime rates, improved health, enhanced educational success, and increased economic prosperity. Trust among community members yields significant benefits by fostering a lively and ethical environment where individuals engage with their neighbours, participate in voluntary groups, receive other support, and uphold moral values.

Trust comes in different forms. We might place our trust in those who resemble us in character, or we might opt for a broader, riskier form of trust. The second type of social capital is the only one that can be used to make an initial investment and expect to earn extra income. Onwe (2010:33) states that specific trust involves minimal risk but does not contribute to the prosperity or vitality of individuals or the broader community. Generalised trust is prevalent in democratic societies, while

specific trust is more common in authoritarian and totalitarian societies. Generalised trust encourages people to actively engage in their communities and support moral obligations. In democratic societies, trust is a fundamental aspect. According to Bates (1988: 387), trust is a calculated risk that cooperation with others will ultimately be beneficial, and it involves a commitment to behaving in a way that benefits others, even if they do not always reciprocate. Trust is a rational risk only in democratic societies. Democracies tend to have higher levels of trust, and in trusting countries, a greater proportion of citizens participate in voluntary associations. Trust is important because it promotes diversity and constructive criticism.

The people of Ngboejeogu (an Igbo extraction from Nigeria) were known for their cooperation, trust, and associations. They have a cultural integration that binds them together. Before the institution of modern infrastructure, they had a way of assisting each other and making their environment safe. They work on their roads once a year, which is road maintenance. This is usually done towards the end of the rainy season. The road maintenance is done village by village and community by community across the whole town. On the day of the work, all men in all the villages of the entire community will come out for the work as early as possible. Each village will do their own road maintenance, whereas women will prepare food and bring to them while they work. Defaulters are usually penalized. However, it is rarely difficult to see anyone default because people live with one mind and trust each other. They work in such a way that a visitor who sees them would think that they live a communal life. Economically, they form associations where they contribute money either on a weekly or monthly basis to assist each other in their farm work or business. By doing this, they alleviate poverty in the community, especially among themselves. There were so many forms of communal cooperation. For instance, a father-in-law may ask his son-in-law during the farming season to come and cultivate for him on his farm. In response to this, the son-in-law will inform his kinsmen and his friends of this demand and request that they join him to go and work on his father-in-law's farm. Often, the number of people who will join him will not be less than ten. At times, the number can be up to fifty or more, and where the distance between the two families is far, they will go to the father-in-law's house on the eve of the work. At times, they will finish cultivating the man's farmland in a day. This saves the man the expense of hiring labourers and delaying his work.

More so, it is common among the people to form groups known as 'igbuodju'. This is a group or association where people come together to assist each other in their farm work. There are two types of igbuodju: *igbuodjuvuzodjuoru* and *odjuopfibi*. The association known as *odjuoru* is formed by men, while that of *odjuopfibi* is formed by women. The men's group or association is for cultivation, while that of women is for weeding farms. The formation of this group may be among the age grades, or at times, on an irregular age basis. Among themselves, they will pick up dates for their work to be done. If one has no work, he or she will sell his or her own and collect the money to solve his or her personal problems. The cooperation is much greater among the age grades, though not limited. In the early eighties and nineties, voluntary work associations were more common than they are today. During those years, people would voluntarily and willingly come together to build a house for anyone in need of it. The same thing was applicable to areas of human need at the time. The case is a bit different today in terms of voluntary work in Igbo land due to the egoistic tendency of men. The practice of liberal democracy in Nigeria affected the existing democracy in Igbo land. The existing democracy in Igbo land has more to do with African humanism embedded in it, unlike liberal democracy, which is individualistic in nature.

### **Social Capital and African (Igbo) Humanist Democracy**

African humanism is a philosophy that places the human race as the first thing of all importance. As an ethical stance, its emphasis is on human dignity, concerns, and capabilities, with particular regard to human rationality. Humanism is a word with a lot of meaning, but its philosophical meaning can be understood when contracted to the supernatural or appealing to higher authority. African humanism, as used here, refers to a philosophy that extols not only the good of the human person in general but also the good of the African person as the purpose of all actions. It entails welfarism as the central object of policy. According to Igwe (2002: 189), African humanism is a belief system that promotes the advancement of society and the well-being of humanity, as well as the responsible use of the natural environment. It's important to recognise that ecological issues are part of the humanistic challenges in Africa.

Africans treasure the values that are inherent in their culture. Values are standards. African values, therefore, are those standards existent in

African society that determine what the members are to aim for and what is expected of them. They (values) function as the yardsticks for measuring success among Africans because they determine commendation or blame, achievement or failure within African society. Africans hold values (standards) in higher esteem and, as such, prize them dearly. Some of the African values are honesty, truthfulness, sacredness of the human life, good name, hard work, friendship, hospitality, brotherliness, etc. Truth is highly treasured in Igbo land (the eastern part of Nigeria), such that the Igbos equate it with life itself. As it is said in the Igbo language, "Eziokwubundu" (meaning truth is life), a truthful man in Africa stands for honesty all the time. Honesty is one of the African standards that influences other African values. This renders any atom of its violation in any form (example, stealing or cheating) a great violation of African values. The importance of honesty in Igbo land is expressed in the language as "Ezi aha k'ego" (meaning a good name is better than money or wealth). This makes Africans see anybody who violates honesty as one who has committed "original sin in traditional Igbo ethics". In describing the importance Africans attach to truthfulness, Ewelu (1999: 40) states that some African societies have special ceremonies in which they recognise some of their members as men of truth. The Igbo, for instance, have the Ozotitle, in which those who receive this title have their tongues washed as a sign that all they say is nothing but the truth. The Ozo title also constitutes them as custodians of truth in society. In the African traditional way of appointing or electing a leader, truthfulness and honesty, among others, serve as yardsticks. If such ethical qualities (values) are lacking in you, the people cannot entrust the control of their affairs to you.

African humanism is manifested in African socialism. African socialism is unique in its nature. Thus, it differs from the European type of socialism. It is not atheistic communism. It has an entirely different history than European socialism. The roots of African socialism are indigenous and traceable to the essential social mental attitude and practice of the traditional African. In African humanist democracy, a leader leads with authority. A leader can lead with authority when he rules authentically. Authenticity comes from truth. A thing is authentic only when it is true. The authority of the leader comes from people themselves, from his personal knowledge and abilities, and from his integrity of character. No self-imposed leader can lead with authority. According to Ewelu (1999: 56), when the leader no longer leads according to the expectations of the subordinates and no longer leads

them to the desired goal, his leadership lacks authority. When the leader no longer commands in order to protect the common interest of the group he leads but aims at protecting his own interests, his commands lack authority. When he proves untrustworthy through arbitrariness or unjust exercise of power, he erodes the basis of his authority. He fails to command obedience and thereby makes himself superfluous and a dictator.

### **Policy Implications of Intercultural Philosophy for the Nigerian Nation Building Process**

Intercultural philosophy brings together philosophical ideas and traditions that have hitherto developed in isolation from one another and re-integrates them along cultural lines (Wong 2014). This creates the idea of a new national culture that could be valuable to the Nigerian state, which has multiple and even opposing cultural orientations of Christian South East and Muslim North. By doing that, Nigeria will become more integrated into the national framework and ideology. Thus attaining one of the aims of intercultural philosophy, which is to emancipate human societies from all types of their hitherto cultural centricism (Mall, 2000). Inter-cultural philosophy and social capital give voice to marginalised groups (Wimmer, 1990), and in Nigeria, many ethnic groups are crying over marginalisation. Thus, it will grant the culture of new thinking towards a new national culture of nation-building that will respect the different peoples and cultures that make up the Nigerian state. The implication is that it will promote philosophical dialogue (Wimmer, 2002) across Nigerian cultural groups, which is fundamental for the transformation of the nation-building process in the country.

It is in the same manner in which intercultural philosophy pushes for the provision of collective solutions to global issues that social capital does. Social capital helps humans solve collective action problems, including key elements of ethical behaviour. Ethical behaviour, which has been destroyed by corruption and get-rich-quick syndrome in Nigeria, should consist of maxims of conduct towards other people. It may be guided by values or by the expectations of others. By bringing different philosophical ideas together, it widens the scope of ideas and philosophical approaches (MacIntyre, 1990) for nation-building in Nigeria. In these concepts, historians, anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, economists, policymakers, and other fields of study locate a common language within which to engage one another in open,

constructive debate, a language that disciplinary provincialisms have largely suppressed over the last one hundred and fifty years (Alvin, 1990).

## **Conclusion**

Our appraisal of intercultural philosophy and social capital so far shows that the emerging interest in investing in the two concepts is a potentially useful component of better economic-development theory and policy. Intercultural philosophy is a concept developed to unite values embedded in different cultures around the world to solve universal problems confronting man. Whether we admit or believe in the occurrence of this problem (climate change and global warming) or not calls for a response from us. These are basic issues, that is, vital philosophical questions that demand to be addressed collectively as they affect every human being in Nigeria. This is because there is no individual culture that can attend to them authoritatively on behalf of everyone. Intercultural philosophy subjects man to think about everybody in the Nigerian national context and, by so doing, creates an enabling environment for peaceful existence and growth.

Finally, intercultural philosophy and social capital provide a credible point of entry for sociological problems into a comprehensive multi- and interdisciplinary approach to some of the most pertinent challenges of today. There is no doubt that a continual discourse on international development will pave the way for new directions for comprehending and growing intercultural philosophy and social capital in Nigeria. The study found that both intercultural philosophy and social capital permit individuals to unite together to defend their interests and organise to support the collective needs of a country. Again, intercultural philosophy contributes to the understanding and explanation of current political, ethnic, and religious conflicts in Nigeria and offers possible solutions that consider the entire palette of available research. This paper recommends the gospel of intercultural philosophy and social capital as a path for the management of numerous nation-building challenges in Nigeria. Intercultural philosophy paves the way for decline in all forms of ethnic conflicts, social dichotomies, religious fundamentalism, etc. within the Nigerian state while creating ideas for the management of xenophobia, racism, and cultural stereotyping internationally. It is a means of promoting better cultural relations and understandings as the basis for world civilization.

The liberal democracy so far in Nigeria has been inimical to development. This is because it houses abuse of office, mediocrity, lack of transparency and accountability, corruption, and many other vices. These vices are in contrast to what is obtained in African (Igbo) democracy, which encourages efficient and effective representation, individual enterprise, popular participation and unity of purpose and action, accountability, development, and achievement-oriented. More so, the combination of intercultural philosophy and social capital can contribute to development by promoting cultural understanding, diversity, innovation, trust, collaboration, and inclusive policies. By leveraging the strengths of both approaches, societies can work towards building more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable communities. Philosophy emanates from culture. Every culture has a philosophy embedded in it. Thus, having a wholistic view of the universe requires intercultural philosophy. Social capital, on the other hand, builds on the idea that social relations, shared norms, values, and trust enhance cooperation among people. This shows that intercultural philosophy and social media have features that, if properly harnessed, can engineer development in Nigeria. This paper intends to appraise intercultural philosophy and social capital as panaceas for development in Nigeria. In doing this, the paper adopted a critical and analytic method in examining the inherent features of intercultural philosophy and social capital towards the development of Nigeria. This paper discovered that in the early eighties and nineties, social capital had great influence in some parts of the Igbo extraction of Nigeria, especially in Ndigbo. It showed how the people trusted themselves, and trust is an integral part of social capital that has important payoffs. This resulted in the people living happily and making their environment inhabitable for themselves. This indicates that the application of intercultural philosophy and social capital in Nigeria will address its developmental problems.

Therefore, Nigeria should engage in promoting cultural understanding and cooperation, enhance diversity, and innovate so as to build a nation that can compete with other advanced nations. It is also necessary for Nigeria to build trust and social networks and facilitate cross-cultural collaboration. Finally, there is a need to support inclusive development policies.

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