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## Everything has its Time; the State of the State

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## *Chapter Nineteen*

### **Everything has its Time; the State of the State<sup>1</sup>**

It is worthwhile that I begin this write up with a quotation from the Old Testament, the book of Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3: 1-21. When I accepted to take up this task, I was very conscious of the variegated problems facing us as a nation and as a state, the varying interests, the political groupings and pressures, the various levels of intellectual and social persuasions, the economic disparities and the fact that my audience is anything but homogenous.

The difficulties are compounded when one considers the umbrella under which and to whom this work is precisely being addressed: though others may benefit from it; WAWA SOCIAL CLUB OF NIGERIA. The usage of the word WAWA created difficulties which are linguistic, geographical and geo-political. What is WAWA? Who is a WAWA? What distinguishes WAWA's from none—WAWA'S? Are the WAWA people in a WAWA territory? What mores and indeed what yardsticks defining it? These questions have become lately insistent within our context so much that some already ask: What price a nation and a people? What does the claim # I belong to the WAWA tribe of clan or nation or people mean to the individual, and when did it begin to mean anything? Can we talk about a WAWA people outside of Igboland? Are the Ebenebe, the Awka, the Amawbia, the Idoma who linguistically use the word WAWA to emphases 'No', just as the Nsukka, the Enugu and some parts of Abakaliki also WAWA people?

Where is the dividing line? Can they be upheld by objective test? If Ebonyi still be WAWA "extra Cevitatis"? These, are unavoidable details of the version in which I have posed the question, a version that is meant to be summative.

In a task like this, one cannot but undertake the method we have adopted, to clarify the concepts, to define, redefine and reverse the frames of reference? To think or rather rethink on our assumptions, claims or prejudices and base

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<sup>1</sup> Ike O.F.; Lecture delivered at the Macdevos Hotel Enugu under the Umbrella of the WAWA United Social Club of Nigeria on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December, 1995.

them on facts and reason, not on illusions or sentiments. The time has come to search for the relevance and adaptability of concepts we assumed but which today need to stand the test of its claims and assumptions or disappear before the crucibles of the philosophic inquiry and probe.

Is the WAWA phenomenon a result of the collective mind, Or will? Is it a coerced state, the objective of an individual will, Or furthermore a passive, unquestioned habit of cohabitation due to proximate and contiguous existence? Or a rigorous conclusion that derives from history? Geographical contiguity is unfortunately no answer. And history, will definitely agree with me is “still unwritten” as we discuss, it is still in the making. Yet, I am not sure that we have the luxury to shy away from these questions. In fact, it is my firm belief that the answers determine the rational foundation or disintegration of the topics and concept under survey. To shy away therefore from the reasoning is to run into the suspicion and possibility that “WAWA” is a mere sentimental concept in any practical advantages for its occupants. Like Wole Soyinka once said “We are entering, it must be apparent by now, the possibility-not of a discovery- but a recovery of certain historical truth-that nation—status has never been an absolute or a constant, that it has ever followed the politics of conflict interest, alliances, power and even accident”.

At the end of our inquiry, we may perhaps discover that WAWAISM and to be a WAWA is a “philosophy” which characterizes any people, any situation and anywhere, where there are minorities of majorities who are neglected, oppressed, unjustly treated and reduced in their individual and collective dignity by the denials of rights etc. This point needs to be taken seriously in a global perspective. (ref. lecture: When is a Nation? At the Oxford and Cambridge Club of Nigeria, delivered at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) IV, Lagos on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1994).

### **Optimistic Moments of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century:**

We owe ourselves a reckoning as we approach the end of the year, the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and open a new millennium chapter in world history. There have been many exciting and encouraging developments in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century worthy of reckoning.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century has seen the invention and development of the aeroplane and of space travel. We have seen the widespread use of electricity, not just for lighting, heating and cooling but also for making possible other revolutionary invention like television and computers.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century has conquered many diseases and through the discovery of the DNA have begun to understand the nature of life itself by contributing to the greater happiness and fulfillment of many-women, men and children.

For us in Africa, Malaria, Typhoid, dysentery, elephantiasis, tuberculosis, sickle cell anaemia etc. once diseases shrouded in our huts and hovels and villages in superstitions stupor have been brought into curative, explanatory and liberating medical practice. The development of International Organizations from the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conferences which led to the International Court of Justice, through the League of Nations to the United Nations, the UNESCO and other International bodies-has led to International Co-operation in many fields. External Colonialism was gradually dismantled, even in neo—colonialism took over and internal colonialism continued.

The acceptance of the universal declaration on Human Rights is of special relevance for Africans where a 3 pronged slave business (Trans-Atlantic, Trans-Saharan and Trans-India ocean) flourished for over 400 years killing almost the African Dignity, the African Soul and the African personality. Likewise, of special mention is the modern Olympic games. Except for the years 1916, 1940 and 1944 during two world wars, the Olympic games have been held regularly since 1896, demonstrating that the people of the planet Earth can compete in friendship in spite of their many differences. Our century has been very fruitful in its practical discoveries — its magnificent institutions of political and economic liberty, for example. But it has been spectacularly wrong in its underlying philosophy of life. An age wrong about GOD is almost certain to be wrong about man.

The spirit of our age, of this century, was aptly described in poetic caricature by the Briton, W.B. Yeats who was very much influenced by the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Nihilist Philosopher Friedreich Nietzsche where he wrote:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre;  
the falcon cannot hear the falcores  
things fall apart the centre cannot hold  
mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.  
W.B. Yeats

History books tell their story and we read them. We compare and contrast them as well as make judgments. No other age has witnessed so much bloodshed, so many wars, too much inconsistency, deceit, crisis, brutality and

death as our own. A few years towards the year 2000, as we approach the third millennium, history dictates that we take notes and records to survey where we started, where we stand and where we are going. In the words of my old Uncle, Ozor Neife Ozoike, whom I consider a sage, although he never sat in a classroom:

“People cannot look forward to posterity, if they do not look backward to their ancestors, to their history”. This century was history’s bloodiest. When we look back to earlier years the long screech of falling bombs cost over 70 million lives in Europe, Africa and Asia. No other century knew about the bomb; about world war one and world war two; the Inter — continental ballistic missiles, the SS 20’s to 22; the A-Bomb, H-Bomb, N-Bomb now arrived to create a shrill of fear and death in the hovels, huts and homes of people worldwide.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki are still fresh in our minds for those among us who are not drunk, or numb. The millions of massacred Jews and other minorities are daily recalled as a warning to those who care. But who really care? The communist revolutions in Russia in 1917 with over 20 million dead and the Chinese Revolution with over 100 million prisoners of war in labour camps everywhere in Asia, Africa, Europe, America since 1900. And talking of children Via hunger, disease, homelessness and full blown wars as our century. The United Nations statistics state that daily 40,000 children die in our world.

Since the apparent collapse of the colonial era and its replacement with neo-colonialism, millions of children, God’s children in Africa have been sent to unwarranted death, The concepts are still alive in our head and memories The long process of struggle against the character of exploitation, oppression and cultural manipulation have been found in the progressive rebellion against the geopolitics of the oppressors in the cases of: Biafra, Eritrea; Chad; Mozambique; Angola; Rwanda; Congo, Uganda; Sudan; Somali; Ethiopia; Liberia; Sierra- Leone; Central Africa Republic; South—Africa among others. The results have been catastrophic and extremely aggravating.

Excruciating hunger and tyranny, political instability, natural disasters, uncontrollable and incurable diseases; corruption in all directions; mismanagement of resources and personnel abuse of state power, Urban and Rural Migrations, demographic changes, traumatic ideological resentments to the left or to the right; the secular crisis of the conditions of material and spiritual life for the people; social insecurity; mass—media manipulation of

both the elite and the misinformation of the generality of the populace. This geostrategic destabilization of the people was begun by external colonialists and continued by glorified feudal Lords within.

The injustice of the entire system whether economic, national, social, religious, cultural or political — all these come to the fore as we x-ray the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. But how did humanity come so low? What happened to our era compared to other previous historical epochs? How come that peaceful means were tried and exhausted before large portions of the people arrived at the painful conclusion that there was no avenue open for the dignity, and welfare of the majority of the population other than war, confusion and near anarchy?

Why has it been difficult to achieve social justice, political participation, cultural dignity and national liberation for the people?

Why is it that our intellectuals praise and prefer international capitalism or communism when these models have failed to produce economic welfare in virtually all African nation-states? These systems have in fact continued to undermine the developmental prospects of our countries through the wild fluctuation in the so-called world market of our exports, through the unequal exchange in value of our products in comparison with the industrial products of technologically advanced countries; through the low investment rates of our export—oriented private enterprise and their evasion of internal capital investment, and lately through the unbearable burden of our external debt.

Finally, how come that despite the unquantifiable progress in humanity's technical and information machinery with a new wealth of resources, educational and industrial, we are not able yet to arrive at the new societal foundation with four calabashes in 4 pillars to support the edifice of a new world, which would yield the much desired dignity, self-respect, mutual equality and co-existence for everybody, namely:

- a) Mixed economy in a liberal but socially teleguided social market economy;
- b) Cultural integrity;
- c) International sovereignty, co-existence;
- d) Participatory democracy or political pluralism (self-determination).

These questions and many more are being asked by people everywhere. I ask them today and have found one cogent answer in What I consider the “philosophy of Nihilism”.

### **The Philosophy of Nihilism**

What is Nihilism? The word comes from the Latin and means literally “nothingness”.

According to Peter A. Angeles in the ‘Dictionary of Philosophy’, *nihilism* in epistemology is:

1. The denial of any objective and real ground or state of truth;
2. The theory that nothing is knowable. All knowledge is illusory, worthless, meaningless, relative and insignificant.
3. No knowledge is possible. Nothing can be known.
4. The psychological and philosophical state in which there is a loss of all ethical, religious, political, social values.
5. The sceptical denial of all that is regarded as real/unreal, knowledge/error, being/non—being, illusory/non-illusory; the denial of the value of all distinctions.

*Nihilism* in ethics refers to the theory “that moral values cannot be justified in any way — not by reason, by a God, by intuition, by conscience, or by authority of the state, or law. Moral values are:

- a) Expressions of arbitrary and capricious behaviour or
- b) Expressions of loose feelings and reasonless social conditioning; and
- c) They are worthless, meaningless and irrational (ibid)

### **Metaphysical Nihilism is the theory that:**

- a) the universe is meaningless and without a purpose;
- b) human life and its activities are of no value or significance;
- c) Nothing is worth existing for (ibid).

**Political Nihilism** is belief that social organization is so corrupt that its destruction is desirable. Sometimes couples with a form of anarchism whereby no constructive alternative form of organization is deemed possible and terrorism, violent revolutionary activities, assassination are advocated” (ibid).

The Greek philosopher Georgia's propounded an extreme form of scepticism sometimes referred to as *nihilism*, which denied the possibility of knowledge and doubted whether anything existed at all. The main arguments are:

Nothing can be said to exist (The stronger nihilistic version: Nothing exists). If anything did exist, we would not be able to know it, and if we were able to know it we would not be able to communicate it" (Ibid p.259). Having used the word scepticism, it may be useful to clarify its origins as a

1. "state of doubting";
2. A state of suspension of judgment;
3. A state of belief or unbelief, Scepticism ranges from complete, total disbelief in everything, to a tentative doubt in a process of reaching certainty.

### **Nihilism in the Nigerian Society**

- Failed leadership (Chinua Achebe's position);
- Failed orientation—who will bell the Cat;
- Failed utilization of resources and personnel;
- The seeming hopelessness of the generality of the people;
- Deceit as a way of life/truth no more;
- The cult of mediocrity and meanness;
- Federal character as injustice/oppression;
- Tribalism and ethnicism;
- Corruption of the entire system (educational, civil service, military; police, business/industry, social) *via* bribery/inducement;
- Quest for title and external names/honours;
- Financial misdirection/false investments/misappropriation;
- "Anything goes philosophy".

The above life-styles and world-views cannot stand the test of truth, value, liberty and future.

An age morally depraved and deceitful in its underlying philosophy of life and of God is almost certain to be wrong about man.

### **Awakening from Nihilism**

The world definitely must have drawn 4 painful lesson from ashes of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

**FIRST:** Even under condition of Nihilism; Fidelity to TRUTH is better than Cowardice. If we remain faithful to the truth, inner liberty is obtained.

**SECOND:** The boast by dictators that dictatorship is more vigorous than 'decadent democracy' was empty. 'Participatory Democracy' is better than one-man rule.

Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, Idi Amin, Bokassa, Doe, Abacha, Babangida and Buhari etc have been exposed.

Dictatorships lead to concentration camps in manifold forms — Nigeria is a case in point.

**THREE:** The claim that socialism is morally superior to capitalism and is better for the poor has been proven empty and we have become the witnesses. An open liberal market economy brings the best in human beings and their ingenuity more than a communist — rigid planned economic system which creates slavery, poverty, stagnation and unfreedom.

**FOURTH:** Vulgar relativism and its subjective culture so undermines the culture of liberty and knowledge that it is preferable to take a position on an issue than to remain neutral.

**Some Lesson:**

1. **Truth matters.** Even for those unsure whether there is a God a Truth is different from a lie. Torturers can twist your mind, even reduce you to a vegetable, but as long as you retain the ability to say YES or NO, as truth alone command, they cannot own you.

2.

The prison literature of our century abundantly testifies that the endless scroll of honour in our century went to those personalities who even before the stake insisted on their identity as true men and women, refusing to compromise truth for whatever they believed, and refusing to cheapen their positions by just signing to keep quiet or tell a lie before they are freed. By accepting torture in the face of its alternative, we have such great names today as Andrew Sakharov, Maximilian Kolbe, Vaclav Havel, Anthony Enahoro, Nelson Mandela, Lech Wales, and Julius Nyerere to mention but a few.

Like Michael Novak has clearly demonstrated, to obey truth is to be free, and in certain extremities, nothing is more clear to the tormented mind, nothing

more vital to the survival of self—respect, nothing so important, to one's sense of remaining a worthy human being, of being no one's log, part of no one's machine, and register to death against the kingdom of lies—nothing is so dear as to hold to truth.

**In Fidelity to truth lies human dignity.**

There is nothing recondite in this Aleksander Solzhenitsyn had this insight in 1970 upon receiving the 'Nobel prize' in his address: that one single truth is more powerful than all other weapons in the world, communism advancing everywhere, truth would prevail against lie: and that those who clung to truth would overturn tyranny. He was correct. We are the witnesses today. We must learn today that we human beings do not own the truth. Truth is not 'merely subjective', not something we make up, or choose, or cut to today's fashions or to tomorrow's pragmatism. We obey the truth.

We do not 'have' the truth. Truth owns us, truth possesses us. Truth is far larger and deeper than we are. Truth leads us where it will. It is not ours for mastering. Truth is the light of God within us. In obeying truth, a man becomes aware of participating in something greater than himself which measures his inadequacies and weaknesses.

**Vulgar Relativism Challenge our Future**

One point that many ardent souls of our time most passionately disseminate, for example, is vulgar relativism, what I call 'Nihilism with a happy face'. For them, it is certain that there are no truths only opinion; my opinion, your opinion. They abandon the defence of intellect. There being no purchase of intellect upon reality and nothing else is left but preference and will is everything. They retreat to romance of the will.

Vulgar relativism is an invisible gas, odourless, deadly that is now polluting every free society on earth. It is a gas that attacks the central nervous system of moral striving. This most perilous threat to free society today is neither political nor economic. It is the poisonous, corrupting culture of relativism. The people know this while the intellectuals do not. If your intellectuals better knew this, they would be sounding the alarm.

Freedom cannot grow, it cannot even survive every atmosphere or clime. In the wearying journey of human history free societies have been astonishingly rare. The ecology of liberty is more fragile than the biosphere of earth. Freedom needs clean and healthful habits sound of one human for another. Freedom needs entire rain forests of little acts of virtue. tangled loyalties,

fierce lives, and undying commitments. Freedom needs particular institutions and these, in turn, need peoples of particular habits of the heart. There are 2 types of liberty: one a pre- critical, sober, deliberate, response and proper to adults. Liberty is not the freedom to do what you wish but it is freedom to do what you ought to do. Human beings are the only creatures on earth that do not blindly obey the laws of nature by instinct, but are free to choose to obey them with a loving will. Only humans enjoy the liberty to do what we ought to do a or alas, not to do it.

It is this second kind of liberty — critical, adult liberty that lies at the living core of the free society. It is the liberty of self-command, a tolerable mastery over one's passions, bigotry, ignorance, and self-deceit. It is the liberty of self-government in one's own personal life.

For how, James Madison once asked, can a people incapable of self-government in private life prove capable of it in private life? If they cannot practice self— government over their private passions, how will they practice it over the institutions of the Republic?

Can there be a free society among citizens who habitually lie, who malingers, who constantly cheat, who do not meet their responsibilities, who cannot be counted on, who shirk difficulties, who flout the law — or who prefer to live as serfs or slaves, content in their dependency, so long as they are fed and entertained?

Freedom requires the exercise of conscience; it requires the practice of those virtues that include courage, courtesy, ingenuity, respect for individual choice, a patient regard for hearing evidence on both sides of the story.

The question for the next millennium is whether we can survive the most insidious and duplicitous attack from within, from those that undermine the virtues of our people, doing in advance the work of 'the Father of Lies'.

"There is no such thing as truth" they teach even the little one. Truth is bondage. Believe what seems right to you. There are as many truths as there are individuals. Follow your feelings. Do as you please. Get in touch with yourself. Do what feel comfortable. This is how they speak, those who prepare the jails for the next century. Those who undermine the work of truth, do the work of tyrants.

If a people composed of 100 million citizens is guarded by 100 million inner policemen — then the number of policemen of its streets may be few. For a society without inner policemen, on the contrary, there aren't enough policemen in the world to make society civil. Can all the suffering of our ancestors on behalf of liberty have been endured that we might be as we now are? What we must do is self-control; Self-government; self-command; Openness to the future; Openness to GOD.

Nihilism builds no cities. Great cultures are built by vaulting aspiration - by the eros of truth and love and justice and realism.

We must learn again how to teach the virtues of our ancestors; the commandments of God, the teaching of Jesus Christ, which celebrate virtue, character and nobility of soul.

It is a constant struggle to maintain a free and same society on the political, cultural and economic levels. The cultural struggle will be the one that will take the stage most strongly in the new millennium.

Culture and religion go hand in hand, thus the theologian of the present and the future has enough task. He needs prophetic courage to give hope, orientation, good news and denounce evil.

