

PHILOSOPHIZING ON THE ENIGMA CALLED MAN: DOES EDUCATION REALLY MATTER

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Traditionally, an inaugural lecture provides the lecturer an opportunity to justify his appointment as a Professor or launch a philosophical idea in relation to his worldview as a way of contributing to knowledge as the bedrock of human development. In this lecture, I shall endeavour to do both. As the topic itself indicates, the subject matter is man. In line with the Socratic tradition, the three questions raised and addressed in this lecture are: What does it mean to be human? What does progress mean to man? Does education really make a difference in dealing with man's paradoxical nature? Hopefully, we can wet your appetite intellectually, as we explore why humans are enigmatic in their disposition.

Although the constraints of time and space are serious limitation in this endeavour, the subject itself constitutes the very essence of my professional aspiration. But how did this interest begin?

Towards the end of my high school years, it became apparent that my academic inclination was towards the arts. With the humanities as my best subjects, I gradually developed an interest in the nature of man and his world. When I finally entered the University, philosophy provided the needed opportunity to explore human thought and disposition within the context of education. And because philosophy is the flip side of education, both have been instrumental to the task of making teacher education pivotal to my contribution to educational development.

Another justification for exploring human thought is not unrelated to the state of our world, including our country. When you read the newspapers, turn on your radio or television, surf the Internet, or call anyone anywhere across the world on your cellular phone, the story about man and his actions is a definite pointer to his enigmatic nature. What is recurrent is some act of love, benevolence and care on one hand, and on the other, it is one of ethnic hatred, brutality, racism, hunger and religious bigotry. Back here in Nigeria, our polity, our economy, our religious experience and education have inspired very little confidence in view of the turbulence that these aspects of our national life have experienced. After several years of military rule and some experiment with democratic governance, our country has yet to improve on the quality of life of the average citizen, despite some efforts to provide access to education.

If the challenges confronting man today must be addressed, the process ought to start with an understanding of ourselves and our neighbours. Such knowledge of the self is essential to mitigate man's egoistic tendencies which fuel conflicts in all spheres of human relationship. Although education is generally viewed as the panacea for the good life, its beneficiaries have not always demonstrated its positivity in relation to our expectation. Because the issue of human nature is fundamental to our discourse we shall discuss it first.

A. *What Does it Mean to be Human*

The concept of human nature provides some insight that is germane to our task of exploring human thought and action. Our philosophic inquiry has drawn on a variety of other disciplines from which philosophy itself has played the midwife since their inception. And because philosophizing involves thinking and talking about human prospects, it is inevitable that it is done

within the context of what constitutes the liberal arts tradition today (Omatseye 1982). We have chosen this route in view of what impact education could possibly have on human behaviour and action the focus of our subject.

If our aim is to comprehend the mixed signals received from humans in their endeavours, we are not alone in this quest. No wonder Matthew Arnold in Dover Beach describes the world as

...so various, so beautiful, (and) so new. It heath really neither joy, nor love, nor light. Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain.

Ortega Y. Gasset describes the modern man as a creature without appreciation for the complexity of civilization because he lives by violence and bloodshed while cherishing a gospel of antagonism and hatred (May and Brower, 1956).

A careful observation of the unfolding scenario of history would reveal the complexity of man's enigma which is made even more glaring by the fact that its essence is characterized and polarized in many ways. All things considered, man could be Godlike and beastlike, exalted and base, free and enslaved, adapted for rising and falling, capable of great love and sacrifice, capable of cruelty and unlimited egoism (Berdyayev 1994). These internal contradictions are further juxtaposed in his being endowed with reason and compassion and yet we have often witnessed the sorry spectacle of a supposedly enlightened and seemingly contented person behaving in the most brutish manner. Sigmund Freud has described man as one born with a confused host of desires which can only with great difficulty be brought in accordance with the requirements of living in any organized society. Of course, we are all too familiar with the Freudian theory of suppression and sublimation.

As negative as some of these human attributes may be, man is still that one animal that is endowed with the ability to reason, use symbols, develop abstractions, intend and imagine something that is far in distance and time. Because these qualities are uniquely human, thought is not only made possible but can be translated into words and other symbols which only man can decipher. From the aforesaid, man may be compared to a fountain spring from which sweet and bitter waters flow. Although we tend to dislike these negative attributes in man, wouldn't life be too monotonous and boring if it was all sweet and pleasant? Have you ever wondered why even in the biblical account of creation the serpent (Satan) showed up at the Garden of Eden to destroy the bliss of Adam and Eve? In other words, the presence of evil has always made us more appreciative of the good. Should we then promote evil in order to appreciate the good? Certainly not. But because evil is and will always be part of hum existence, whether we like it or not, the good should be encouraged to minimize the negativity of evil.

A.1 A PORTRAIT OF THE SELF

One step further into what it means to be a human being takes us into the domain of a person who naturally has a personality. To be a person involves a consciousness of the same self with a set of goals and purposes over time. But personhood also involves having definable status in relation to other persons sharing a language and culture in an organized society. The notion of the self as an inherent personal trait implies consciousness, that is, being able to think about thinking itself and knowing that you know – a situation that is not easy to keep track of. As will be argued later on, we have today achieved greater consciousness than our forbears due to an increase in the physiological and mental capacity of the modern person.

Also implied in the notion of the self is a duality of body and mind the body being material, extended and tangible. On its part, there are several philosophical theories about the nature of the mind (also referred to as soul or spirit). Some thinkers have viewed the mind as a mental substance of a collection of mental states bound together more or less tightly by their mutual intentions (Beardsley and Beardsley, 1972). Others opine that the mind is simply a stream of

consciousness, a view to which I subscribe. By its very nature, the mind is private, an intentionally inclined entity which lacks a spatial location. I share with some ecclesiastical sages like Hegel and St. Augustine the view that the mind is an extension of the Absolute Spirit with His celestial qualities of purity, rationality and immortality. In other words, our individual mind is and ought to be viewed as part of a network of which the Absolute (God) is central.

Physiologically, the body is viewed as the opposite of the mind in spite of their symbiotic relationship as the key components of a person. While the body is sustained and energized by material nourishments such as food, water and air, the mind is revitalized and renewed through meditation and spiritual inspiration sought in a variety of ways. Together, the self is sustained through a system of checks and balances to make life more meaningful.

Even as we ponder the mystery of the mind-body problem, philosophers, psychiatrists and psychologists have yet to fully determine its essence. By virtue of the body being the only visible aspect of the self, it has received more attention in terms of scientific inquiry. In a study by Maimonides, a dual metaphor of matter (body), as “a married harlot and woman of valor” has captured the imagination of thinkers on this subject. Like matter, (representing body), the married prostitute “never ceases to seek another man to substitute for her husband and she deceives and draws him on in every way until he obtains from her what her husband used to obtain” ... (Maimonides, 1963). In other words, the seduction occasioned by the attractive look of a sexy man or woman is typical of the vanity sometimes associated with matter of which body is composed. In contrast, the mind symbolizes rationality, wisdom and indeed all that is decent about humans. We are all too familiar with the theme of literary works in which the prettiest lady or very sleek gentleman turns out to be a real demon-incarnate. But as vilified as the body may be, it is still the most nurtured part of the self for obvious reasons.

The dilemma of the self is further compounded when within the context of ecclesiastical thought the mind is transformed into a soul trapped in a terrestrial body with all its limitations. Consequently, it is viewed as falling short of its angelic perfected intellection. The soul in its holomorphic state is therefore a blend of pure reason and human will encased in an inescapable bond of corporeal reality with its vicissitudes (Pessim, 2002). Therefore, when we as humans vacillate between right and wrong, the ugly and the beautiful, darkness and light, ignorance and knowledge, tyranny and good governance, affluence and poverty, it is the self that is at work. And because life itself is a balancing act, how successful an individual is, in doing so, determines what judgment is passed on him by others.

If you are wondering at this point why some people are viewed as exceptional as a result of their acceptability, we are once again reminded of Maimonide's metaphor of the married prostitute and woman of valor. Because when virtues and vices converge in one individual, it takes self knowledge to simultaneously denigrate his terrestrial essence while upgrading his celestial purity in a world in which he must live and find his niche. Just in case we are a bit too negative at this point with the human inadequacies highlighted so far, we quickly state that man also has tremendous potentials for making the world a better place – a capacity that is hardly utilized optimally until challenged fully. Our difficulty in maximizing our potential could be attributed to the deficiency in the will to power – a concept extensively dealt with in existential thought for which I have considerable sympathy.

My optimism, based on man's **undetermined** capability is traceable to the dynamism of his **personality** which is neither socialized, civilized nor rationalized by his envioning world. For one thing, personality is a subject (not object) rooted in the noumenal world of freedom. Whereas social norms may be incorporated into a person's personality, personality cannot itself be absorbed by prevailing societal practices – hence man's enigmatic or idiosyncratic tendencies discussed so far. Social scientists are all too familiar with the vicissitudes of human institutions as an attestation of this fact. Indeed, personality may be characterized as the absolute existential centre of human thought because it presupposes the freedom of the will, freedom of choice,

liberation from the servitude of religious fanaticism and thus facilitates an unblemished understanding of authentic institutional practices in a free society. Resistant to orthodoxy, the existential nature of personality is characterized by an agonizing struggle between a desire to be free and an enslaving power of nature, society or the state. Propelled by the will to power, we are sustained in our struggle against the oddities of a precarious world. I share the view expressed by the Russian existentialist, Nicolas Berdyaev that personality is an image of man through which principle has mastery over man's soul and body.

If we accept personality as the existential centre of our being, to where do we trace its origin? The answer to this poser is central to the efforts made by researchers in psychiatry, psychoanalysis and philosophy who have grappled with this problem. Although some gaps have yet to be filled in their findings, they have uncovered an unconscious psychic phenomenon as a more or less inherent attribute of human thought. This mythical discovery, personified as "the Great Parental Figure", has shattered an existing framework of nihilism against which background human disposition was empirically explained (Neumann/Erich, 1979). The Great Parental Figure also referred to as the Supra-Power has sustained and nourished all our creative endeavours, and development. Within the context of the African, Judeo-Christian and the Islamic traditions, this Figure is no less than the Supreme Creator Himself in whom all forms of security have been vested. Even the polytheistic religions of the Orient tacitly recognize the universality of the Supreme. Psychologically, the self is not considered secure until it becomes part of the network of which the Great Parent Figure is the controlling agent. Even such atheists as Neitsche and Sartre who deny the existence and reality of God have lamented their denial in view of the voids in their lives.

A.2 MAN AND HIS ORIGIN

A summary of some scientific evidence available till date indicates that our world has existed for a little over 60 million years, of which there is a record of only 6,000 to 7,000 years. But the pre-historic account of scientific evolution takes us as far back as 40 million years when man's closest relatives, the apes (gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans and gibbons) first emerged as primates (Volume Library 1978). Attempts made over the years to scientifically determine when the biblical account of creation occurred, indicate that this event took place around 4004BC. And because ours was an oral tradition in Africa, we are unable to tell you when our accounts of the origin of the world occurred. Having paved the way for these accounts of creation, let's get to them.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth... Then God said, 'Let us make man in our own image and likeness'. (Genesis 1:26)

Two accounts from Yoruba and Dogon mythologies are relevant here. The Yoruba creation myth states:

Before Oduduwa, God had sent his first son Obatala to establish the earth upon the primordial waters and letting loose a five toed hen to spread it over the surface. This action brought about the existence of this world in which we live (Omatseye, 1978).

In Dogon's myth of creation (small ethnic group in Sudan),

The Supreme God is personified in Amma who is the causal efficacy of thought, signs, seeds, words and twins – principles of order ... (but) The original germ of life is symbolized by a very small seed known as Fonio and called by the Dogons "the little thing". This seed, quickened by internal vibration, bursts the enveloping sheath and emerges to reach the utmost confines of the universe. (Griaule & Dielerlen, 1954, p.84)

The three accounts of the mythical origin of man in the Judeo-Christian and African traditions recognize the source of creation as the handiwork of a Supreme Deity. Whether He manifested Himself in the person of Christ, Obatala or Amma, his authorship of life and all there is, are indisputably His. Like the Aristotelian characterization of God as the Unmoved Mover, the accounts also underscore the notion that the act of creation itself implies force as the underlying factor. It is this awesomeness of the One earlier referred to as the Great Parental Figure that has been the source of assurance of security for all who recognize his power and benevolence (Omatseye, 1978).

What our study of these mythical accounts reveals is that at every point in the creative process, a rational action (sometimes involving words), is often interrupted by an irrational and sterile oppositional force within the cosmos as is exemplified in the Dogon's or the biblical account of the serpent (satan's) marring the peace of the garden of Eden. The dialectical process of Hegel's Philosophy of history also pitches the forces of good (thesis) against evil (antithesis) in a world whose course is still charted by human action toward (a synthesis) some teleological end.

As speculative as some of these postulations may be, they have stood the test of time in terms of our yearning to come to grips with the mysteries of our universe much of which science has also been unable to decipher.

The Darwinian theory of evolution is on the opposite side of the accounts discussed so far. For the scientific evolutionists, life is simply a biochemical emergent because the first organism simply emerged and began to evolve and develop into what man has become today. The authorship or participation of a creator in the process is totally absent. The evolutionist's assertion that the initial organism that evolved into man was a biochemical emergent can still not be convincing in the absence of an agent. Nor does Darwin's argument that human nature can best be understood as a product of historical and biological development make any difference. If we accept as fact, the scientific evidence that man's ancestry predates the biblical account by millions of years, there can be one of several plausible explanations. The pre-historic 'man' could not be considered to be a person in the strictest sense of the word. He lacked self-consciousness, goals and purposes in relation to other persons in an organized society. An example of this was the sweet and childlike innocence of Adam and Eve who did not even realize that they were naked until the forbidden fruit of Eden catapulted them into consciousness of their being nude. For as Chardin (1969) pointed out, although the early man entered the scene with an infantile naivety and limited self knowledge, he was gradually moved towards taking full possession to become an adult. What may be deduced from the foregone is that self consciousness in man has grown over the years.

But be that as it may, the mythical accounts of creation have a lot of obscurities needing clarification. Cultural and linguistic coloration of the accounts have also posed some challenges, especially when it is considered that the translation and interpretation of these texts have undergone considerable mutilation and distortion for whatever reasons by the uncalled. Such are the challenges experienced in communication, even of the untainted directive of the Creator.

The scientific data presented by the evolutionist are also fraught with gaps that have yet to be filled by further evidence. As objective as some empirical inquiry and outcome may seem, their perception and interpretation are usually coloured by the worldview of the scientist. If that were not the case, some atheists in science who still deny the existence of God would have realized the futility of their argument. But it is heart warming that some very distinguished scientists have accepted that faith takes over from where scientific evidence ends, especially in cases involving some mysteries of our universe that are beyond science. Recently, Prof. Richard Swinburn of Oxford applied his theory of probability in defence of his belief in the resurrection of Jesus (Guardian 16/6/02). Similarly, Sir Isaac Newton once wrote:

This most beautiful system of the sun, planets and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being (Guardian 11/8/02).

To drive this point home, Max Planck, the distinguished nuclear physicist once argued:

The scientific world picture gained by experience remains always a mere approximation, a more or less divided model. As there is a material object behind every sensation, so there is a metaphysical reality behind everything that human experience shows to be real (cited in Omatseye 1988).

But despite the gaps highlighted in scientific evidence, there are certain undeniable facts relating to man. There is some convincing empirical evidence that man's physiological and mental components have grown larger over the centuries. Some paleontological and anthropological studies have documented a marked difference between us and the prehistoric australopithecine (early man), found between East and North Africa and South East Asia some two million years ago. The australopithecine, who was contemporaneous with the Pleistocene of the ice age, predated the emergence of the Homo-Erectus that emerged some 500,000 years ago. These studies have also indicated that the brain of the Homo Erectus is twice as large as that of the australopithecine who lived before him. Compared to the brain of the modern man, the heart of the Homo Erectus is much, much smaller. An increase in the size of the brain can therefore be traced to greater intelligence and consciousness as earlier discussed (Volume Library 1978).

A.3 HUMAN ASPIRATION AND CONSEQUENCES

Having come this far in our historical and social evolution, certain marked traits have emerged as a clear expression of human nature. The first is man's sense of insecurity, that is, fear of the unknown. While knowledge of some sort may reduce our anxiety, it has generally not eliminated our concern about the future of which we have no knowledge. Although one's sense of insecurity may vary with his situation in life – be it social, economic, cultural etcetera – his level of education and state of mind are a key factor in how he handles his life's challenges. But man's basic aspiration is not only to be secure but to feel secure as much as possible. And in as much as we detest a feeling of insecurity, it is our recognition of the pressure of such that sometimes brings out the best in us, especially in times of crisis. We tend to study more, work harder and become more productive when we are threatened.

The survival instinct in us, triggered by this fear of the unknown, is traceable to man's insatiable quest for wealth and power. Have you ever wondered why some wealthy people tend to be more stingy than others? You also may have given some thought to why politics for some is a "do or die" affair. Ultimately, the goal is to be in control of available resources human and material. And when one acquires wealth and power, he is unwilling to part with them no matter what. These human attributes are a clear indication of an attempt to be secure. But how much wealth or power gives this sense of security? Who then is immune from this human trait?

In pursuance of our aspirations, it is inevitable that some individuals are bound to have an advantage over others. It is also natural that the privileged ones would like to maintain the status quo while the disadvantaged yearn for change. Even when such revolutionaries such as Jesus Christ, Socrates, Karl Marx and their kind advocate change – the powers that be, have never taken it kindly. Reactions to their advocacy for change have generally brought out the best in the saintly martyrs and the worst in the demagogues. But is change always for the good of all? Over time, our values undergo change for good or evil. For instance, in the old testament era, it was acceptable to stone some sinners to death; today, it is considered barbaric to do so. The reluctance to encourage capital punishment today can be attributed to the level of civilization attained so far. But it has been argued also that modern civilization would not be what it is in the absence of violence on the part of some nations. The world of apes from which man derives his ancestry is characterized by murders and massacres with missiles due to irreconcilable regimes. Treaties signed by nations are sometimes not worth the papers on which they were signed and

so our peaceful acres are frequently converted into battle fields (Artery, 1976). The point to be underscored here is that human development is never achieved without painful sacrifices. Do we need to be reminded about our agonizing transition from military dictatorship to democracy or the hardship of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the 1980s? But if we must attain the security we aspire for, **something has to give**.

Out of all the social institutions from which we have sought some form of security, religion appears to be the most reliable for its adherents in terms of maintaining a psychic balance and coping with fear of the unknown. Some psychologists have asserted that man's conscious functions are occasionally subverted by certain uncontrollable circumstances from within and without (Jung 1958). Religious experience is viewed as an antidote which neutralizes adverse consequences because of the state of mind provided by it. In the course of our turning to religion for succour in view of our emotional and spiritual needs, lack of understanding of the tenets of our faith has sometimes blurred our vision of the Divine. When the human yearning for power, fame and wealth overshadows our focus on the Creator, the whole religious establishment weakens its influence. Our experience in history and the present has shown the inability of some clerics to distinguish between ecclesiastical and secular matters in a secular nation. And such as posed some difficulties in our country and elsewhere. While some attempt is made within the Judeo-Christian tradition to separate church and state, the Islamic tradition makes no such distinction, because to the Moslem, religion, theology, law and science are one and the same. According to an Islamic authority, the most important justification for the existence of an emirate was to safeguard Islam (Mbah 1981).

The early church also had its share of power politics dating back to the pre-reformation era. We shall cite only two instances to make our point. The Papal Monarchy of Innocent III was an anti-climax to the involvement of the church in the rulership of Europe in the 1300s. But the involvement of the Papacy of Boniface VIII was of such a threat to secular authority, i.e. the monarchy, that (King) Philip the Fair of France had to defeat him in an all out war to re-establish his authority. To keep the church from further interference, the Papacy was transferred from Rome to Avignon and a new French Pope, Clement V enthroned. He was kept under surveillance to ensure he confined himself to church activities only not politics.

The literary world has also dramatized this social phenomenon called power. In Dostoevski's **Grand Inquisitor**, the cardinal told Jesus Christ (on his second return to the world):

We shall allow or forbid them to live their wives and mistresses, to have or not to have children according to whether they have been obedient or disobedient and they will submit to us gladly and cheerfully.. Or it will save them from the great anxiety and terrible agony they endure at present in making a free decision for themselves (Rollo May 1953).

As the saying goes, 'If gold rusts, what will iron do'? Indeed, the human instinct to control others and their resources is inherent in life itself. The greatest challenge to human existence is how profitably man uses his power.

A.4 HUMAN VALUES JUSTIFIED

If some of the traits discussed so far have illustrated the human desire to be secure, it is logical at this point to conclude that man as a valuing organism, considers his security as the most basic of necessities. But our values are mostly determined by our culture, our personality and the circumstances occasioned by our birth and society. What we consider important is essentially a function of our educational attainment, circumscribed by the arts and sciences of our time. Indeed, the totality of our worldview is a dialectical culmination or synthesis of our feelings and reasoning. Of all the values held by a person, the most important may as well be his reason for living. But only a few people actually care to discover on time what this purpose is, if they do at all. But once it is known, squandering our lives for a clearly defined plan for living would not only bring true happiness but the greatest contentment to the individuals concerned. It has been

observed that if within the first twenty years of a person's life, his parents do not know "where he is going", and in the following forty years, his spouse cannot figure out what his purpose of life is, his mourners, when he dies, would certainly wonder about his mission on earth. I certainly agree with Rev. Martin Luther King Jr, when he said; "If a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live" (Mason, 2000).

To all intents and purposes, our values cannot be ascertained without reference to our circumstances and cultural background as dictated by the socio-economic, religious or linguistic orientation of our people. For instance, to determine what values are held by a Muslim youth in Saudi Arabia, a member of the klu klux klan in the United States or an Umalokun priest in Koko, Delta State, you must turn to their society for an answer. Are the values held by one better than the other? Your guess is as good as mine.

But as diverse as our axiological dispositions may be, we all share a basic value a desire to be safe and secure. This yearning finds expression in our quest to decipher the phenomenal world through science and the noumenal through an inbuilt religiosity in man. Faith takes over from scientific knowledge to shed light on the Divine as the author of life. A full realization of man's ultimate value comes when death strikes and the question about what comes after life stirs us in the face. A denial that our world is governed by reason, as a manifestation of the Absolute Mind, has generally left a deep void in the mind of the nihilist. For the non-believer whose philosophy of nothingness leaves all things to chance, coping with the thought of what follows death is even more torturous because of the hopelessness of his situation. Hope is man's eternal source of comfort.

It's been nearly 3,000 years when Anaxagora (a Greek Philosopher) observed that if reason were not the guiding light of the laws of the universe, the sequence of activities of such heavenly bodies as the sun, moon and other planets would not have the order witness so far. And because these bodies lack consciousness, their movement could not have been guided by chance. Consequently, there is certainly an Absolute Mind who charts the courses of movement of these planetary bodies. Reason is therefore embodied in the Divine who in turn harmonizes nature.

B. WHAT IS PROGRESS?

Having examined what it means to be human, our task of ascertaining what difference education makes would not be complete without paying some attention to human progress. In general, progress is an overall concept under which growth and development are evaluated. Some have argued that what others regard as progress is indeed growth which does not necessarily translate into development, a subset of progress (Ukeje 2002). For instance, that more children are in school today does not necessarily mean that education is on the increase. If indeed, learning materials and effective teaching are not available to the large number of students in our schools, progress in education becomes an illusion because it takes an appropriate learning environment to make education possible. And education is only one of several areas in which we must view progress.

If we accept development as synonymous with progress, the latter must be viewed from a variety of perspectives-social, political, economic and religious. How much progress have we made in these areas? When you consider the on-going disintegration of family values, the turbulence in the polity, the declining standard of living due to our economic difficulties and the upsurge of religious bigotry, one would almost ask the optimists to reconsider their view about progress. Yes, there has been some growth and progress in institutional development in the world, including our country, Nigeria. Yet it may not be as much and fast as we have expected.

But what is progress? We should start with what progress is not. Progress is not maintaining the status quo; not stagnation, not a desire for unnecessary repetition; not a misplaced priority; not promoting prejudice, tribalism, racism, discrimination, inequality, injustice, opportunism, oppression and alienation. Again, progress is not immediate ease, well being and peace; not rest. So what is progress? Progress is a force, the most dangerous of all forces (Chardin 1969). It is consciousness of all that is and all that can be a kaleidoscope of pain and pleasure, an interaction of the subjective and the objective, a convergence of the past and present as pointers to the future, cut throat competition in a world with limited resources. Progress is a full day's work for a full day's pay, relentless quest for knowledge transformed into service; it is an embodiment of wisdom in the service of mankind; an endless rejuvenation of potentials and leaving the world a better place than we found it. That is progress!!!

More often than not, we tend to substitute, the manifestations of growth for progress which is basically a state of mind (Omatseye 1985). When we are not thinking about what ought to be, progress is hardly achieved. In what follows I shall argue that man has been more successful in the area of cultural evolution than in all other spheres.

B.1 THE COLLECTIVE MIND PHENOMENON

Right from when man acquired enough self consciousness to develop culture and language, he has been part of the social brain - a network of individual minds (**neurons**) working on ideas and propositions about how to survive in a world that must be conquered and made more habitable. The social brain is a culmination of thoughts, purposes, actions, habits, character leading to norms shared by humans every where, dating back to the pre-historic era. Indeed, this legacy is still shared by us today. Back then, someone had an idea about a cutting implement a cutlass. Another with whom this idea is shared moves one step further to think of how to make the implement sharper. A third person to whom the idea of a cutlass is transmitted decides that it should have a handle to make it more comfortable to work with. And so, a network of thoughts of how our cutlass becomes better is developed. The development of the collective mind has accelerated the expansion of modern science, the arts and technology in such a way as was never experienced before.

This cultural evolution has galvanized our thoughts and actions in the last century more than ever. It has rekindled our "can-do-attitude" because most of us have become tethered to our radio, television, personal computers, cellular phones and other technological paraphernalia. While some zealots view this development as real progress, some sceptics think it is a distraction from meaningful social relations - a much cherished African life style. Whatever is your view about the burgeoning information and communication technology, one thing is certain: communication has become faster, easier and cheaper, thus expanding the collective mind within the context of globalization. Today, satellite television brings us "breaking news" live from around the world. With our cell phones, we can now reach anyone, anywhere in the world. Without question, the development in this realm has been hastened by the electronic synergy, the internet and associated technology as a means of pulling its users to the collective mind. For as Wright (1999) puts it, the internet keeps enticing new and more people into a bigger, faster and stronger web. Between when the idea of making the first cutlass was shared among the first inventors some 50,000 years ago and now the population of the world has risen from 3 million to 6 billion. While it took centuries then to communicate an idea from one end of the world to the other, it now takes a few seconds to do so either on the internet or a cell phone.

Although Nigerians are gradually acquiring a taste of the benefit of the new technological revolution, how much have we done to contribute to its development? Yes, it is true that some Nigerians abroad have become significant contributors to the Silicon Valley superstructure. But how much have we done here at home to encourage participation in the on-going technological revolution? If we must go beyond our usual tendency to consume and not produce, the state and

the private sector must go beyond lip service in funding research and development in technology in our tertiary and related institutions. We must trade our collectivistic disposition in which anyone is hardly held responsible for our low productivity. The so-called Asian tigers have moved faster than we in Africa in terms of responding to the challenge of the info-tech revolution. India with its overwhelming population but less resources than Nigeria has become a leading software producer in the world today. It is not enough to urge our sons and daughters abroad to come home when the infrastructure needed for contribution is not available. For instance, access to personal computer is still a ratio of one to thousands in our country. Whether we like it or not we have become part of the virtual borderless world (Iyer, 1999). Having become part and parcel of globalisation what about our treasured African identity?

B.2 THE AFRICAN QUEST FOR IDENTITY

Since the colonial era, the quest for a true identity of the African intelligentsia has been a source of nagging anxiety for some. For those who even see themselves as citizens of the world or their adopted countries abroad, there is still no clear answer to the question "Who am I"? Ultimately, the rooster must return home to roost. For one thing, it is not enough to ignore the issue because it is tied to the authenticity of an individual and his psychological well being. Psychologists and psychiatrists have made it their task to educate us on how to deal with the pains of discovering our true, inner, deeper and more authentic self.

If the burden of dealing with one's true identity is difficult for the western man, it is twice as much for the African intelligentsia who has to balance the demands of his westernised professional expertise with his traditional African way of life, as evident in his language and cultural orientation. For as Rollo May (1953) once described it, the anxiety and guilt associated with the performance of one's public roles could be very painful, bringing in their train great sufferings and conflict. But then who would argue that such pains are too much a price for self awareness, creativity and the power to be fully human? Anything less would keep the individual at the level of an innocent infant.

Indeed, the existential school of thought of which I have been part all of my professional life articulates as inauthentic the double life of the modern man with his mask. It reveals his outward conditional and unreal life, replete with falsehood. Existentialism would further compel the individual to confront his primary self and the full depth of his life in a society and civilization in which his true self is shrouded in secrecy. This mode of thought that is shared with likes of Nietzsche, Berdyaev, Tolstoy and Sartre articulates the authentic self as an enabler and encourager in accepting one's true identity (Omatseye, 1988). And until we are able to evolve an eclectic synthesis of our westernised professional training with what it means to be African culturally, the intelligentsia's true identity may forever be concealed. But that should never be the case.

C. DOES EDUCATION REALLY MATTER IN THE HUMAN EQUATION?

So far, we have argued that man's enigmatic nature has made it extremely difficult for anyone, sometimes including himself, to pre-determine what his next line of action is likely to be. Despite his endowment with a mind to think and a heart to feel, he is prone to vacillate between right and wrong, good and evil, the beautiful and the ugly. And when we recall how outrageous the behaviour of some supposedly educated people can be, it becomes incomprehensible to think that education is the panacea that we consider it to be. Two illustrations from my personal experience will drive home the point.

Toward the end of my course work in a Masters degree programme in Humanities, I proposed a thesis topic on existential thought in African literature. But this was rejected by my advisor who did not think that there was such