

Socialism as an African Social and Political Philosophy: Senghor's Paradigm

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Abstract

The paper interrogates the meanings and practices of African political thoughts, especially the theory put forward by Leopold Sedar Senghor. What is the distinguishing factor of African Socialism? What is the direction of African socio-political philosophy? What is the African conception of man that determines the socio-political theory? It is in an attempt to answer these and other related questions that the paper is written.

We argue that Socialism is socialism; there cannot be anything like African Socialism, European Socialism, American Socialism and even Scientific Socialism. This is because socialism is based on two premises: (i) Equity (ii) Non-exploitation. These are value-laden, moral and non-scientific. Socialism can be applied as a means of economic, social and political advancement in any society. Although situation and condition may differ but the basic productive and distributive principles remain the same.

Introduction

The term "African" is a racial geographical entity. 'Africa' is a continent inhabited by a people of a particular race, which could be black, white, Arab, Negro, etc., but definitely with similar culture, custom, common history of colonial experience and tutelage (Azenabor: 2002, 9). So, the tag 'Africa' has a meaning, a character and an identity – "if an identity, is a coalescence of mutually responsive (though sometimes conflicting) modes of conduct, habits of thought, and patterns of evaluation, in short a coherent kind of human social psychology..." (Appiah: 1992, 282). Every human identity is constructed, historical and cultural, so race alone cannot enforce an identity. Identity is one that can continue to be reshaped taking into consideration the challenges of our time and the political, social, economic and cultural experiences/forces of the modern world. So, identity is a consciousness. What the Africans are fundamentally seeking when they talk of an identity is not so much national and political independence as an end to the psychological suffering that goes with indignity and inhumanity to man.

"Social and Political Philosophy" is a branch of philosophy. It addresses similar but employs a different methodology from political science or political theory. The social and political philosopher utilizes the method of asking fundamental questions, argumentation, critical and logical evaluation, rigour, skepticism or refusal to believe unless on rational ground. To evaluate issues. It employs the tools of the core areas of philosophy, namely epistemology, ethics, metaphysics and logic. He also uses these to explain and understand the nature of man, his world, society and organization. In all of these, the social and political philosopher's concern is mainly with the goal of value

orientation, which is ethical. So, the social and political philosopher asks fundamental questions about justification, ultimate nature, value or *goal* and he formulates answers with some metaphysical and ethical theories and the limitations therein.

The Social and Political Philosopher looks at the *ought*, while the Political Scientist examines the is of the state and society. This is precisely the task of philosophers like Plato in his *Republic*, Aristotle in his *Politics*, Machiavelli, in his *Prince*, Nietzsche in his *Thus spake Zarathustra*, Hobbes in his *Leviathan*, etc. So, the political philosopher deals with the ideal. He is a thinker and a critic.

“African Social and Political Philosophy” is a branch of African philosophy. It deals with the ‘Africanness’ of social and political philosophy. Every philosophy is a response to experience and experience vary from person to person, from people to people, from race to race and from culture to culture. The experience of slavery, colonialism, racism and neo-colonialism are experiences that shape the socio-political philosophy in Africa. It is in fact the need to meet the challenges of these experiences that we have African social and political theories, like Senghor’s “Negritude” in *African socialism*, Nyerere’s “African brotherhood and “African humanism” in *Ujamaa*, Nkrumah’s “Pan-Africanism and Social Revolution” in *consciencism*, Azikwe’s (of Nigeria) “Pragmatic Federalism” and “Neo Welfarism” in *ideology for Nigeria*, Awolowo’s. “Freedom” in *People’s Republic*, etc.

Also within the scope of African social and political philosophy are works on African personality, identity theories, Pan-Africanism, etc., all having important implications for the development of social and political philosophy in contemporary Africa, they all constitute the substance of African social and political philosophy. African social and political philosophy is inspirational and it provides a sense of meaning to the development of nationalism in most African states and ultimately black consciousness. It serves as the intellectual backing for African politics and political thinking. In African Social and Political thought or philosophy, attempt is made to develop unique political theory aimed at African unity and based on African socialism, welfarism, communism, family hood and the existential situation of Africa. It is argued that a true and meaningful freedom must be accompanied by a true mental liberation and a return, whenever possible and desirable to genuine and authentic traditional African brotherhood and humanism.

Direction of African socio-political Philosophy

The social and political philosophy in Africa, like its counterparts all over the world, is determined by the social conditions in which Africans find themselves. But unlike its counterparts all over the world, the social and political theorists in Africa have been men with active political participation, most of them statesmen, freedom fighters and political leaders. The reason for this is understandable and historical. This has to do with the intellectual orientations of the thinkers which were affected by colonialism. So, hardly would any writer in African social and political philosophy or theory proceed without relating his or her thought to this colonial experience of Africans.

In terms of objective, African socio-political thought has changed direction in line with the social and political changes that have occurred over the years. It is no more that of political and economic liberation from colonial powers, since independence

has been fought for and won. Rather, emphasis would now be on internal conflicts, disputes and resolution within Africa.

Another direction in African social and political philosophy is that of ideologies. There are conflicting ideologies with the social and political structure left by the colonial masters on one hand and those of the indigenous Africans on the other. The African Scholars are now formulating theories as bases for the social and political philosophy of the African people, taking into consideration the historical/political antecedents on one hand and the democratic principles on the other coupled with the African socio-cultural context. A fundamental guide to the direction of African social and political philosophy would be the African concept of man.

The African concept of man

In the African socio-political philosophy, there is a stress on defining relationships among men in society. It was Aristotle who was credited with the view that man is a social and political animal. With this conception, it will be impossible for man, whether in Africa or Europe, to live in isolation. Man is a being - in - relation to others. There is always the need for collective efforts, action, mutual assistance, and inter-dependence as conditions for welfarism, which is the basis for communalism. So the individual must identify himself with the group or community for social well being, solidarity, inter-dependence, cooperation, reciprocity and relationship.

In spite of the general view of man or human nature, there is a societal or a people's conception or perception. In Africa, there is both the individual and communal conception of man. Man is not an individualized entity, but part of a collectivity. Man is a social being - a being inseparable from his community. In this respect Mbiti writes: "The individual can only say: I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1969: 108 & 109). Every society or community faces the problem of the nature of the relationship that should exist between men, i.e the individual and the society and the distribution of collective wealth. It is the way a society interprets this relationship that produces the social and political doctrine or philosophy. And every individual has three levels of existence; as an individual, as a member of a group and as a member of the community. In African cultural experience, these three are fused together, because there is interdependence, perpetual interaction and interpenetration. The individual develops in the light of the whole. Hence, he talks less of freedom, right and equality, he is not even aware of them. He works and lives for the whole - God, spirit, ancestors, community, man, past, present and future generations. The African man cannot demand to be free from these. Rather, what the African talks more of are duty and responsibility. Comparing the Western and African perception of the individual, Anyanwu writes:

The individual in the West is a being who is isolated from other beings and thereby becomes conscious of himself. Here, concern for the individual becomes individualism. It is the spirit of **individualism** that governs Western democracy. The West wants to create a community of people by organizing individuals into groups according to their interest The

African assumes that there are no isolated individuals since there are no isolated forces in the universe. So, an individual is a force in relation to other forces. Individual awareness is possible only in a **community of forces**. Individuals are born into a community and their obligation is to manifest the spirit of community in them by sharing in collective beliefs, works, duties and results (Anyanwu: 1981, 278).

The African social order manifests features of both communality and individuality. So, to describe the African social order simply as communalistic is objectively speaking not true. The individual has a place, but the place of the individual in the social order has to be understood. So, in African social and political philosophy “individualism and communalism are not seen as exclusive and opposing concepts, as they are in capitalist and communist philosophies” (Gyekeye: 1987, 162).

It is against this background that we must now situate African socialism. African socialism is an intellectual extraction from the African reality and cultural experience.

African Socialism: Senghor’s Paradigm

The trend of Africa towards socialism is partly due to the African experience and condition. African continent of today is emerging from European occupation or colonization which used the tool of capitalism as a means of oppression. But political freedom and independence are not enough; there is also need to be free from economic exploitation and social inequality, and socialism provides more for this than capitalism. To encourage this socialist stance of Africa, there is the traditional pattern of African society, where people owned so much in common.

Africans are not just moving towards socialism, some African leaders are also trying to evolve their own brand of socialism, which is opposed to “scientific socialism”. ‘African’ because, the nations must evolve and grow organically, not merely to suit African conditions, but it must also be original, indigenous, and creative in the experience of Africa’s own development. They reject Marxism, the theory of Dialectical Materialism, Class Struggle, and Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and base their own theory on traditional social structures. African conditions, they claim, are not conducive to scientific socialism. They go as far as saying that an African is “socialist by nature”, and cannot therefore be taught a socialism which is influenced by ‘alien’ ideologies. We all have our brand of socialism, so the argument goes, suitable to our communal life which is now being threatened by the intervention of European values. That in fact, with the advent of foreign intervention, and alien concepts of individual ownership and the monetary economy, communal traditions were gradually subverted and economic inequalities resulted. Thus, we are called upon to look for our own way of development in order to get salvation. One of such people who holds such a belief is Leopold Sedar Senghor; one time president of Senegal; “the first probably to use the term, ‘African socialism, in the forties” (Klinghoffer: 1969, 19).

This paper, therefore, examines Senghor’s theory of African socialism. For the sake of systematic analysis and expositional simplicity, this aspect of the paper

is divided into three main parts. The first, shall examine why Senghor adopted "African socialism" instead of "scientific socialism". The second shall consist of the presentation of Senghor's basic theories on African socialism. The third shall entail critical evaluations. Let us address ourselves to the first task.

Why it is "Africa Socialism" and not "Scientific Socialism".

The theory of scientific socialism has been said to apply under all conditions and that its theory and method are universally acceptable the Dialectical Materialism and Class-Struggle, are said to be general manifestations in all existing societies. Scientific Socialism with The Capital as its infallible Bible will only have little variation in details here and there, when applied, depending on the particular distinctive character of individual societies. The question then, is, why has Senghor rejected this theory of Scientific Socialism and opted for a brand called "African Socialism"?

To answer this question, Senghor painstakingly analyses what he calls the weaknesses of scientific socialism, in order to show why it is not the answer to Africa's problems. Senghor believes that Marx was too deterministic and underestimated man's freedom and the organizing power of the capitalist state. Senghor also opposes many of Marx's economic theories. He points out that "Socialism" has not triumphed in the industrialized countries of Western Europe as Marx predicted it would, that economic crisis are occurring less often, and that Marx's theory of capitalistic concentration has not come true as the number of small and medium-sized firms had grown. He also charges Marx with under-estimating the importance of the peasantry and with not realizing the complexity of class relationship. Senghor then rejects "prefabricated models" such as the Russian, Chinese and Scandinavian. Much, he says, can be learned from them but applying methods dogmatically leads to failure (Senghor: 1964: 32 & 157). He warned, "we must assimilate, not be assimilated (Ibid: 165). Senghor then argues that socialist structure already existed in African community before the arrival of the colonialist. He writes, "...Africans had already realized socialism before the coming of Europeans ...but we must renew it by helping it to regain a spiritual dimension "(Ibid: 29).

According to him, Africa's social background of tribal community life not only makes socialism natural to Africa, but excludes the validity of the theory of class struggle.

The most obvious departure of Senghor from Scientific Socialism lies in his rejection of this class-struggle and exploitation as having any application to Africa. He asks; "... Must we have proletariat and capitalists at war before we can talk like Marx? In our Negro-Berber society ... there are no classes at war, but only social groups struggling for influence (Ibid. : 33). He further maintains that, "In the working out of our African mode of socialism, the problem is not how to put an end to the exploitation of man by his fellows, but to prevent it ever happening...(Senghor: 1964, 265). It will therefore be a betrayal of Marx, he writes, to super-impose his method on Negro-African realities "especially since African societies are ... with no wage earning sector ... where money is not king. Though dialectical materialism can help in analyzing our societies, it cannot fully interpret them ..." (Senghor: 1964, 77).

Senghor also rejects Marxist Scientific Socialism which talks of the "dictatorship

of the proletariat” for its dictatorial tendencies. He maintained that the “dictatorship of the proletariat” becomes under Stalin (i.e. in Soviet union) an all powerful and soul-less monster which discouraged human freedom. A theoretically temporary dictatorship developed with a permanent dictatorship of the state and party” (Andrain: 1964, 165). Marxist socialism is based on the ideal of class was distinction and injustice in the Western world, whereas in African society there was no class struggle, even if classes exist, they were not conflicting and struggling. There was no bourgeoisie and proletariat. There was therefore no particular class in the society that needed to be liberated. In Africa, the oppressor was the foreigner; the colonialist and the oppressed were the Africans, the colonized.

Marxism or Scientific Socialism was also rejected by Senghor on the ground that ours is Agricultural economy not industrial one. So, there is no entrenched capitalist power in major enterprises. Furthermore, African socialism is anti-colonialist while Marx’s scientific socialism is anti-capitalist. Again, Marxist socialism is atheistic, and contemptuous of spiritual values, while African’s is Godly religious, creating room for value and ethics. Senghor writes: “What embarrassed us in Marxism was, along with its atheism, a certain disdain for spiritual values: this discursive reason pushed to its outermost limits, turned into materialism, without warmth, into a blind determinism (Irele: 1989, 53). Another area of contrast is in the final synthesis of Marxist socialism which is the withering away of the state, whereas that of Africa’s is the realization of universal man, a humane society without races (Sogolo: 1993, 199).

Senghor gave two other reasons apart from the above, why he would not accept Scientific Socialism. According to him; “the first is that the knowledge of Marx and Engel was conditioned by their era, by the rather limited progress of science and philosophy ... Secondly, a new theory of knowledge was born during the first half of this century as a result of these scientific revolutions. Dialectics as a theory more precisely, as a method of knowledge is not new ...” (Senghor: 1964, 169-172).

Having debunked the ideas of Scientific Socialism, Senghor, then sets out to lay the foundation of “African socialism”. To justify his theory of “African socialism”, Senghor appealed to the African concept of man and epistemological justification, that is; African mode of knowing. Based on the African concept of man, Senghor establishes African socialism by saying that the European society from which context Marx took off is an assemblage of individuals and places with more stress on individual and his needs.

“In this respect, the debate between “to each according to his labour” and “to each according to his needs” is significant. Negro-African society puts more stress on the group than on the individual, more on solidarity than on the activity and needs of the individual, more on the communion of persons than on their autonomy. Ours is a community society. This does not mean that it ignores the individual, or that collectivist society ignores solidarity, but the latter bases his solidarity on the activities of individuals, whereas the community society bases it on the general activity of the group ... The individual

is, in Europe, the man who distinguishes himself from the others and claims his autonomy to affirm himself in his basic originality. The member of the community society also claims his autonomy to affirm himself as a being. But he feels, he thinks that he can develop his potential, his originality, only in and by society, in union with other men – indeed with all other beings in the universe: God, animal, tree or pebble” (Ibid: 93& 94).

Senghor also notes the collective nature of work in the Negro-African society. He opines that the means of production and instrument of work was owned by the family group as common property. And “under this collective situation, the African worker felt that he laboured for something of value to himself. This work satisfied the human needs of responsibility and dignity. Since the work permitted the realization of his personal needs, it was not forced labour but a source of joy (Andrain: 1964, 169).

Senghor then adds his second reason, which is a deeper one, for ‘African Socialism – something which he believes is inseparable from African psychology. He argues that the *African approach to socialism is determined not only by the African concept of man and society*, but also by the “faculty of knowing” which Africans have inherited. He writes:

From our ancestors, we have inherited our own method of knowledge. Why, should we change it when Europeans now tell us it is the very method of the twentieth century and the most fruitful method? Let us, then consider the Negro-African as he faces the object to be known, as he faces the other: God, man, animal, tree or pebble, natural or social phenomenon. In contrast to the classic European, the Negro-African does not draw a line between himself and the object; he does not hold it at a distance, nor does he merely look at it and analyze it. After holding it at a distance, after scanning it, without analyzing it, he takes it vibrant in his hands, careful not to kill or fix it. He touches it, feels it, smells it he discovers the other. Immediately he moves, going centrifugally from subject to object on the waves of the other Thus, the Negro-African sympathizes, abandons his personality to become identified with the other, dies to be reborn in the other. He lives a common life with the other, he lives in symbiosis subject and object are dialectically face to face in the very act of knowledge ‘I think; therefore I am’, Descartes writes The Negro-African could say: “I feel, I dance the other; I am” (Senghor: 1964, 72 & 73).

Thus, Senghor uses the above mode of knowing to juxtapose and contrast with the method of Dialectical materialism, and Senghor asserts that the method of scientific

socialism falls short of the contemporary method of knowledge.

Having established the basis for African socialism, Senghor adapted a definition of African Socialism, which he derives from his concept of “Negritude”, where he defines Negritude as: the common denominator of all Negro-Africans regardless of their ethnic background, their religion or their country” (Skurnik: 1965, 351) and laid emphasis on the primacy of African and African cultural values. So, using the concept of “Negritude”, as instrumental element, Senghor defines African socialism as “a return to Africanism we would rather say this is the essence of Africanism, which must be preserved at all costs in our endeavour to modernize. In a society which has never really been stratified into classes a redistribution of wealth is a normal process; the provision of equality for all is merely translating into modern terms what goes on all the time and perhaps extending it more consciously beyond the confines of the extended family” (Rolberg: 1964, 122). From the above we see that socialism is said to be African because it is based on African traditional Value System and reality, which is humanistic (not racialistic). It is centred on man, respect for man’s dignity as a rational being. It is also nationalistic (not colonialistic). Enough for Senghor’s justification of African Socialism, let us consider his basic theories on African Socialism.

Senghor’s Basic Theories

Senghor’s approach to the theory of African Socialism is eclectic. Retraining such traditional African Values as religion and the community spirit, Africa, he believes, must develop her ‘open’, ‘democratic’, humanistic socialism, selecting and applying the most useful contributions available. And

From French utopian socialists it will borrow trade unionism and the cooperative. From Marxism – Leninism, it will accept dialectics, but reject atheistic materialism. It will have a planned economy with a public, a mixed, and a private sector. Nationalization as well as laissez –faire will be avoided. Techniques and technicians from France and other developed countries will be welcome, and an intensive programme to train African cadres will be instituted. The basic pre-requisite is that these various devices be applicable to 20th century Negro-African realities, without meeting this criterion, (Senghor believes) no prefabricated foreign model designed for other times and other people can suffice (Senghor: 1964, viii). Senghor’s basic theories could better be examined under the following: Religio-cultural theory, political theory and economic theory.

Religio-Cultural Theory:

Senghor recognizes the role of religion and culture in African Socialism. He asks; Can we integrate Negro-African Cultural Values, especially religious values, into socialism? We must answer that question once and for all with an unequivocal yes.

(Ibid.,26). Senghor in his theory leaves room for God and does not consider religion as the “opium of the masses” as Marx did. African socialism will not be incompatible with the teachings of Jesus and Mohammed. “we must renew it (ie African socialism) by helping it to regain a spiritual dimension”. (Ibid., 29) Religion, says Senghor, is a contribution to the universal patrimony of mankind, but without destroying what is the essential message of a religion, it must be adopted to the Africa cultural world. He writes:

Indeed, like the Marabouts, even more so than the Marabouts, the missionaries were iconoclasts, destroyers of values--- cultural values and moral values ---- Nevertheless Islam and Christianity gave us spiritual values as substitutes.---- once we have chosen them, it is our task to adapt these religions to our historical and sociological conditions. It is our task to Negrofy them (Ibid., 82 & 83)

Religion then, according to Senghor is the means of realizing the African road to socialism-he therefore rejects the “atheistic materialism” of scientific socialism. Senghor also places great emphasis on traditional African cultural values, in fact this is the constant reference made to what he calls “Negritude” Senghor sees African culture as a vessel for the “Negritude” to the African peoples. And for him, “culture is the very texture of society” (Ibid.: 49). “Culture is inside and outside, above and beneath all human activities. It is the spirit that animates them that gives a civilization its unique style” (Ibid.: 80). “It follows that African socialism as a method and an expression of African realities must be placed at the service of culture” (Skurnik: 1965, 365). Senghor then maintains that, “we must avoid the temptation of both cultural colonialism and of exclusive anti-colonialism. Of course we must reject colonialism, but this should not lead us to become xenophobic isolationists, which would be a sterile attitude” (Omi & Anyanwu: 1981, 226)

The African task, according to Senghor, is to integrate, to assimilate the complementary values with our own to make new blood. Thus, Senghor’s conception of African socialism is the selective rejection of foreign experience – he will neither accept capitalism nor Scientific Socialism. He writes:

Our revised Negritude is humanistic. I repeat: it welcomes the complementary values of Europe and the white man, and indeed of all other races and continents. But it welcomes them in order to fertilize and reinvigorate its own values, which it then offers for the construction of a civilization which shall embrace all mankind-- (Ibid.)

Senghor says the new African society cannot be realized by merely copying foreign models, however perfect that model may be in its own original setting, nor by an artificial and impossible return to a traditional past which could not be truly lived today. (Senghor: 1964, 83)

Political Theory

Senghor believes that it is only democracy that will allow the Negro-African to realize himself, since, democracy is the traditional form of Negro- African societies. In order to attain this lofty goal, African socialism will utilize the instrument of a single mass party system. Under the control of the majority party, the governments will take all necessary steps to curb demagogic opposition. He points out the party as the consciousness of the masses and avers that the party must raise the masses to political consciousness. And any opposition to the state is viewed as ambivalent, since the state represents all citizens and opposing it is really opposing one's self (Ibid: p.53). From the above, one can see that Senghor's doctrine about the primacy of the state recalls Jean - Jacques Rousseau position. The state appears as the interpreter of what may be called the "General will" of Rousseau. "This exalted position is explained not by reference to a state of nature but through the irreversible dictum which could read: 'man is born free but every where he is poor - -.'" (Skurnik: 1965, 355).

Economic Theory

The other facet of Senghor's African socialism is that of economic set up. One of his economic objectives is the socialization of the means of production and exchange, for the creation of a communal society. Senghor maintains that since most of African countries are primarily agricultural, Africa, especially Senegal is to remain predominantly agricultural. He writes, "Our countries are fundamentally agricultural. We do not merely risk an imbalance to the disadvantage of Agriculture, what we risk is developing industry at the expense of food" (Senghor: 1964, 62). Thus, according to him, the state will have great control over agricultural developments and supports communal and cooperative land holding. He maintains that;

Although Africans need industrialization to make human progress, they must adapt the methods to the realities of the soil, climate, and race. Industrialists must never forget that they are dealing with Negro-African peasants. In the Negro-society, the work of the land is the most noble activity, and the Negro soul remains oriented to peasant ways (Andrain: 1964, 164).

Senghor believes that private enterprise can exist under socialism, but capitalism will not flourish. He therefore maintains that; "private capital will not be scorned; instead it should be sought. Whether from France or else where, provided it does not alienate the rights of quasi-nation (Senghor: 1964, 58).

The problem, according to Senghor, is that the capital is not national, but comes from developed countries. For this reason therefore, Senghor felt;

It cannot be purely and simply nationalized. Several factors prevent it. In addition to legal difficulties, the nationalization of foreign capital would risk provoking international conflict, with which we have nothing to do. But above all, it would

entail the loss of our international credit and prevent other investments, which are vital- - - - suffice it to say that our problem is less of nationalizing capital than of effectively orienting it to help our harmonious development (Ibid., 95)

Senghor believes that instead of nationalization, we should talk of taxes, which can be used for national ends. And that since capitalists train and employ African personnel, re-invest part of their profits, and pay taxes, capital is, for all practical purposes nationalized (Ibid: 58). But then, there is need to prevent laissez faire economy, says Senghor, this is the negative aim of the development plan.

The state and the trade unions, according to Senghor, should have the same purpose of increasing production and raising the standard of living of the workers. So, there should be no conflict between the state and the unions. During his tribute to Negro-African trade unionism in Senegal, Senghor said:

It is one of the purposes of trade unions to ensure for the workers a fair share of the profits of their labour. But a "fair" share must be fair in relation to the whole society ----- trade union leaders and their followers, as long as they are true socialists, will not need to be coerced by the government into keeping their demands within limits imposed by the needs of society as a whole. Only if there are potential capitalists among them will the socialist government have to step in and prevent them from putting their capitalist ideas into practice (Brockway: 1963, 41).

So much for the exposition of Senghor's theory of African socialism, now, let us make a critical evaluation of the theories, assertions and claims.

Critical Evaluations

Behind these theories of Senghor, lies the instinctive African reaction to all external superiority or domination, whether it be political occupation, military pressure, wealth, or any contrast in status. As an African who had witnessed the humiliating period of colonialism, Senghor, like any other African, is claiming equality and a right to equality. So one can appreciate what Senghor is trying to say, that; there is need for Africans to create a new society (especially having experienced colonialism) where traditional values, human solidarity, natural unity, social equality and economic democracy will be immortalized. There is need for a socio-cultural philosophy, an indigenous civilization and way of life, based on African humanism, seeking to eliminate exploitation and social stratification. It is on this basis then, that "----- Senghor of Senegal stands out among the statesmen of Africa not only for his literary achievements and his political acumen, but also for having made a major contribution towards the emergent doctrine of African socialism. Senghor's reflections on that subject are based on his emotional and intellectual commitment to African values and realities, and on a thorough investigation of western and communist thinkers.

The result is an amalgam aimed at serving the future of Africa (Skurnik: 1965, 459). So, African socialism is a movement in Afrocentrism - a quest for African identity or being and cultural nationalism, as against Euro-centrism. But in spite of all these well-meaning ideas, some of Senghor's assumptions, claims and cultural theories about African socialism are entirely misconceived, too simplistic and lack merit.

Senghor emphasizes the African concept of man, as a basis for Africa socialism. It is true that the African concept of man can be different from that of the West-But then, which concept of man are we referring to in the west? There is not a single concept of man held by the whole of western culture. The concept of man varies according to individual philosophers, school of thought and age. There is no static concept of man in the history of philosophical thought, as Senghor wants us to believe. Senghor's conception does not make room for continuous exploration and advancement of concept, because it is static. Therefore, it is not a worthwhile philosophy but a dogma.

The qualities of "African situation" which Senghor tend to describe as essentially African are really "human qualities which find expression when a community is at a certain level of productive capacity. When a community does not have the capacity to produce social surplus, there is simply no means of becoming unequal. The sense of brotherhood which is common under such conditions is essentially for the survival of a community which is permanently being threatened either by natural forces, which they cannot explain, or by hostile invasion. A similar feeling of brotherhood may be manifested in terms of war or natural calamities even today" (Babu: 1981,57). The point is that it has been pointed out that, there is nothing uniquely "African" about the traditional society. Every society passed through this traditional stage and later moved to higher levels of production simultaneously evolving new social codes, political aspirations, and moral ethics. So why is Senghor trying to draw the hand of the clock backwards? Mankind is always in a state of progress. The politics and ideology of the past have been over taken by modern exigencies. There is no room for such backward forms of organizations; they are hindrances to progress and perpetuate poverty. "To say that an African can learn democracy and socialism simply by looking backward to see how our great grand parents behaved (which of course is part of any traditional phase of any people of the world) is not only meaningless but down right reactionary". (Ibid; 58).

After all, socialism is entirely oriented towards the future, concerning itself with what ought to be, so it cannot be backward looking. Socialism aims to modify what exists not what existed, it proposes not past conditions but reforms. While a glorious history of the past may be important for national self-confidence, we must also discriminate between the glorifications of anachronism just for the sake of establishing a past, on the one hand, and the challenges or obvious realities of our time, on the other. We need not be unnecessarily sentimental about our past. It is true that we must respect our own history "but respect for history means giving it its proper place as a science, respecting its dialectical development, and not eulogizing the past at the expense of the present ----." (Ibid: 60).

Soviet political experts oppose the idea of "Negritude" put forth by Senghor. They are averse to this racial concept, partly because it includes only Negroes, and Potekhin,

for example, indicated that white and black Africans should be united in the struggle against the remnants of colonialism. Thus, soviet writers consider "Negritude" to be "anti-racial racism" (Klinghoffer: 1969, 72 & 73).

One of the basic claims of Senghor is that prior to the arrival of the colonialists, there was no class struggle in Africa. This contention is very disturbing. But in order not to be guilty of misjudgments and hasty conclusions, let us try and acquaint ourselves in concrete terms by what is meant by classes or class-struggle. If by class struggle we mean the distinction in society or the hierarchical arrangement or order, then classes exist everywhere in the world, and there can never be a classless society; distinction in the society can never be abolished. But Marx or Lenin did not use class in this context. By class, Marx meant that a person or group would have absolute monopoly not only of the means of production but also the means of distribution, and every other person is dependent on some body else for survival and sustenance. And Lenin on his part, defines classes as;

"large groups of people which differ from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in Law) to the means of production, by their role in social organization of Labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions and mode of acquiring the share of social wealth of which they can appropriate the labour of another, owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy" (Babu: 1981, 126). Thus, master servant cum exploiter-exploited relationship is the necessary force for a class struggle to manifest.

Now, considering the above conceptions of class-struggle, does class struggle not exist in Africa, as Senghor has claimed? Considering the fact that Africans have no means of production and distribution, that they are not industrialized nations, and that they do not have capital, and their own production output is still dependent on foreign investments, and that peasants in Africa can exist independently of any capitalist, one may be tempted to agree with Senghor that there is no class struggle in traditional African society. But to claim this, is to view issues in a simplistic, parochial, partial and rather pretentious manner. The histories of Mali empire, Songhai, the Yoruba, etc., were all dominated by struggle – but then, one can quickly point out that these were tribal struggles, or to use Senghor's words; "struggle for influence". However, there was the case of Kings and Chiefs owning slaves or palace boys, and they depended on the kings and chiefs for their means of livelihood. Again, there was the compulsory tribute that subjects must pay to the kings. These are cases of alienating one's labour, and cases of exploitation. So, there was class struggle in Africa. But the difference is that the slaves or palace boys were not conscious of their deplorable and exploitative conditions, because the labour was not quantified-they were not bothered about how much they were putting in and how much they were taking out – they were not aware of the surplus value. And since it was a communocratic society the exploited was not

allowed to suffer hence he was not conscious of the exploitation, but that is not to say that there were no contradictions and conflicts in Africa. In fact, African leaders say there was no class-struggle in Africa, not out of conviction, but because of the need to keep all the indigene united, under the same umbrella, to fight common course-colonialism. So, with colonialism diversion was made to anti-colonial struggle, instead of class-struggle.

Perhaps the most disconcerting aspect of Senghor's African socialism is the one party system. This has been criticized in terms of the legacy of absolutism and authoritarianism. Although, the introduction of one party system has been explained in terms of the need to stamp out tribalism, and establish national unity and the desire for rapid economic growth. This explanations notwithstanding, there is still a more fundamental objection to one party system which makes the explanation vacuous. The idea of one party system is a contradiction in terms, since etymologically speaking, party connotes part of something in the society, therefore, one party system cannot represent the society in its entirety. "The limitations placed upon trade union activity and the concept that there should be no contradictions between trade unions and the party state apparatus, are also restrictions upon true democratic activity (Klinghoffer: 1969, 38).

However, one can also point out that this system of rule, although undemocratic in many respects, may be the most appropriate to the developing African countries, since the practice of Western democracy may be a luxury, which cannot be afforded, rather than a necessity. But then, the African socialist would be sowing the seeds of totalitarianism, where the state is in control of everything. In fact Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski outlined six major facets of totalitarianism which, reduced to their simplest form, include; an ideology which encompasses all aspects of society; a single party; terrorist police control; party control of the means of communication; state control of the means for armed combat, and central control and direction of the economy (Klinghoffer; Ibid).

Conclusion

Let us harvest our thoughts. From the above analysis and exposition, we can say that "Senghor's African socialism is a flexible doctrine in gestation, adopted to the African context, designed to facilitate the transition to modernization and to project a vision of a better future----- Senghor asserts the dignity of African values, he expresses a cultural nationalism for Black Africa – to value and be proud of African traditional culture as a necessity in increase of African emotional security (Skurnik: 1965, 367). These, no doubt, are credit to Senghor's deep commitment to humanism and the entire continent of Africa not just to his native land, Senegal.

However, his analysis poses some problems as I have elucidated above. So, those who look for flawless logical consistency may be disappointed. "Senghor's doctrine is both a method and a myth. As a method, it provides instruments with which to assert and develop the material and ideal values of Africa; these instruments include; Negritude, eclecticism in nation-building, the primacy of the ruling party as the national decision-maker, and the socialization of some means of production and consumption. As a myth, it posits a series of interconnected assumptions which tend

to----- serve as a frame work for the blossoming of Africa” (Ibid; 449). The elements which may be regarded as part of the myth include his claim about the absence of class struggle, the ultimate goal of culture, etc.

Also we have seen that the concept of African socialism is a reaction to what is called “foreign ideologies”. But the truth is that “there is no ideology that is the exclusive possession of any person or group of people. As soon as an ideology is propounded, it becomes not the exclusive property of the ideologist but a thing of universal applicability. After all, the principle of socialist arrangement was not first propounded by Russians, who adopted it as a means for their economic and social development. Karl Marx was not a Russian. It is utterly futile to think that one can resist the invasion of ideas, especially where such ideas are relevant to our societal advancement. Ideas are global, and we cannot seal our borders and say ideas shall need passports in order to come in”(Imobighe: 1972, 17).

Socialism denotes a belief in the pre-eminence of certain values, such as; cooperation, collective welfare, and elimination of abject poverty. In socialism, according to Potekhin, “the state’s power is vested in the workers... there are no exploiting class, nor does one man exploit his fellows. The economy is planned, and its essential aim is to afford maximum satisfaction of man’s material and spiritual needs” (Roberts: 1964, 80). If this is taken as a meaning of socialism, then, as our survey of Senghor’s African socialism has shown, it expresses the same cooperative ideals, the only thing is that Senghor wants to apply the African situation and realities into it – fair enough. So, why not simply call it, “socialism in Africa” instead of the misnomer; “African socialism”? Socialism is socialism, there cannot be anything like ‘African socialism,’ ‘Asian socialism’ American socialism’, ‘European socialism’ or even ‘Scientific socialism’. Socialism is based on two premises: equity and non-exploitation.

These are Value laden and moral not Scientific, etc. Socialism can be applied as a means of economic, social and political advancement in any society. It is thus useless for Senghor to skirt the real issue of our time by inventing various excuses in cultural, traditional, religious, etc., to side-track socialism. Although situation and condition may differ but the basic productive and distributive principles remain the same. The reason for this ideological confusion by Senghor was the problem of non-alignment, (Senghor: 1962, when reaffirming his policy of Socialism to West Africa said: “ Senegal would pursue her policy of non-alignment” (West Africa: 1962: 1447) or non-involvement in the “cold war” struggle between two blocs-Eastern and Western, with the nuclear parity by the two major powers the United States and Soviet Union, with capitalism and socialism as their various ideologies but then there is however no essential difference between capitalism and socialism both are exploitative. In the former an individual does the exploitation, in the later the state does the exploitation). And adopting any of these, i.e. Capitalism or Socialism, it is felt, would amount to allying with a particular bloc., which might result in the threat of an imminent nuclear showdown between these two major powers and their allies. And this might lead to the complete extermination of humanity. “Thus, most African states are thrown into the dilemma posed by their cherished principles of non-alignment... The haunt of this spectrum of non-alignment threw them off their balance, so that instead of concerning

themselves with the need for, and working out a socialist development, they wasted their time in discussions centred on the different types of socialism. Until socialism is given the appendage; “African” socialism, their cherished policy of non-alignment, would be defeated ... (Mobighe, 1972, 17).

Today, in modern world, it is no longer fashionable to talk of Socialism - ‘African’ or ‘scientific’. There is now the challenge of democratic governance, with its representative government. But even at that, democracy has to reflect people’s worldview, cultural experience and political reality. So the formidable task before contemporary African social and political philosophers is how to evolve an indigenous political system, given the democratic challenges of the modern world.

So far, African social and political philosophy has remained pure theory. What we now need is practice, a real revolution like Europe had. This is what is necessary for Africa to put in place “an equitable and progressive social order which will provide food, clothing, and shelter to meet the needs of the people in accordance to their means; a social order that will reflect a higher standard of living and the happiness of African people (Kwame Nkrumah: 1964,259).

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