

Opinion

Values education for a new Nigeria

By Edwin Madunagu

(This is the opening segment of a slightly abridged version of my review of the book: "Values education and national development", scheduled for public presentation in Abuja on November 26, 2012).

ONE of the threads leading to *Values Education and National Development* can be traced back to Professor Otoniti Nduka's 1964 book, *Western Education and the Nigerian Cultural Background*. The editors of the current book have described Nduka's 1964 work as "groundbreaking". Forty-two years after the publication of that book, that is, in 2006, Otoniti Nduka Foundation for Values Education was established to continue, expand and institutionalise the work, which started well before 1964 but only attained public knowledge in that year. It was this Foundation, with physical headquarters in Port Harcourt, Rivers State capital in Nigeria, that organised the two national conferences (2008 and 2010) on Values Education whose proceedings constitute the core of the current book, *Values Education and National Development*.

This 16-author anthology, as any reader can confirm quite early, was designed for five categories of people: academics and researchers in the general field of *philosophy of education* and the special field of *values education*, professional educators, policy makers, students and the general public. The last category is not amorphous. They include - in addition to uncommitted general readers - public intellectuals, politicians, social reformers, journalists and writers, social theorists and critics, radical campaigners and even leftist revolutionaries. I shall be focusing more, though not exclusively, on the needs of students and segments of the "general public" as distilled above.

The last two categories of readers would want to grasp, as early as possible, the general and contextual meanings of the key concepts in the book: *ethics, values, morals, education, values education*, as well as other related and derived concepts. The book satisfies this need abundantly, for each of the 15 essays, as well as the *Introduction* and *Welcome Address* (to the first of the two national conferences, which led this book) gives, not one, but multiple definitions corresponding to the various dimensions of the subject-matter. Beyond

this, Prof. Nduka tells us in the *Welcome Address* that "in the taxonomy of values, numerous clusters of values have been identified" and that these include "clusters of political values, religious values and political values" (page 21).

I am sure that many members of the Nigerian public, including the segments I earlier highlighted, who are likely to search for this book on account of its subject-matter which generates considerable interest in society, would not have known the differences between morals, ethics, values and moral ethics or even be aware that differences exist between them. They use the terms interchangeably and hear and read the terms being used interchangeably. And yet you cannot fully or seriously engage the problem of moral degeneracy and disastrous decline of ethical standards in Nigeria's private and public life - or begin to reflect on, and constructively plan - how to practically tackle them unless and until you grasp the differences in question. *Values Education and National Development* fills this gap early in the book and throughout.

Thus, from the editor's Introduction we read: "By values, we mean the standards by which we judge or express preferences with regard to behaviour, attitudes, objects, state of affairs and so on. These values are passed on to successive generations as a functional moral compass that guides everyday conduct" (page 12). And Professor Uzodinma Nwala, in his paper, *The Crisis of Ethical Values in Contemporary Nigerian Society* (Chapter 2), says that "morality refers to the evaluation of human conduct in terms of good and bad, right or wrong, acceptable or not - acceptable as they are found in the moral code and moral discourse in that society". On the other hand, says Nwala, ethics "is an intellectual appraisal of the logic, rationality, systematic character of such evaluations, as well as the standard and basis for such valuations" (page 51).

Still on classification and differentiation, Prof. Nuhu O. Yaqub, in his paper, *Values Education and Governance in Nigeria: How Could the Country Get the Right Balance?* (Chapter 3), says that "values can be classified into moral and non-moral categories" - something many readers would not have heard or thought of before encountering this book. Moral values, he says, "are those morals that openly attract praises, awards, rewards, sanctifications and punishments Moral values that would at-

tract praise, award, reward and sanctification include courage of immense and heroic proportions, selflessness, hard work, unique discovery that add value to society, and empathy" (page 72). Those that would attract punishment, which Yaqub called "bad moral values" include stealing. "Non-morally defined values", Yaqub says, "are those values that are not associated with hard and/or material sanctions. These include courtesies to members of one's family, neighbours and acquaintances".

The example of *stealing* which Prof. Yaqub classifies under "bad moral values" is also an illustration of the view held by some people, including my humble self, that discussing morals and ethics may sometimes lead to passionate ideological disputations - even on conducts that most people feel should attract total and universal condemnation and appropriate sanctions. Stealing, says Yaqub, is "theft and is morally reprehensible regardless of the scale; indeed, it cannot be defined otherwise. A thief is not, for instance, going to say because they steal a small amount, say N5.00, they should not be punished or upbraided; or that society's umbrage should be expressed only when they steal huge sums of money, say, hundreds of thousands of naira".

While accepting that stealing is stealing, whatever the magnitude and while agreeing that the punishment for stealing should be measured according to the magnitude and that punishment should serve as deterrent (as well as being corrective), I would propose that when it is established that a particular act of stealing resulted from a situation beyond the thief's control (such as hunger, resulting say, from poverty and unemployment), then the thief should be able to plead "extenuating circumstances" and be pardoned with appropriate compensation to the victim - provided the magnitude of the theft is small and it was carried out without violence.

The formulation here can be refined provided the idea of "extenuating circumstances" remains. By the way, "extenuating circumstances" is a euphemism for the present socio-economic system which allows a Nigerian (or his/her family), who is not on hunger strike or any other act of self-immolation, to literally die of starvation or a minor ailment. This is the minimum a highly motivated book, which tends to be (but is not exactly) ideo-

logically neutral, such as the one before us, can demand.

We may need to remain with this "ideological neutrality" a bit longer. This book is about good and bad (evil), right and wrong and the bases for the distinctions in the universal and Nigerian contexts. I say the book tends to be "ideologically neutral" in the sense that the book, taken as a whole, is, for instance, not (at least not explicitly) capitalist or anti-capitalist or non-capitalist and it does not (at least not explicitly) advocate capitalism or anti-capitalism or non-capitalism. That, in my opinion, is one of the strengths of the book, *Values Education and National Development*. Let me illustrate this point with two or three short stories.

The epigraph to the Introduction to this book is a quote from Albert Camus: "Wisdom, we know, is the knowledge of good and evil, not the strength to choose between the two". My reading of this perceptive statement, not necessarily in the context of Camus or the editors, leads me to respond that the "strength to choose between the two" belongs to the sphere of "ideology" or "ideological persuasion". For it is ideological persuasion that can empower a Nigerian and lead him or her to reach beyond himself or herself and be prepared to make even the "supreme sacrifice" for an objective that is largely selfless, altruistic, patriotic and humanistic.

In his recent book, *Africa Must be Modern*, Prof. Olufemi Taiwo says that he was, in part, led to write that book so as to assist persons of leftist persuasion who may wish "to change the world" with correct interpretations of what they want to change. I appreciated the author's motivation and efforts in this mission - although I criticised him on some other grounds. But neither the book nor its author is ideologically neutral; they recommend capitalism. But I still commended both. The current book, *Values Education and National Development*, therefore, invites greater commendation not only for its motivation and efforts, but also for its "ideological neutrality": any genuine reformer, of the right or of the left, will embrace this book. No genuine revolutionary, of the right or of the left, will be ideologically put off by it. And yet, the book is rich and powerful; it speaks, as it were, to all genuine reformers.

• To be continued next Thursday.

Opinion

Values education for a new Nigeria (2)

By Edwin Madunagu

(This is the second part of my review of the book "Values education and national development" which was presented to the public on November 26, 2012. The first part was published last Thursday).

ON Africa must be modern, authored by Olufermi Taiwo, I had proposed that the book be freed from its "capitalist and idealist integument" and the result "integrated into the socialist discourse". But *Values Education and National Development*, in my view, requires only to be freed from its "idealist integument" before its integration - since no "ideological preference" - in the specific sense I use the term here - is expressed in the latter book. Let me put this point differently: *Values Education and National Development* can be used by any serious agency of social transformation - of the Left, or the Right, or the Centre. The key word is serious. The result in either case, would be a new and better society. But if it used by an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist agency, that new and better society would be definitively more humane, less exploitative, less unjust and less unequal.

During one of the national strikes in the early 1980s, a revolutionary socialist group to which I belonged in Calabar decided to set up a strike support committee. At the first meeting of the committee a decision was taken, in principle, to co-opt other activists. When the nomination of a certain lady, a senior journalist and labour activist, came up, some members stoutly opposed it. Their reasons, in the main, were that the lady was not leftist enough and that she interacted too comfortably with "bourgeois elements". But one male member argued that, in that type of popular-democratic struggle, to be an intelligent, truthful and courageous journalist was sufficient qualification for admission into the committee. She was admitted.

Ironically, this particular lady was the person who, at a point, suggested, and acted out, a "coup" that prevented a particular betrayal of the national strike at a lower level. This event was, and is, an argument against, and a victory over, "ideological narrowness". To guard against "ideological narrowness" is to be aware of the dialectical relationship between revolution, on the one hand, and popular-democratic struggle (that is, reform struggle from below) on the other. This

awareness helps to draw the lines between opportunism, reformism, sectarianism and revolutionary line.

This is one of my attitudes to the book, *Values Education and National Development*, its contributors, its inspirers and the *Foundation* itself, and my advice to its radical and leftist readers. I was strengthened in this attitude after reading the essay contributed by Ven. Professor W. O. Wotogbe - Weneka. As will be seen later in this appreciation and review, I explicitly and strongly indicated my rejection of some of this man of God's views even while commending his love, honesty and clarity.

The premise of this book, stated explicitly in the editors' one-page summary, *About the Book* (page 6), and by the various contributors, is the virtual collapse of Nigeria's values system and the grave dangers this poses for the future of the country. Professor Anya O. Anya, in his Keynote Address, *Values Education and the Future of Nigeria* (Chapter 1), however, takes a step back and explicitly asks a question he considers "legitimate", and that is: "Is there a Nigerian values system?" Each chapter answers Anya's question, after telling us what values are, and then proceeds to show that this nation's values system has collapsed (generally and in a particular sphere or cluster of spheres - as shown in the table of contents). Then follows, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, what has to be done to reverse the situation.

What were the critical points, or periods or historical factors, in the collapse of Nigeria's value system? Do they include regionalism, as Professor Anya suggested? Do they include military intervention, the Civil War, primitive capitalist accumulation, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), neoliberalism, "monetisation of politics", bad governance, tribalism and nepotism, public cynicism, proliferation of religious sects (what a friend has called "deregulation of religion"), poverty, corruption, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, etc?

All these causative factors, except, possibly, "deregulation of religion", have been suggested by various contributors to this book. However, the editors made a claim in the introduction whose proof readers may need to track as they proceed with the book: "*Values Education and National Development* gives policy-makers and stu-

dents alike a deeper insight into the critical role values education can play in both shaping and reflecting the acceptable ways, the behaviour that governed the Nigerian society before things fell apart" (page 6). The question is: When did things begin to fall apart, or is it a "slip of pen" or "manner of speaking"? I make this inquiry because some people, including my humble self, take the questions when, why, where and how very seriously.

In his paper, *The Place of Religious Values in National Development* (Chapter 4), Ven. Professor Wellington O. Wotogbe-Weneka commends Professor Otonti Nduka for "venturing into the realms of religious and moral values advocacy in a society characterised by glaring decay in every facet of societal life. It is heartening to note that in a society where religious values are, as it were, made to play second fiddle, there are a few individuals who still believe that a godless society is heading to its doom" (page 109).

I join the author in commending Professor Nduka - but for additional reasons: his wisdom, his tenacity, his genuine intellectual liberalism and his faith. Beyond that, Ven. Professor Wotogbe-Weneka has made a serious intellectual formulation of a proposition, which many religious charlatans nauseatingly parrot every time. He strongly argues his proposition in a way that makes it debatable and not in a "take it or leave it" manner. I commend it. He goes on to lament the growth of secularism and underlines the challenge posed by "secularist tendencies" and "human ideologies" including, in particular, "Humanism, Marxism and Socialism" (page 112). He follows with debatable arguments. My only comment here is to underline, and draw attention to, the fact that the writer has here condemned and dismissed three global movements which, together with democracy, nationalism and modernity, constituted a bloc of really great movements that, beginning from the French Revolution, radically and completely transformed our planet Earth - including religion itself.

Professor Mark Anikpo, in his paper, *Traditional Values and Globalisation: the Nigerian Example* (Chapter 5), asks the question: "To what extent has globalisation affected traditional values?" The paper argues that "globalisation is the contemporary phase of capitalist development with

its imperialist tendencies still intact and perhaps more deadly" and that "in order to understand its impact on traditional values, we must understand the nature and logic of capitalist development" (page 131) (all emphases mine). He strongly argues his point of view. The last leg of Anikpo's compound proposition, namely, that "African leaders failed to comprehend the logic of capitalism which they adopted..." (pages 131-132) does not seem to be strongly supported by the facts of history. What we are dealing with here is more of class interest than of mere incomprehension.

In Chapter 6, under the title *Values Conflict and Social Order in Contemporary Nigerian Society: Survey of Issues and Programmes*, Professor J. O. Charles and Dr. Moses U. Ikoh set out to show that "a trend that is emerging in Nigeria in the face of globalization and economic reforms is the intensification of amoral values". Their thesis continues: "Our diverse cultures create room for diverse values. In many instances, personal values systems conflict with social values systems, thus obstructing actions aimed at enhancing the welfare of others". The authors therefore argue for the "adoption of a national values system that can be sustained through value re-orientation and national ideology" (pages 198-199) (emphasis mine). I subscribe to the theses.

In tracing the efforts that had been made - hitherto in vain - to realise that imperative in Nigeria, Charles and Ikoh mentioned Ethical Revolution (1982-1983), War Against Indiscipline (WAI) (1984-1985), The Directorate of Mass Mobilisation for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) (1989-1992), "Letter to my Country Men" (I think late 1980s to early 1990s), the National Orientation Agency (NOA) (merger of MAMSER with Public Enlightenment Division of the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture) (1993 to the present). The authors seem to suggest that what was wrong with these programmes resulting in their respective failures - was their implementations. But I think - and as the authors can be construed to have implied in both in the title and the body of their work - there was also something wrong with the premises and formulations of the programmes. I shall later generalise and pose this point as a question.

Opinion

Values education for a new Nigeria (3)

By Edwin Madunagu

(This is the third [and concluding] part of the abridged version of my review of the book "Values education and national development". The segments of the complete document which have been left out of the current three-part extract will be integrated with related current national issues and presented in this column at a latter date.)

IN *Human Rights and National Consciousness* (Chapter 14), Professor Akin Oyebo first traces the origin and consequent evolution of human rights in human history, or rather, the various ideological claims on the origin and evolution of human rights. He argues that "it is time Nigeria acknowledged the desideratum of human rights as a pre-requisite for enhancing national consciousness" (page 343). To talk of national consciousness is, of course, to talk of national ideology (which Charles and Ikoh talk about in Chapter 6) and conversely. It is only when each and every Nigerian buys into the *Nigeria project*, argues Oyebo, "that the country can make progress in the task of building a democratic society (of equal opportunities for all that guarantees access to the essentials of a meaningful existence within the firmament that is known as Nigeria" (pages 343 & 344) (emphasis mine).

My only problem with this proposition is with the phrase "the firmament that is known as Nigeria".

This is because it re-enforces Oyebo's earlier premise that "we are all still imprisoned in the geographical expression called Nigeria..." (page 329) (emphasis mine). If these two expressions are inserted in the current political and theoretical discourse (or rather disputation), there appears, at least implicitly, the suggestion that Nigeria could somehow be resolved into its pre-colonial (or pre-Nigeria, which is the same thing) components. This, in my opinion, is impossible. It is impossible by dialogue, it is impossible through war.

My reason: socio-economic and political integration in Nigeria has proceeded too far for this resolution to be possible. But if by whatever means disintegration takes place, and is successful, ethnic, religious and ideological problems more acute than what we are currently passing through will emerge, and struggles more ferocious than what we have now will erupt, in each of and between the

resulting entities. I remember the late Ken Saro-Wiwa telling me in *The Guardian* in the early 1990s that the creation of Rivers State did not solve the problem of the Ogoni people but rather compounded it. Why? Because from being a minority Ogoniland has become a minority in a minority - a double minority, so to say.

If we adopt the dialectical method of analysis, we can say that Nigeria had moved from being a mere "geographical expression" to being what Wole Soyinka once called "nation-space" and then to "nation-becoming". It has been a turbulent development; but *Nigeria exists*. The contention of many Nigerians, including my humble self, is that Nigeria, together with its sovereignty, has been appropriated by predators. The sovereignty passed straight from the colonial power to constitutional politicians who, because they failed to do what they should have done before independence, allowed that power and sovereignty to pass to present-day predators.

Therefore, Nigeria has to be *reclaimed* or, in my personal opinion, *claimed* by the people (since you cannot "reclaim" what you never owned). Of course, popular ownership, or the feeling of popular ownership, enters the definition of a nation. This criterion is currently not existing. But, then, it is not the only criterion for nationhood. The absence of (feeling) of popular ownership is the reason the concept of "nation-becoming" is adopted.

Prince Tony Momoh, in *The Mass Media and Values Education* (Chapter 11), advocates the anchoring of journalists' training programmes on "knowledge of Nigeria, the Nigerian Constitution and the Nigerian Media" (page 257). I agree completely. Momoh also upholds the reportorial rules in *The Daily Times Hand Book*, which include, in particular, "Accuracy", "When in doubt, leave out" and "Separation of news from comment" (pages 276 and 277). These rules, I also agree, are irreducible. But he also concedes that, in the final analysis, the entity that pays the piper also dictates the tune. Hence, in a situation as in Nigeria, where even facts of history are disputed, and where facts in the Constitution are ambiguous, views replace facts and these "triumphant views" are the views of the payer of the "piper" - be it the state or private entities.

I am only posing problems, not offering solutions. How can I offer solutions that I do not have? I have read of, and seen, great revolutions and great revolutionary agencies - against all previous promises and declarations - degenerate and eventually come to ruin on the question of "dictating the tune", on account of "paying the piper". All I can propose in the circumstance is the following: the need to *struggle* to adhere to rules as listed by Momoh and the consciousness that the interpretations and executions of these rules, even by the most honest, are often ideological.

The preceding claim may be substantiated with the following: Momoh reports that when, as editor of Nigeria's *Daily Times*, he toured American media houses in 1978, the managers told him that "they have chosen a way of life which every American must accept, and that is capitalism" (page 256). But we all know that is a "false" fact. What is true, then and now, is that the owners and managers of the leading media establishments, and not "every American", have chosen capitalism. You may need to check the seminal book, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, two leading American intellectuals and genuine authorities in the history of American mass media.

I wish to round up this appreciation and review by looking back. Over 30 years ago, on May 18, 1982, President Shehu Shagari told a meeting of the Council of State of his decision to set up an "Ethical Re-orientation Programme for Nigeria". He said this decision "has some connection with the national economic situation" (emphasis mine). Shortly after this announcement, the president appointed a National Ethical Re-orientation Committee. But by then, some people had renamed Shagari's programme *Ethical Revolution*.

The terms of reference of the committee were given as: "To study the nature, extent and causes of the apparent breakdown in our national ethic and discipline in all its ramifications; to determine the impact of such ramifications upon the society and the economy; to recommend measures, immediate and long-term, for reversing the present trend and removing its effects; to examine traditional institutions, customs, values,

habits (and) traditions of the people with a view to identifying and recommending those in tune with the country's social and economic objects; and to examine any other issues connected with the first (term of reference) not specifically mentioned and make recommendations". The *Nigerian Democratic Review* (NDR), a radical socialist journal, which I co-published, reported and commented on the "Ethical Re-Orientation" or "Ethical Revolution" in its maiden issue (Volume 1, Number 1) in March 1983.

The journal commented: "whereas the President asked the Committee to examine the impact of 'national ethnic' on 'society and economy', he implicitly ruled out the possible impact of 'society and economy' on the 'national ethic'".

Furthermore, the President only asked the Ethical Re-orientation Committee to "examine traditional institutions, customs, values, habits and traditions of the people with a view to identifying and recommending those in tune with the country's social and economic objects", but he did not ask the Committee to examine Nigeria's economic structure and determine what aspects are 'in tune' with the "customs, values, habits and traditions" of the people". The NDR illustrated its comment with a sketch of a man standing on his head and simultaneously attempting to make a somersault.

Were I to review President Shagari's *Ethical Revolution* today, how would I illustrate it? I would, even with the passage of 30 years, illustrate it exactly as we did it at the time, but showing that the man was crying in discomfort. But what of the book before us, *Values Education and National Development*; how would I illustrate it? I would illustrate it, not with one sketch, but with four successive sketches. The first sketch would show a weeping man standing on his head and almost making a somersault in an attempt to move; the second sketch would show, in addition to the ridiculous man, another man standing by, in bemusement, convinced that there is something seriously wrong with the man on his head; the third sketch would show a third man trying to stand the strange man properly - but not knowing exactly how to accomplish this. The fourth sketch would show a fourth man shouting at the third man, "Put him on his feet! Put him on his feet!"

• Concluded