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Ubuntu: Revisiting an Endangered African Philosophy in Quest of a Pan-Africanist Revolutionary Ideology

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Abstract: In the final analysis, Kwame Nkrumah advanced that pan-Africanism must be about the unity of African masses under socialist governments. However, the concept of pan-Africanism in recent times has been misconstrued in the most treacherous manner. On one hand, the concept has been reduced to a “dansiki-wearing” competition by a layer of cultural nationalists; and on the other hand, it has been reduced to a “Black capitalism” bourgeois agenda. In spite of the apparent failures of capitalism, bourgeois economists like Nigeria’s Tony Elumelu, have been peddling a purported refined capitalist system under the ambiance of “Africapitalism”, as a stimulant for economic growth and development in Africa. Under the pretense of a “pan-African” agenda, bourgeois economists have been touting this neoliberal agenda across the continent and beyond, for self-serving purposes. The danger this portends is the detachment of pan-Africanism from its socialist agenda. Indeed, existing works on African personality have showed the nexus between a pre-colonial communal relationship and socialism. The Sotho epistemology, Ubuntu, is undoubtedly a product of this ancient communal relationship. Ubuntu expresses the humanistic tendencies that are fast going into extinction in today’s individualistic society. Ultimately, the withering of Ubuntu is not unconnected to the dominance of capitalism. The economic system through alienation has not just distorted the relationship among humans, but also between humans and nature. This study thus argues that Ubuntu as a value system is a material product of pre-feudal African society; and that because of this trajectory, Ubuntu must be reassessed as a potential social force for resistance that can pave the way for the emergence of a scientific socialist African society. Ubuntu is not scientific socialism and vice-versa, but the value system if properly understood can lay the foundation towards the birth of the former.

Keywords: Ubuntu; capitalism; pan-Africanism; scientific socialism and Marxism

1. Introduction

The failures of capitalism in Africa are very evident by virtue of the widening disparity between the rich and the poor. Interestingly, its failure is also apparent across the globe. With the surge of financial crises, economic stagnation, global warming, mass poverty and unemployment, the capitalist system is ultimately digging its own grave. As argued by Rodney, the capitalist system globally has underperformed greatly in the past few decades because of its inability to guide the “uninhibited development of science and technology” (Rodney 1976, p. 45) as the chase for profits continues to soar. Consequently, the capitalist mode of production has not just successfully altered social relations among humans, but also between humans and nature (Olorode 2016, p. 23). The failure of capitalism indeed is socio-economic and ecological. In Africa, the more than 70 percent of world’s most needed minerals it houses have not succeeded in generating any fundamental transformation (Ake 1982; Onimode 1987).

In spite of the much touted “Africa’s Rising”, in 2017, the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 54 African countries that was around \$1.5 trillion was less than Germany’s \$3.4 trillion (Bwoni 2019). This was the situation in 2017 notwithstanding the illusion around the GDP economic indicator. The primitive accumulation of wealth by a small fraction of elites in Africa at the expense of the impoverished teeming population has unraveled the myth of “Africa’s rising”. A number of bourgeois economists (Elumelu 2019; Arino 2019) in an attempt to cross-examine the factors responsible for this anomaly have contended that the continent lacks enabling structures and strategic leaders at the helm of affairs. Because Marxism teaches that the key to all social developments is the development of productive forces, the deprivation of the African masses cannot be logically analyzed outside the framework of the prevailing capitalist mode of production. The process of capitalist exploitation in Africa, as in other third world countries, in recent times, had taken different dimensions under the guise of political globalization, economic globalization and westernization (Olorode 2016, p. 5).

Through Western-imposed political and economic programmes like the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the Bretton Woods institutions, the blood-dripping fangs of capitalism had been placed on the continent. These neoliberal programmes, by ensuring a perpetual consuming African market, have made it impossible for the continent to grow its manufacture and industrial sectors. The dependence of the African continent on these institutions for economic aids have further deepened the capitalist exploitation of the people through debt traps, corruption, capital flights, etc. (Amin 2004). Consequent to this aberration, the rate of unemployment in Africa is next to none. More so, across the third world countries, the surge of neoliberalism has reduced drastically the access of people to basic needs such as food, clean water, clean air, decent shelter and security of life (Olorode 2016, p. 3).

Politically, the often-peddled institutions of Western society are collapsing essentially because of their internal contradictions. Liberal democracy in recent times has been exuding, openly, its fascist and oligarchic tendencies in Africa based on the existence of pro-rich, money-bag political parties. Therefore, contrary to the above bourgeois claim, the problem with Africa is not that of leadership. These are emphatically the symptoms of capitalism. It is against this backdrop that the African continent is currently in need of an economic ideology which will serve as a model for its political and socio-cultural transformation. An alternate economic ideology, contrary to the dictates of capitalism and neoliberalism, are indeed needed at this time because of the myriad challenges confronting the continent. An alternate ideology is needed in order to allay the fears of Fanon when he stated that “... the deeper I enter into the culture and the political circles, the surer I am that the great danger that threatens Africa is the absence of ideology” (Guy 1993, p. 67).

The question of what ideology can best transform the African continent from its impoverished state has been interrogated by different layers of statepersons and intellectuals since the early phase of the postcolonial period. The process of inventing this ideology has been a lingering effort, however, because of the internal contradictions of the postcolonial African state. Indeed, countries like Ghana, Tanzania, Congo, etc. dared to invent and apply radical economic ideologies during this early phase, but the existence of neocolonialism and a preponderant number of conservative African countries undermined these efforts. A chunk of African countries after the attainment of flag independence in the 60s failed to dismantle the erstwhile colonial economic structures and values, hence the setback of the postcolonial African state. The fact that the postcolonial African state is not radically different from the colonial state it inherited led to the predatory and counterproductive roles African governments have been playing in the economy of their various countries. Like the colonial state, the postcolonial African state in the absence of creating an independent economic ideology had been concerned mostly with the accumulation of wealth, and the maintenance of law and order at all cost.

The absence of people-oriented economic strategy had structured the postcolonial African state in such a way that its interests and aspirations lies not with the masses but with members of the bourgeois class, hence the privatization of the African state. It is against this backdrop that the postcolonial African state cannot fundamentally transform the living conditions of the oppressed masses, not until the inherited and sustained colonial ‘money-oriented’, capitalist system is being dismantled. The search

for an ideology has led a number of Africanists (Ibekwe 2015; Julius 1968) into the submission that a return to African traditional practices is ultimately the solution to the problem of poverty, inequality, unemployment, corruption, etc. In fact, it has been argued that the neglect of communal value systems such as Ubuntu is responsible for the social ills that have enmeshed the continent. Indeed, the lacuna in the submissions of these theorists is that the highly purported traditional African society conceptually never existed. What existed prior to colonialism in Africa were pre-feudal and proto-feudal societies. Certainly, the communal characteristics of the pre-feudal African societies have been exaggerated by a number of African scholars. The romance of “traditional African society” has led to a surge of advocates of the aged-long communal value system–Ubuntu. Ironically, these advocates (Cilliers 2008; Mkhize 2008) have reduced Ubuntu to a mere moralistic, philosophical concept. This paper will argue that Ubuntu is a revolutionary concept that is capable of building a worldwide class solidarity and unity against the forces of capitalism.

As early as the 1960s, an African head of state had envisaged the bankrupt nature of the postcolonial African state under the whims and caprices of global capitalism. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana and a foremost African nationalist, had contended that to avert the consequences of capitalism, African countries through a collective pan-African agenda must embrace a social democratic, state-regulated, socialist alternative (Nkrumah 1965). This conclusion was echoed by Walter Rodney when he argued that “African development is possible only on the basis of a radical break with the international capitalist system” (Rodney 1976, p. 145). The socialist alternative as a working economic ideology for postcolonial African countries vented by Nkrumah and his comrades, however, has been criticized by a different layers of African thinkers. Similarly, the way and manner at which the socialist alternative will be introduced in postcolonial Africa have raised many polemics.

The renowned Nigerian thinker, Chinweizu, had accused Nkrumah of being opportunistic and fallacious in his claim that the unity of postcolonial African countries, under the banner of pan-Africanism, is only possible within the economic framework of scientific socialism. Chinweizu in his submission had contended that Marxism and scientific socialism are alien and are imperialist imports into Africa, just like Christianity (Ibekwe 2015, p. 417). On scientific socialism, Julius Nyerere, Tom Mboya, Ayi Kwei Armah, etc. have argued that its straightjacket introduction in postcolonial African countries will be disastrous. Although these African intellectuals and statesmen agreed with the principles of a socialist alternative, they disagreed with Nkrumah on what brand of socialism to be introduced in Africa. Nyerere in his submission posited that whilst “scientific socialism is for Europe”, there must be African socialism in Africa (Julius 1968). The point about African socialism by Nyerere and its proponents basically is that socialism is not alien to “African traditional society” because of the similar communal socio-cultural values. Because of this similarity, they contended that socialism in postcolonial African society must be introduced in harmony with the structures and values of the “African traditional society”.

This paper will interrogate the basic flaws in the submissions of the antagonists of scientific socialism on the one hand, and the protagonists of African socialism on the other hand. The aim of this paper is not to exonerate the claims of Nkrumah, but to vindicate the theory and practice of Marxism in its efforts to unmask the intricacies of the capitalist mode of production. This paper will be divided into three important parts. The first part will attempt an exhaustive dissection of the concept of Ubuntu. In the second and third parts, this study will examine the historical trajectory of pan-Africanism and relates the mission of pan-Africanism in the 21st century to scientific socialism through Ubuntu.

2. Conceptualizing an African Epistemology: Ubuntu

The fundamental notion behind Ubuntu is the core belief that our existence lies in the collective existence of humanity. In Nguni, an expression encapsulates this—*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, translated, “A person is a person through other persons” (Mkhize 2008, p. 39). Ubuntu in the Sotho dictum says “I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am”. The concept illuminates the aphorism, “all for one, one for all”. The effect of the steady erosion of Ubuntu is apparent in the replacement

of the above aphorism with the eccentric, individualistic phrase “God for all, all for God” (this is indeed a pedestrian phrase often used to describe the individualistic way of life of contemporary times. See [Nussbaum 2003](#)). Etymologically, Ubuntu has been said to be the combination of Ubu and ntu. Ntu being a popularly used word in most sub-Saharan languages, simply means “human” ([Cilliers 2008](#), p. 2). Ubuntu is actually a derivative from the word ‘muntu’ by east African Bantu speaking people, which literally means a person or human being. It is against this background that the term Ubuntu has been accepted by scholars to mean the art of being a human being. Being human under this framework, however, is largely connected with the contributions of individuals to the general well-being of others and the community at large. In Shona, a Zimbabwean language, the word unhu means being human. While in Ndebele, a Zimbabwean language also, human is expressed as ubuthosi. In Botswana, it is expressed as botho, and in Tanzania, it is expressed as bumutu. Congo, Angola, Malawi, Mozambique and Uganda, invariably uses the words bomoto, gimuntu, umunthu, vumuntu and umuntu, respectively, for human ([Jacob and Andrew 2013](#)).

Philosophically, Ubuntu hypothesizes that community strength emanates solely from community support, and that success and happiness can only be achieved through communal living, self-sacrifice, altruistic living, and community commitment. The relationship between an individual and the community under Ubuntu is thus one of interdependence and mutual nurturing ([Mbiti 1970](#)). To be human consequently means to affirm one’s humanity by recognizing the humanity of others under Ubuntu. Nussbaum in his own assessment has contended that Ubuntu is essentially a basis of African communality which expresses “our interconnectedness, our common humanity and the responsibility to each other that deeply flows from our deeply felt connection” ([Nussbaum 2003](#), p. 2). The bond between communalism and Ubuntu therefore is not unreal. The concept inherently detests individualism. The concept is thus inherently contradictory to the purpose of the capitalist economic system. While individualism advocates the principle that “self-preservation is the first law of life”, Ubuntu preaches that “all preservation is the first law of life” ([Khoza 1994](#)).

Interestingly, the philosophical basis of Ubuntu, we wish to reiterate, is apparent in the traditions and cultures of most African societies. One of the advanced pre-capitalist African societies that had its political and economic systems firmly rooted and structured in the ethos of Ubuntu is the Oromo society. Owing to the immobility of the forces of production for a longer period of time, the Oromo people of modern Ethiopia were able to build a communalistic socio-political and economic system known as the Gada system. Asafa Jalata has argued that the infusion of the indigenous political system of the Oromo under the dictates of Gada was such that it can be equated to a unique democratic dispensation that promoted popular representative, security, peace, intimacy and sustainable development ([Asafa 2012](#)). The political system of the Oromo people during this era was such that it was impossible for a despot or tyrannical leader to exist. Importantly, some pre-capitalist African societies, like the Old Oyo in modern southwestern Nigeria, had similar political structures where the principles of checks and balances, separation of powers and rule of law were highly regarded. On account of the scope of this paper, a thorough dissection of the political features of the Oromo democracy cannot be examined, however, this system existed in a proto-feudal Oromo society because the political structure was essentially male dominated, but the remnants of the pre-feudal value system was apparent in the moralistic view of Gada. Philosophically, it appears that the moralistic view of life in Gada is related to the value system of Ubuntu as a whole. Both Gada and Ubuntu preaches the value system of tolerance, unity, togetherness and humanity. This is thus another philosophical proof of the existence of Ubuntu in most pre-capitalist African societies.

Ubuntu although is void of a generally agreed upon definition. Nevertheless, Ubuntu over the years has been described as so many things, and according to Gade, Ubuntu has been described as, “human nature, humanity, humanness, manhood, goodness of nature, good moral disposition, virtue, the sense of common humanity, true humanity, generosity, etc.” ([Christian 2011](#), p. 307). The above thus means that Ubuntu is an embodiment of the idea of interconnectedness of people. As such, Ubuntu is an expression of the essence of being African, as it transcends beyond a narrow view of individualism

to a holistic African outlook concerning everybody. Van Binsbergen in his work stipulated that Ubuntu recognizes four basic attributes of human beings and these are human dignity and equality, universal brotherhood, sacredness of life and “Being” as the most desirable state of life (Van Binsbergen 2002). Mbigi and Maree in their work have explained that Ubuntu is a metaphor that describes the significance of group solidarity on the basis of survival (Mbigi and Maree 1995).

To this paper, therefore, Ubuntu can be said to be the conscious process of understanding and connecting one’s beingness to one’s humanness. In other words, Ubuntu is a state of consciousness that asserts one’s humanness or relationship with humanity, as a primary perquisite before one’s personality. The philosophical basis of Ubuntu is being articulated by Martin Luther King, Jr. when he posited that: “An individual has not started living until he (or she) can rise above the narrow confines of his individual concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity” (Griffin 1995).

Indeed Ubuntu is an indigenous word of Southern Africa, specifically from the Nguni language family, comprising isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiSwati, and isiNdebele, the equivalent of the meaning of this word can be found among different groups across Africa. Among the Ndebele speaking people of Southern Africa, the term Sisonke connotes collectivity, and “well-beingness”. And outside from words or vocabularies, there are numerous proverbs, sayings and expressions in Africa that perfectly epitomizes Ubuntu. The Chewa speaking people of Malawi for an instance have a phrase that goes this way, “*Kali kokha nkanyama, tili awiri ntiwanthu*” which literarily means, “One person is like an animal, two are a community” (Jacob and Andrew 2013, p. 86). Ubuntu in the Sesotho language is Botho. In the Shona language of Zimbabwe it is called Nunhu, in Xhosa it is called Umntu. In addition, under the following Bantu languages, Ngoni (Malawi), Chewa (Zambia), Nyanja (Mozambique) and Bemba (Zimbabwe), umunthu is used for Ubuntu (Louw 2001).

In East Africa, where the Swahili language is the most spoken, the people of Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, uses the word Utu for Ubuntu. However, quite peculiar to the Ugandans, abantu is also used to mean Ubuntu. Also peculiar to Kenya, among the Kikuyu speaking people, umundu is often used, and umuntu by the Kimeru people. Peculiar to Tanzania is bumutu, used by the kisukuma and kihaya speaking people. Among the shiTsonga- and shiTswa-speaking people of Mozambique, vumuntu is often used. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, bomoto is used among the Bobangi speakers. While in Congo and Angola, the kiKongo and kiKwese speaking people use gimuntu for Ubuntu (Kamwangamalu 1999, p. 25).

Drifting to the West African region, several words, proverbs and sayings symbolizes the concept and philosophy of Ubuntu, this which clearly illuminates the ancient existence of Ubuntu amongst most groups in Africa. The Akan people of Ghana have a word known as Biakoye. This word connotes unity, respect and communality. In the same vein, the Yoruba people of West Africa also have a long history of systems and values that are a perfect representation of the totality of the ethos of Ubuntu. The concept of “Ebi” among the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria equally articulates the sociological meaning of Ubuntu. By extension, Ubuntu has been interrogated as not just an African exclusive concept. Teffo posited that “The philosophy (Ubuntu) is encapsulated in all the philosophies of the world ... therefore, it would be ethnocentric and, indeed, silly to suggest that the Botho ethic (Ubuntu) is uniquely African” (Teffo 1998, p. 4). Be that as it may, it is instructive to note that although more than any society, African society had a greater encounter with communal socio-cultural values like Ubuntu because of the stillness of the forces of production for several centuries. This is evidential even in recent times.

In spite the distortions of capitalism, remnants of communal social relations still exists in some rural African societies (Fagunwa 2014). By the way, the slight existence of these remnants has been overblown by a fraction of Africanist scholars (Kaunda 1967). To these scholars, the “African traditional society” still exists. But the apparent effects of capitalism in the nooks and crannies of contemporary African society exposes the flaws in this claim. Some of these scholars have made a wide ahistorical claim that whilst Africa is lagging behind technologically and economically, the continent is far ahead of Europe in terms of its social and political philosophies. Kenneth Kaduna echoed this position when

he stated that “Let the West have its technology and Asia its mysticism! Africa’s gift to world culture must be in the realm of human relationships” (Kaunda 1967, p. 22). These conclusions are unreal in the face of the raging individualistic tendencies that are holding sway across contemporary African society due to the pressure from capitalism. Ubuntu philosophy speaks about sharing, respect, tolerance and compassion, but contemporary African society is bedeviled with greed, disrespect, intolerance and indifference.

The African continent today is highly occupied with corruption, mismanagement, self-enrichment, disease, and poverty (Louw 2006). Thus, it is contradictory to state that in a society supposedly ingrained in an advanced human relationship, homelessness and joblessness are both on the increase. The essential point to make is that the basic value system of communal African society began to wither consequent to the full emergence of states in Africa. Rodney had contended that the rise of states in Africa birthed proto-feudal relations, thereby annihilating the basic ingredients of communalism (Rodney 1976, p. 140). This annihilation was, however, institutionalized through the slavery and colonial experiences of the African people in the hands of both the Arabs and the Europeans.

Therefore, it is misleading, in spite of the evident distortions, to claim the absolute existence of the institutions and value system (Ubuntu) of communal African society in the present day. Even in South Africa, the literal abode of Ubuntu, the frequent occurrences of xenophobic attacks had exposed the deterioration of the value system. From the foregoing, it is thus apparent that the Marxist theory of conflict is quite relevant. On the question of social conflict, Marxism had shown that violence erupts in class societies because of the prevailing opposing interests anchored by members of the ruling class (Marx and Engels 1946). Consequent to the economic uncertainty and retrogression caused by these opposing interests, all forms of cultural value systems, like Ubuntu, are bound to become obsolete. Hence, the survival of Ubuntu or any other value system for that matter, is largely dependent on the prevailing material condition in a society.

However, this study is interested in the concept of Ubuntu essentially because of its ability, as a value system to unite, on a socio-cultural basis, the oppressed people globally, whose humanity are on daily basis being threatened by the exploitation of members of the bourgeois class. The point that needs to be stressed is that the cultural value system of Ubuntu has the basic ingredients of solidarity and cooperation in its composition. Basically, the void of these two ingredients have been the clog in the development of class solidarity amongst the oppressed globally. Members of the ruling class across the globe, in an effort to suppress the possibility of class solidarity amongst the working class masses through divisions of all manner, have occasionally exploited religion, racism, ethnocentrism, etc. But the socio-cultural value system of Ubuntu provides the oppressed masses the necessary foresight through solidarity and cooperation to unmask the intentions of their oppressors. The application of Ubuntu in today’s labour movement across the globe will thus transcend from just mere ‘brotherhood’ or ‘sisterhood’ to ‘comradeship’. This kind of Ubuntu undauntedly will raise the consciousness of the working class masses towards the firm belief in the principle of equitability in the distribution and consumption of wealth in any society.

This approach is therefore a departure from the often bourgeois analyses of Ubuntu. A number of bourgeois elements have contended that Ubuntu can be exploited to serve the purpose of atonement and reconciliation (Mangaliso 2001; Lutz 2008). These elements, like Desmond Tutu, have contended that Ubuntu can be used to unite humanity regardless of the social class of individuals. This kind of unity creates the illusion that the “humanity” of the oppressor is the same with the oppressed. The basic limitation of earlier works on Ubuntu is that attempts have been made to treat the concept as a dogma regardless of the changing dynamics that have reshaped modern Africa. Unfortunately for Ubuntu, because of the internal contradictions of postcolonial African state, it has been exploited by members of the ruling class to legitimize their grip on the state. This paper is of the contention that the enemies of Ubuntu basically are the bourgeois elements, members of the capitalist class, whose greed has led to the impoverishment of billions of people all over the globe. And it is against this backdrop that the oppressed masses must come to the aid of Ubuntu, a philosophy that preaches humanness,

by collectively digging the grave of the capitalist mode of production for the scientific instatement of socialism—an economic system that is void of class oppression or exploitation.

This paper thus approaches Ubuntu not as a submissive, reactionary concept, but as a concept of resistance. Within this framework, Ubuntu will serve the purpose of rejecting the possibility of any collaboration between the oppressed and the oppressor classes. The only unity this kind of Ubuntu will build is the unity of the oppressed, no more, no less.

3. A Historical Trajectory of Pan-Africanism

Pan-Africanism in its simplest form means the solidarity among people of African descent globally. The emanating factors responsible for the formation of pan-Africanism were essentially rooted in the exploitation and oppression of the African masses. The reaction to the long centuries of exploitation, suppression and oppression of people of African descents everywhere, whether in Africa or outside Africa, provided the foundation for the institutionalization of pan-Africanism. This exploitation basically had its root in the enslavement experience of Africans by both the Arabs and the Europeans. Thus it is incorrect to contend that pan-Africanism was a response to colonialism. Indeed, pan-Africanism only responded to colonialism. Following the growth of European agricultural plantations in the Americas in the 15th century, the need for slave-labour brought European slave merchants into Africa. By the end of the 15th century, Africans have been added to the number of global trade articles, like ivory, gold, pepper, etc.

The reality of this barbaric transaction was such that the enslaved Africans literally produced the wealth that laid the foundation towards Western economic prosperity. It has been argued that Atlantic slavery paved the way for the rise of the industrial revolution in Europe during the late 18th century (Inikori 2002). Africa in turn benefitted nothing specifically from the Atlantic slavery. Scholars have argued that the first cases of pan-African attributes in history manifested during the revolts and uprisings of enslaved Africans in the Americas (Thompson 1969). Because of the necessity to free themselves from the shackles of slavery, enslaved Africans in the Americas, regardless of their ethnic background, had to join forces to plan for rebellions. The Male Rebellion of 1835 in Brazil is an evidence of this realization. Owing to this experience, enslaved Africans in the Americas began to perceive themselves as a single entity, thus forming the logical basis for pan-Africanism. This perhaps formed the basis upon which pan-Africanism is being perceived as a “belief that African people both on the continent and in the diaspora, share not merely a common history, but a common destiny” (Arthur 2003).

However, suffice to state that it was not until the abolition of Atlantic slavery in the 19th century that the awareness of the African masses towards pan-Africanism was intensified. Just after the abolition of slave trade, a new model of European domination over Africans was redefined through capitalism and subsequently colonialism. Nkrumah has argued that colonialism was the political manifestation of international capitalism (Nkrumah 1973, p. 39). Consequent to the discovery of machines in Europe in the 18th century, an urgent need for raw materials once again brought European merchants into Africa. However, the need to exploit these raw materials, which basically were in abundance, formed the basis for the creation of colonies. These exploitative activities in Africa invariably became a major concern for Africans in the diaspora. Prah K. K indicates that, one of the largest single factors that contributed to the ultimate task of the conceptualization of the idea of pan-Africanism by African intellectuals such as William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, Joseph Casely Hayford, George Padmore, Alex Quasion Sackey and others, was the Berlin Conference of 1885, wherein Africa was carved up and apportioned among European powers without her consent (Prah 1997). The reaction of these eminent African scholars in the diaspora played a significant role towards the racial awareness of the African masses during the early 20th century.

The earliest education Africans in the diaspora have had exposed them to the principles of equality and justice, hence the cry for the independence of colonial Africa started outside Africa. Thus, quite instructive in the formation of pan-Africanism was the question of race. It was this race consciousness

that the founding fathers of pan-Africanism held on to as a means to liberate the people. It became glaring to the Africans, prior to this time, that while they were being exploited and oppressed primarily for economic reason, colour has always been the justification employed by the Europeans.

Though, W. E. B. Du Bois, an African American activist, had stated in New York in 1897 that “if the Negro were to be a factor in the world’s history, it would be through a pan-Negro movement.” But it was Henry Sylvester Williams, a Trinidadian lawyer living in London, who coined the word ‘pan-African’, in the same year when he formed the pan-African Association (Falola 2010). The basic idea of these earliest pan-African groups was to create a platform for the African masses to collectively discuss issues they were facing globally. It is important to note that during these earliest times, the lack of unity among these movements greatly affected the legacies of pan-Africanism. Of these earliest movements, two movements however were very prominent in the early 20th century—Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and W. E. B. Du Bois’s National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP). Garvey in 1914 established the UNIA (Dalrymple 2014, p. 20). Garvey was of the position that there was an urgent need to create an organization that will mobilize people of African descents in the diaspora and the continent because of their overwhelming population. This which was the motivating factor for Garvey. He utilized the factor of population to establish the largest pan-African Organization ever recorded in the history of the world. In 1915, Garvey left for the United States where his organization was accepted by a great number of people of African descents. Subsequently, his movement became the object of inspiration for African nationalists in their struggles against colonial rule.

The idea of the UNIA, just like Garvey himself revealed, was that of race first. The movement was aimed at restoring the self-pride of the African masses through self-reliance. Garvey’s mission was also to see to the emigration of Africans back to Africa (Graves 1962, p. 66). African American intellectuals were most often in disagreement with Garvey’s ideologies. While Garvey was against any form of integration in the United States, many African American intellectuals like Du Bois were in favour of integration. Yet, Garvey had the largest number of supporters all over the world. The UNIA spread its ideologies to the African masses globally through the establishment of *The Negro World*. The newspaper constantly condemned colonialism, white supremacy and racism. Therefore, UNIA formed the first organized structure for pan-Africanism in the 20th century. Influenced by Garvey’s ideas, young Africans studying in London came together in the 1925 to found the West African Student Union (WASU) (Dalrymple 2014, p. 21). WASU subsequently became a basis for African students to organize in their struggle against colonialism.

The second movement worth mentioning during the 20th century was Du Bois’s NAACP. Du Bois was an African American historian, sociologist, activist, who many referred to as the father of “pan-Africanism” (Prah 1997). Du Bois was an aristocratic Harvard trained scholar. He was also an outspoken opponent of Marcus Garvey disintegration scheme which he considered to be unfeasible. In 1900, he attended the First pan-African conference held in London, and subsequently he was appointed vice-chair of the United States branch of the pan-African Association. He also attended the Universal Races Congress in 1911, where he presented a paper titled “The Negro in the United States” (Adi and Sherwood 2003, p. 48). In later years, Du Bois and his associates formed the NAACP (Contee 1972, p. 15). In 1919, consequent to the First World War experience of the African masses, Du Bois convened the second pan-African Congress in Paris. The agenda of the conference was on the plight of Africans and people of African descents. Most raised issue in the conference was the need for Africans to be granted the right to self-determination under the newly founded League of Nations.

The next pan-African congresses hosted by Du Bois laid more emphases on the right to self-determination for the colonized African masses. The 1921 Paris, London, conferences both made references to this, so also the 1923 Lisbon and London conferences and, lastly, the 1927 New York Pan-African Congress (Adi and Sherwood 2003, p. 49). Thus the 1920s and 30s were remarkable for the institutionalization of pan-Africanism. The congress that has been considered as the most significant in the history of pan-Africanism was the Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester, United

Kingdom. After the end of the Second World War (1939–1945), in which Africans also participated, a good number of pan-Africanists all over the world felt colonized African countries now deserved their independence. The conference was organized by the Trinidadian pan-Africanist, George Padmore and Ghanaian then nationalist leader, Kwame Nkrumah. What differentiated this congress from previous ones was that many Africanists were in attendance. The conference was attended by 90 delegates, of which 26 came from Africa (Reed 1985, p. 432). The greatest effect this conference had on pan-Africanism was that these African scholars and activists eventually returned to their respective countries to become full-time political activists. The conference had in attendance Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Obafemi Awolowo, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Jaja Wachuku all from Nigeria, Hastings Banda of Malawi, Robert Sobukwe of South Africa, to mention a few (Adi and Sherwood 2003, p. 50). The Fifth Pan-African Congress therefore advanced the pan-African struggle by ensuring the political decolonization of the African continent.

From the Fifth Pan-African Congress, the idea of Pan-Africanism became an animating force for modern politics in the African continent. Starting from the late 50s, country after country in Africa began to reclaim their independence from their colonial oppressors. However, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o noted, "The journey of the African idea, beginning in Haiti and championed by Pan-African congresses, reached its climax in the independence of Angola, Guinea Bissau, and Mozambique and the liberation of South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s" (Thiong'o 2009). In 1958, pan-Africanism was fully instituted in Africa following the All-African Peoples Conference organized in Ghana by the Kwame Nkrumah-led government. After the political independence of some African countries in the 60s, a new layers of pan-Africanists, led by Kwame Nkrumah surfaced. Nkrumah's blueprint for pan-Africanism as evident in several of his writings was that the newly independent African countries will have to unite politically, economically and socio-culturally, in order to survive in the "great schism" created by the Cold War. On 25 May 1965, the aspiration of Nkrumah and his supporters was partially achieved with the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). But the fear of tampering with the colonial borders on the part of other African postcolonial leaders frustrated the dreams of Nkrumah's pan-Africanism.

From the foregoing, it is thus correct to state that pan-Africanism essentially is a movement designed for the mobilization of Africans across the globe against their political, economic and socio-cultural domination. It has been contended that the greatest aim of pan-Africanism is to exalt African history and rediscovery the African personality that had been subjugated under European domination. Against this backdrop, Du Bois argued that: "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of color line" (Romero 1976), and for the black folks as stated by the pan-Africanist, the great history of the African people have to be revisited to reawaken the consciousness European domination had suppressed. This formed the basis upon which Du Bois and other leading pan-Africanists in 1945 prepared volumes for the intended *Encyclopedia Africana*.

Apparently, pan-Africanism thus has distinct versions of interpretation. But germane to state that the concept has political, cultural and economic significances. Politically, pan-Africanism is aimed at ensuring the protection and respect of the sovereignty of the postcolonial African state. The subjugation of the African masses would not have been possible without the destruction of their socio-cultural value systems; hence pan-Africanism is similarly designed for the restoration of the devastated African cultural heritage. Economically, pan-Africanism has been refined as an alternative against neocolonialism, imperialism, capitalism and recently neoliberalism.

Basically, the economic agenda of pan-Africanism had gained ultimate attention because of the realization of the failure of postcolonial African state. The political independence of African countries in the 60s created the illusion that the paramount liberation of the continent lies in this form of independence. Nkrumah's assessment of the failure of the postcolonial African state is hinged on the inability of these countries to grasp the primacy of economic independence. Nkrumah in "Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism" declared;

The essence of neocolonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus political policy is directed from the outside. (Nkrumah 1965, p. 45)

Against this backdrop, Nkrumah's contention on pan-Africanism is an admixture of both the political and economic agendas of the concept. The conclusion reached by Nkrumah, therefore, is that pan-Africanism must be about the unity of the postcolonial African state under a socialist government. He stated this by clarifying that "For the political unification of Africa and socialism is synonymous. One cannot be achieved without the other" (Nkrumah 1977, p. 84). By this hypothesis, Nkrumah had shown that the true independence of the African state lies in economic liberation. In the face of the effects of neocolonialism, capitalism and imperialism, Nkrumah posited that the appropriate alternative is the struggle for socialism in Africa. A socialist revolution as claimed by the Ghanaian leader will automatically put an end to class antagonism in Africa. However, Nkrumah's alternative economic system and scientific socialism have been dismissed by a number of intellectuals and African leaders. Chinweizu, Julius Nyerere, Tom Mboya, Ayi Kwei Armah, etc. have raised their objections to Nkrumah's alternative in their many writings. The basic argument of these critics falls into two categories. The accusation that Marx's scientific socialism is Eurocentric and that the context of socialism is not odd in "traditional African society" have resulted in these polemics.

While Nkrumah concluded that pan-Africanism cannot be achieved without socialism, Chinweizu argued that the two concepts are not organically complementary. The well-known intellectual argued that since pan-Africanism is an anti-racist, anti-colonialist and anti-Eurocentric concept, it is thus incompatible with a "racist, colonialist, Eurocentric scientific socialism" (Ibekwe 2015, p. 421). On the other hand, Nyerere in his African socialism has pointed out that an African branded form of socialism has to be built contrary to the supposedly European scientific socialism. In his arguments, allusions were made to the "traditional African society" as a perfect egalitarian society, devoid of social classes, and by extension, oppression and exploitation. On this basis, Nyerere remarked that for socialism to be practicable in Africa it must be fused with the structures and value systems of this perfect "traditional African society" otherwise known as African communal societies.

Although Nkrumah exposed the basic limitations of these conclusions, this paper at this juncture is going to demystify the notion of a "perfect traditional African society" by putting into historical perspectives and timelines, the primary economic phases of precolonial Africa. Also, an attempt will be made to dichotomize between the structures and value systems of African communal societies in a bid to expose the inherent limitations of any peculiar brand of socialism like African socialism. Lastly, the concept of Ubuntu will be revisited as a useful social ingredient that can be employed as a rallying point for the oppressed masses in Africa and across the globe in their fight towards the building of socialism.

4. Ubuntu, Scientific Socialism and the Mission of Pan-Africanism

At the core of the limitation of exiting works on what is supposedly call traditional African society is the void of objective historical timeline. By ignoring the important phases of African history, some writers have assumed that every theme that falls under the category of precolonial Africa can be classified as a subject of traditional African society. But what could possibly be traditional about a society that was under the influence of foreign dominance for several centuries prior to colonialism? The assumption created by this ahistorical claim is that traditional African society ceased to exist as a result of colonialism. The neglect of historical materialism in the assessment of precolonial African history has led to the primacy of sociological and anthropological interpretations. Consequently, the scientific progression of these societies prior to colonialism is often being ignored. To demystify this distortion, it is pertinent to dissect precolonial African society within the framework of dialects. Perhaps the most unempirical and unscientific claim that has resulted from this distortion is the proposal that class structures and value systems that existed in other climes did not exist in precolonial

Africa. Colonialism within this context had been declared as the bearer of class divisions in Africa. This misconception was evident during the era of independence struggle in Africa.

In most parts of Africa during the anti-colonial struggles, all African masses, regardless of their social classes, workers, peasants, elites, politicians, etc. came together to lay off the colonial government. But the subsequent events that followed the independence era, with the outward display of class divisions immediately laid to rest the romanticism around “traditional African society”. Basically, precolonial African societies or what is erroneously called “traditional African societies” can be divided into communal or pre-feudal and proto-feudal eras. Indeed, under the pre-feudal era, the entirety of the productive forces were communally owned by the people. Lands and other productive forces were owned by the community and not individuals (Rodney 1976, p. 112). In addition, labour was a necessity for all in the community. Within this mode of production, the nature and character of relations to production was therefore cordial. There was, consequently, an extreme sense of duty and order. Exploitation and oppression of any form was absent and people lived in harmony. The socio-economic order under pre-feudal African society was thus built on collective responsibility for labour, land, production and distribution. A subset of this order was the creation of a peculiar African personality as a cultural value system (Nkrumah 1977, p. 30). Because of the fraternity in the production and distribution of wealth in these societies, an African personality that was rooted in a sense of duty of care, altruism, harmony, justice and egalitarianism was established. Under this framework, one’s humanity is thus hinged on one’s commitment to a collective responsibility towards the betterment of the larger society.

African communal societies existed for several centuries because the forces of production stood still (Temitope, forthcoming). An organized slave mode of production emerged through the Atlantic slavery rather than an internal evolution from these societies. The absence of an internal evolution into the organized slave mode of production restricted the development of the forces of production, thus retaining some of the socio-cultural value system of African communal societies, but not structures. With Atlantic slavery, full-fledged empires and kingdoms rose in precolonial Africa, thus annihilating the basic structures and institutions that had existed in communal societies.

The African communal societies had its structures and value systems. The structures had to do with the organization of production, distribution, consumption, law and order, etc. The value system on the other hand, is related to the cultures that emerged from the above structures and institutions. A good feature of the value system of African communal societies is the socio-cultural attribute of Ubuntu, which indeed was prevalent in all of these societies. Nyerere, had posited that, “In our traditional African society, we were individuals in the community and the community took care of us. We neither needed nor wished to exploit our fellow men” (Julius 1968, p. 56). The rise of states in precolonial African societies, ipso facto Atlantic slavery, and the complexity of productive forces, gave birth to what Rodney has called proto-feudal African societies. Kristin Mann while studying the rise of the Idejo chiefs, a proto-feudal class that prides itself as the possessor of all lands in Lagos, stipulated that their rise cannot be too distant from the period when the town was occupied in the late 16th century by the Benin forces (Mann 2007). By the 19th century when Europe had fully advanced into capitalism, Rodney had said that African societies were still in a proto-feudal stage. The point to be noted is that the transitional stages of precolonial African societies from communalism into slavery, feudalism and capitalism, is not the same with Europe or any other society. The transition for Africa, as pointed out by Rodney, is more gradual than revolutionary (Rodney 1976, p. 160).

For all intents and purposes, a feudal society is a class society between the landlords and the landless. The mode of production involves a great sense of inequality. A dialectical scrutiny of precolonial African states have revealed an emerging class society with apparent instances of exploitation of labour and resources on one hand, and the oppression of sex, on the other hand (Temitope, forthcoming). Rodney posited that the rise of states and superior classes in proto-feudal African societies led to practices where common subjects would prostrate themselves in the presence of the monarchs. Nkrumah has also pointed out that with the disintegration of communal Africa,

collective spirit declined drastically (Nkrumah 1977, p. 34). Indeed, what imperialism and colonialism did in Africa was not the invention of class divisions but its institutionalization. For an instance, it was under colonialism that production eventually evolved from subsistence to commercial. Colonialism through capitalism undermined the power and influence of the hitherto existing feudal lords for the indigenous industrial, professional and agricultural petit-bourgeois class. Immediately after independence, the exploitative tendencies of the indigenous bourgeoisie became apparent.

It is against this backdrop that the ahistorical assumption of Chinweizu and his comrades that class divisions did not exist in precolonial African societies is unempirical. Although, as rightly argued, the value system of African communal societies were retained all through proto-feudal African societies, the structures of the societies were essentially exploitative. The “traditional African society” therefore cannot be beyond the period of communal practices under pre-feudal era. Although Nkrumah submitted that class divisions existed in precolonial African societies, he also made the mistake of overgeneralization of “traditional African society”. Nkrumah noted in ‘Consciencism’ that, “In the traditional African society, no sectional interest could be regarded as supreme; nor did legislative and executive power aid the interests of any group. The welfare of the people was supreme ... but colonialism came and changed all this” (Nkrumah 1975). With the concrete understanding Nkrumah had established in his other writings, he probably could have been referring to pre-feudal African society. See Figure 1.

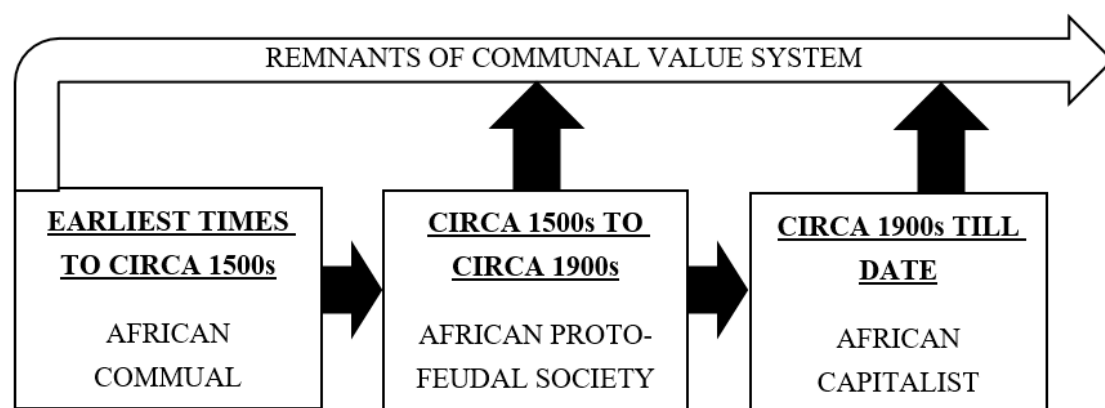


Figure 1. A pictorial illustration of the gradual transition of modes of production in Africa.

Having exposed the limitations of the presumptuous notion of the absence of class divisions in precolonial African societies, it is germane to interrogate the limitations in the conclusions of the protagonists of African socialism. The proponents of African socialism basically have been the propagators of the supposedly perfect “traditional African society”. In an attempt to create a rebranded, unscientific, “Eurocentric” form of socialism, the proponents of African socialism have muddled up precolonial African history. Sekou Toure, a proponent of African socialism once declared; “Africa is communautarian. Collective life and social solidarity give her habits a humanistic foundation ... an African cannot imagine organizing his life outside that of his social group—family, village or clan. The voice of African people is not individualistic” (Toure 2010). Sekou Toure obviously failed to put the aforementioned African into historical perspective. What kind of African holistically is he acknowledging? The African that lived during communal, feudal or capitalist society? This clarification is germane because outside from the communal society, such African described above is relatively a myth on a large scale.

Senghor in his own assessment claimed that “Africa’s social background of tribal community life does not only makes socialism natural to Africa but excludes the validity of the theory of class struggle” (Senghor 1964). In the absence of the theory of class struggle, Julius Nyerere had pushed forward the idea of an extended family or family-hood system, known as Ujamaa in Swahili. The Tanzanian leader also claimed that since there was no word for ‘class’ in any African language, then social classes

must have been alien in “traditional African society”. These submissions basically are displays of an extreme emotional and intellectual loyalty to the pre-feudal African cultural value systems that originally stemmed from communal economic relationships or structures. Chinweizu also claimed that it is only when the social classes that arose from the struggle over the means of production surfaced in Africa, as it did in Europe, that we can begin to interrogate capitalism and socialism as ideologies. His submission, as we have shown earlier, lacks proper historical depth in precolonial African history. The social classes the intellectual is in search of have been in existence since the transition of the continent into proto-feudal practices.

However, in spite of the limitations of the conclusions of these intellectuals in their works, it is pertinent to point out that they are all in support of the rebirth of a new socio-economic order outside the fangs of capitalism. As an alternative, it has been agreed by a number of these intellectuals that a transition into socialism remains the best. Fanon concludes that, “the choice of a socialist regime, a regime which is completely geared towards the people as a whole . . . will allow us to go forward more quickly and more harmoniously”. According to Nkrumah, class struggle can be prevented only in a socialist state since the government represents the workers and the peasants, in contrast to the capitalist class the government represents under capitalism. But there is a disagreement around scientific socialism. Socialism basically is socialism anywhere and everywhere. Ultimately, the perversion of socialism by those that attempted to contain it by inventing terms such as “African socialism, Chinese socialism, Japanese socialism”, etc. had caused a great setback. This illusory pseudo-intellectual adventure can only succeed in suppressing the essence of socialism. The science in socialism indeed is hinged on its successful application in any country. The science in socialism is very instructive in explaining the basis of the development of whatever human societies within the purview of economic determinism. Within this context, scientific socialism reinforces the position that the transition of not a society, but human societies, into socialism is not a given but a natural law of science that must occur because of the self-consuming nature of capitalism. This dialectical form of reasoning, therefore, positions the working class masses, the people, as the builder of socialism and not a prophetic, heroic or “messiah” figure. Nkrumah’s Consciencism provides us yet again with a theoretical approach to scientific socialism. Nkrumah dismissed precisely the concept of Nyerere’s African socialism. He posited that African socialism is a myth “used to deny the class struggle, and to obscure genuine socialist commitment by those African leaders who are compelled to proclaim socialist policies, but who are at the same time deeply committed to international capitalism” (Nkrumah 1977, p. 26). Nkrumah argues that “There is only one true socialism and that is scientific socialism, the principles which are abiding and universal” (Nkrumah 1973, p. 466). He further argues that the concept of African socialism appears to be more associated with anthropology than political economy (Nkrumah 1973, p. 440).

In the application of socialism, Nkrumah argues that it has to be scientific because the mode of production is objectively rooted in general principles. The features of the productive system is based on natural laws that describe human nature and society. Indeed, the general principles of scientific socialism within the context of productive and distributive processes are universal and not peculiar. Within this context, the state in any socialist society, in its effort to create a classless society, will have to take the responsibility of having democratic control and management over all sectors at the commanding heights of the economy of the country. This indeed is a necessary step towards the attainment of a society based on the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, exchange and consumption. As such, it is only under the science of socialism that production will be exclusively use for humane purposes and not for the purpose of profit maximization.

However, this is not to totally reject the essentiality of the African cultural value system, like Ubuntu, in the ongoing struggle of the African masses to build a better society. Cabral had said that for a successful national liberation there must be a “return to the source” (Amilcar 1973). And indeed this is pertinent because behind the success of the colonialists and subsequently the imperialists in their domination over African labour and resources was cultural oppression. There is no doubt that colonialism succeeded in annihilating some leftovers of the African communal cultural value system.

This was done because it was materially important to oppress the colonized culturally. And it is on this basis that the struggle to rebuild these cultures must be connected to materialism. To rebuild the value system of “traditional African society” without building firstly the economic basis of that society is an attempt to put the cart before the horse.

This Ubuntu in its present bourgeois form cannot build a cooperative society. What can be done, however, at this material point in time is to convert the value system into a social force of resistance against the entirety of the fabrics of capitalism for the purpose of instating the higher stage of the economic system that produced it—socialism. Ubuntu in its bourgeois state lies within the realm of idealism and not materialism. As pointed out hitherto, the value system nevertheless must be reconceived as a subject of materialism by exploiting it to galvanize the African working class masses towards the destruction of every force of the capitalist mode of production. Concretely, the capitalist mode of production in all ramifications is contradictory to the principles and tenets of Ubuntu. The system inherently creates a situation wherein the producers of the labour are being alienated from their creation. Marxism also had shown that because of the internal contradictions of capitalism its invariably creates an unplanned society where profits override needs and competition ignores cooperation. This, indeed, is strange to the tenets of Ubuntu. Hence, because Ubuntu favours equity, justice and fairness, then the oppressed masses must hinge on it as a rallying force. Ubuntu have to be employed as a means to an end—a socialist transformation. Socialism, basically, is the only system that inherently has the capacity to revive the currently endangered African communal value system of Ubuntu. Although socialism is not communalism, the former stands in defence of the value system of the latter. So invariably, the survival of Ubuntu in fact lies within the establishment of a scientific socialist African society. Nkrumah had lent his support for the utilization of the African communal value system and not its structures because essentially, the structures of that society are incompatible with the realities and conditions of the continent today. He stated that, “What socialist thought in Africa must recapture is not the structure of ‘traditional African society’ but its spirit, for the spirit of communalism is crystallized in its humanism and in its reconciliation of individual advancement with group welfare” (Nkrumah 1973, p. 478). Within this context, a working economic ideology against capitalism with the unity of Ubuntu must be the focus of pan-Africanism. This is pertinent because pan-Africanism, therefore, becomes a potent economic ideology that can liberate the African working class masses from imperialism, capitalism and neoliberalism. Rodney has pointed out that “pan-Africanism must involve transformation of the environment, while making a break with imperialism and forming African political and economic unity” (Rodney 1969).

Pan-Africanism, from the aforementioned, therefore becomes relevant within the framework of the creation of a scientific African socialist continent. As such, the mission of pan-Africanism in the 21st century cannot be about the theorization of idealistic thoughts in an attempt to supposedly transform the capitalist African society. In spite of the apparent failures of capitalism, a number of bourgeois economists in Africa have been working assiduously to reinvent an “inhumane” capitalism. Elumelu’s Africapitalism is a good instance of the ongoing attempt to rebrand capitalism, especially in Africa. Notwithstanding the admission that capitalism has failed the continent, these economists have not been able to create anything new in their bourgeois laboratories. Elumelu’s Africapitalism is not in any way whatsoever different from capitalism. In his assessment, the bourgeois economist stated that “Africapitalism is the philosophy that the African private sector has the power to transform the continent through long-term investments, creating both economic prosperity and social wealth” (Elumelu 2019). This definition is extremely contradictory. Private sectors, both locally owned and foreign, have been in business for several decades in Africa, but the unproductive chase for the maximization of profits has made it impossible for the creation of “economic prosperity and social wealth”.

Indeed, Elumelu has not invented anything logically different from capitalism. More so, it is an aberration to contend that a class-based economic system like capitalism can be rebranded. Nkrumah had stated that “‘People’s capitalism’, ‘enlightened capitalism’, ‘class peace’, ‘class harmony’, are all bourgeois capitalist attempts to deceive the workers and peasants, and to poison their minds”

(Nkrumah 1977, p. 84). The unscientific attempt to rebrand capitalism is a pointer to the fact that the wannabe-reproducers have an inconclusive idea of the modus operandi of the system. As posited by Marx, no class system can be reformed. The only solution to a class system like capitalism is its destruction for the instatement of a classless economic system—socialism.

5. Conclusions

The African continent today, on the basis of the effects of neocolonialism and neoliberal policies, has inherited a complexity of problems which communalism or Ubuntu in its current bourgeois state cannot scientifically solve. The practical alternate ideology for this contemporary moment is exclusively an economic ideology, and Ubuntu has a galvanizing role to play in this struggle if properly understood. This paper has argued that Ubuntu must be revisited and be channeled into galvanizing the working-class African masses en route in the struggle for scientific socialism. Contrary to the bourgeois analyses of some proponents of Ubuntu, this paper posited that the concept must be about the social unity of the oppressed masses globally. Whilst the conventional approach to Ubuntu presupposes atonement and unity of all, regardless of classes, it was the conviction of this paper that such approach is misleading and counterproductive because the unity of the oppressed and oppressor is scientifically impossible. Socialism in its scientific application is aimed at building a society wherein the basic values of Ubuntu will be properly instituted. Thus, it is only under scientific socialism and not Africapitalism as purported by bourgeois African economists that a society wherein competition would be eradicated for collectivity and wherein greed will be replaced with altruism, can be ascertained. Hence, the mission of pan-Africanism, from the foregoing, would be the achievement of African unity. But germane to state that this kind of unity must not be a state-centric form of unity. As required under a scientific socialist African continent, this unity must be the unity of the oppressed masses against their oppressors, both Africans and non-Africans. This form of unity must be the unity of the proletariats against the bourgeoisie. Fanon echoed this position when he contended that “African unity can only be achieved through a bottom-up, people-driven process, and under the leadership of the people, that is to say in opposition to the interests of the bourgeoisie”. The only form of pan-Africanism that should be receptive to the African masses, therefore, is the pan-Africanism that intends to unite the continent under an all-African scientific socialist government. The ongoing attempt from some quarters to create a pan-African federalist continent under the influence of the failed postcolonial African state is not only misleading but criminal. The mission of pan-Africanism must essentially be about the furtherance of the African revolution in tandem with the international socialist revolution under which society will be organized on the basis of “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs”.

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