

TIME IN TRADITIONAL IGBO PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY DYNAMICS

RAPHAEL C. ERUKA, Ph.D

Department of Philosophy, Madonna University, Okija,
Anambra State, Nigeria.
drerukar@gmail.com

Abstract

Time is a universal phenomenon. Regional conceptualizations stem from socio-cultural perspectives and perceptions. Regional concretizations of specificities with reference to Time frames underscore the uniqueness of the apprehension of the concept in given geo-cultural contexts, epochs, and, or peoples and their orientations. The Igbo of South Eastern Nigeria related closely to Time and apprehended the concept in a natural and unique way. Such relationship was based on commonsensical empiricism, care and utility. Igbo idea of Time is closely associated with the people's idea of nature and again their activities and programs within the operations of the phenomenon that is nature. Pristine Igbo society, loved and cared for nature, observed it and converted the end results of such observations to the service of her needs. Nature in its broadness and proximity was the thematic for continual understudy and appreciation of whatever value is from this empirical and existential encounter. In this work, effort was made to analyze and synthesize where necessary the realities in the pristine Igbo conception of Time. The work puts emphasis on the examination of the meaning of Time, highlighting its fundamental role in ushering in the two paradigms of peace and development as the Igbo strives for social, cultural and economic cohesion. A critical look at the project, again a paradigm shift in ethno-philosophical considerations, to which this work subscribes, brought the work to its logical conclusion.

Keywords: *Time, Igbo Philosophy, Socio-Cultural, Contemporary Dynamics, Nigeria*

Introduction

Time is a universal phenomenon. Our existence is in time, and so are our programs and projects. Since this is the case, any temporality consideration is possible within the context of the phenomenal dynamics which are part and parcel of human experience. What is now and what will be are all measured against time. Time and change are reality correlations. The former is the condition of possibility of the latter. A discourse on Time makes sense because the concept of change is a true concept that defines much of human existence. St Augustine believes that time is a function of change and, in the absence of the reality of change, time would not be perceived – St Augustine, according to Lawhead opines that *the changes of things make time* (Lawhead, p.130). If everything is at a standstill, there would be no time. Therefore, to think of time is to think of motion, alterability and dynamism. Heraclitus of Ephesus, in Greek antiquity, stated that everything is in a state of flux. Therefore, flux is the permanent state of things. The 'panta rei' – ouden menei – of Heraclitus depicts reality as in fact defined by

cosmic motion (Composta, 1998, p. 35). The phenomenon of motion is all pervading, such that even static objects only appear to be static, otherwise, on further analysis, it would become clear that even the so called static objects are subject to internal or not readily perceptible motion. The implication is that a universe defined by motion is also a universe defined by time, change, dynamism, mutability or alterability and allied concepts make the perception of time real (Maritain, 2005, p. 21).

There is need to point out that part of the perception of time is its being a two-phenomenon-reality as Bergson would underscore (Russell 2002, p. 759). First, it is a phenomenon of external experience. External objects are indeed objects of time. They are there in time and again they are subject to the vagaries of time. In fact, there is a sense in which it can be said that the universe in its external presentation, is time bound; therefore, subject to the modifications of time. The second of this phenomenon is the internal dimension of time. This is time as a subjective experience (Lawhead, p. 484). This refers to the operation and perception of time in the internal universe of the subjective human milieu. This is very fundamental to the perception of time. The subjectivity in regard to the conception of time is a function of its human correlation. The human mind conceptualizes time and interprets it. The human mind assigns frames to time and demarcates it in terms of historicity – past, present and future. Although attempts are made to objectify these demarcations from the descriptive view point; in reality, they are subjective functions of the human mind. Therefore, the subjective reality of time is just as important as our attempts to grasp time descriptively and objectively.

Time is not only a universal phenomenon; it is a cultural issue as well. Peoples of different cultures perceive time differently. Therefore, time in terms of what it represents for the people, its meaning, impacts on the socio-cultural and even economic realities of the people has acquired a cultural coloration. The Igbo have a unique relation with time. Although similarities in the values represented by time can be spotted within given communities or tribal peoples, for instance within given regions of the African continent, yet there are peoples' unique perspectives to time on which hinges their existential values, developmental dynamics and socioeconomic realities. It is within this regional dimension that we proceed to investigate the concept of Time among the Igbo people of the Eastern region of Nigeria.

Igbo cultural relation with Time

Igbo existence, like their counterparts in other parts of the world is a phenomenon of Time. Time ushers in life and accounts for its cessation. In-between the significant extremes, the Igbo are availed the opportunity for a concatenation of dynamic activities. The Igbo, like many other cultures, have a way of imposing checks, measures and regulations on their activities and programs of actions. The Igbo are conscious of order and the need to let this reflect in the operations of their daily life. The Igbo is conscious of the dynamism and changes in their relationship with peoples and external objects and the importance of all these in the making of their own existence. In all these, time becomes a factor of great value. Time is needed to make possible the controls that are of importance if the Igbo have to order their lives well. Life is basically an ordered whole as seen in the prioritization of values, issues and activities. One thing follows the other in the sequence that makes sense and adds values to the people's existence. The chapters of life's activities have to be plotted and so are the sections. To

make this possible, the Igbo needs only not be conscious of time, they need above all, to be able to manage it to their own advantage.

Philosophical notions of Time

These are to be considered from the literal understanding; then, abstract and concrete times. *Literally*, time is referred to as 'Oge', 'Mgbe'. Linguistically, Time is as simple a term in English as it is in Igbo; it does not need to be explained in many words – thus understood simply in one word: in English, 'Time'; in Igbo, 'Oge', 'Mgbe'. 'Oge' suffices in mere three words; 'Mgbe' squares up to its English counterpart in having four words. Actually, the Igbo concept is not only simple; it is simpler when considered fundamentally. It is as real and simple in its perception just as it can be imagined. As a reality of human experience, it pervades all that is in the human consciousness as well as all that we do since all activity is within a time frame.

Time as Abstract

As already stated, Time is referred to as 'Oge' in the vernacular. 'Oge' is as abstract as it is real. 'Oge' as 'Oge' is an abstract concept. 'Oge' or 'mgbe', as a general notion, is conceptualizable. The conceptualization does not assign it entities in the immediate. Although it is real, it is neutrally real. In this case, it does not refer to any particulars or specifics. When 'Oge' presents in its absolute simplicity and purity, it becomes an idea in the domain of the abstract. Examples: Mgbe oge ruru – when the time comes; at the assigned time. Oge di – there is time. Oge ka foro – there is still time. Bia n'oge – come on time. O jigi oge kporo ihe – he/she does not value time; Onye a bu ogbu oge! – This person is a time waster! Mee ya n'oge – Do it on time (within the required time). O jigi oge egwu egwu; ihe e ji mara ya bu i mee ihe n'oge – He/She does not play with time – literally – he/she does not waste time; he/she is known for punctuality/being conscious of time/working within expected time. Maara na oge anaghi agwu agwu – Know that Time does not cease; Time is a continuum; time just flows. The ceaselessness of time is comparable to the continuous flow of the river or ocean water – time can always be harvested in so far as change remains a fact. That is why Heraclitus correlated water, change and time when he stated that one cannot step into the same waters twice since the fact of change makes this impossible. Each time fresh water flows past the person. So is time – one cannot experience the same time twice – each moment is defined by time experienced in its newness. In its abstract understanding, time tends towards its simple, pure and general or universal conceptualization.

Concrete Time

The concrete dimension of time points to its association to the particular. It is hereby made to relate to the object or the particular as known. Here, whether as conceived or as imagined, time has lost its simplicity. It becomes a bit complex or at least tied to a thing. It is any reference to time bound to an event or a thing as such. Examples: Ugbu a bu oge Kereshmesh – this is the time of Christmas. Oge a bu udu mmiri – this is rainy season (time of). Oge a bu okochi – this is dry season (time of). O bu oge emume iri ji ka m na-ekwu maka ya – I am

referring to the Iri Ji festival (time of). The *ahu mere n'oge agha Biafra*. – the thing happened during the (time of) Biafra war. *Mgbe anyi bu umuaka, anyi na-egwu egwu onwa* – When we were small children (time of), we participated in moon-light plays; etc. The fact remains that concrete time is associated with an object, a thing, an event, a historical fact, etc. Here, the concept of time is contextualized and as such plays a role in defining something of the event or the object in order to impact meaning.

The Descriptive Dimension of Time

The descriptive dimension of Time has a lot to do with the rhythmicity of nature. The Igbo are keen observers of nature. This is because first of all, they are lovers of nature, and consequent on that, its close observers. Igbo relationship to nature weighs more towards the concrete and empirical than the abstract. The capacity for abstractive conceptualization and analysis notwithstanding, Igbo relation to nature borders on mutuality and utility. The Igbo derives a lot of good from nature; uses same in the service of their needs and at the same time tends and cares for nature. It is in this spirit of a conscious absence of distancing from nature and true proximity to same (nature) that attempt would be made to consider the description of Time in Igbo philosophy in two main ways – as *chronos* and as *kairos*. It is interesting to note that Bergson came close to the Igbo appreciation of time when he distinguished scientific or clock time from what he called duration or real time. *The first is time as an intellectual, scientific concept, and the second is time as we experience and live it* (Lawhead, p. 484). While the intellectual, scientific dimension approximates to our concept of the *chronos*; the experiential and existential dimension passes for our sense of the *kairos*.

Time as chronos

This is mathematical or chronological time. As *chronos*, time is understood as succession of events. It is the consciousness of motion measurable in unit forms. Time is the reality of motion scientifically monitored in a given device as opposed to staticity or the static. It is better described as the awareness of moments/units of awareness in transition. This could be paired to the western mind's consciousness of the mathematical units of time in seconds, minutes and hours. The comparison is not exact since the pristine Igbo society did not have instruments for exact mathematization of units of time. The Igbo did not invent chronometric devices. However, the Igbo did make meaning out of the succession of events up to a point. There are grounds to state that the Igbo did make effort to efficiently maximize his deep knowledge, dependency and utilization of the values arising from his relationship with nature to his 'mathematical' or chronometric advantage, so to say. For instance, the Igbo extract the equivalencies of unit forms of Time measurement from nature. These unit forms of a so-called Igbo natural chronometer stand uniquely on their own but can, if need be, be compared to the unit forms created by the western scientific chronometer. Conventional chronometric time is a function of seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and so on. The ultimate end of this work is not to foster a comparison between the Western chronometric time and the Igbo natural extrapolation (but to highlight uniqueness in Igbo perspectives and concept of Time), however, the Igbo could make of nature a psychic

chronometer based on its operations. Examples: Let us, for want of space, consider this operation based on any single day of the operations of nature: the first would be 'agbaakwa' – this translates to dawn. If a journey would start off 'n'agbaakwa', that means the journey takes off at dawn (about 5:00 am). Equivalent units include 'chi ofufo' or 'chi obubo', - as visibility begins to show to usher in the morning; 'a na-ahu uzo unyogo unyogo' – that part of the very early morning when people see hazily or cannot yet see clearly. Another unit of time here is 'huru huru chi' – practically, at dawn. This is followed by 'isi ututu' – very early in the morning; 'ezi ere' – very early morning; 'ututu' – morning; 'mgbaye chi ma o bu mgbake chi' – late morning or when on a would be sunny day – the sun first shows up and is yet very benign on the body (about 9:00 am); 'ivokere anyanwu' – noon or mid-day; similarly, 'mgbe onyinyo no n'ukwu ala' – when the shadow is shortest, practically when the/(your) shadow is under (your) feet, that's noon time, mid-day (12:00 noon). Then, comes the rhythm of activities associated with the stomach: 'na oge nri eshiushe' – launch time (about 2:00 pm); 'n'oge e ji eshi akwukwo enyasi' – when people set off to collect grass to feed domestic animals like goats, sheep, cows (about 5:00 pm); 'oge ikpolata anu', 'mkwachi nkwu', 'ilata ashiua' – when the domestic animals are brought home; when they have been taken care of, that is, made to go in for the night (about 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm) or when the last people in the market on a particular market day must have vacated the market arena and returned home; see also 'chi ojiji' – at dusk. 'Oge nri enyasi' simply means 'dinner time'. This is followed by 'n'laba' or 'n'lakpu ura' – bed time; time to go to bed for the night. 'Nderi uchichi ma o bu etiti abali' would be 'mid-night', 'oge etiri' entails dead-of-the-night; that is; when darkness so covers everywhere that one cannot see a thing no matter how one tries. 'Oge etiri bu oge i bi opee' – etiri is the time to grope one's way! This would be about 2:00 am. Overlapping with this deepest part of the night is cock-crow at different times – first, second, third (about 2:00, 3:00 and 4:00 am) respectively. Journeys are usually scheduled to take off at given cock-crow times. The last cock-crow to usher in the day is the one that calls forth the dawn (about 5:00 am), which continues till early morning times. The cycle of day and night (24 hours is complete). This cycle is simple, at least converted by the Igbo into a natural chronometer. This natural clock, though not so precise, is at least precise enough for the very practical utilization of the Igbo to serve his existential and temporality needs. Interestingly, this time device, woven around nature, does not break down or develop major faults or cease to be!

Time as Kairos

This refers to the concretization of time by association. It is the reality of time in association with events, happenings, occurrences or phenomena. It is referential time – always appreciated with particular reference to other issues of significance. Time as kairos is an attempt at concretization of time within the frame of the memorable. That is to say that time is tied to other vivid occurrences. These occurrences or phenomena could be in terms of the following:

Rhythms of nature

Examples: the cock crows at given points of the human conscious awareness; the cows,

goats and chickens/fowl go/wander off to forage/find food in the open/fields and find their way/are helped back home at given points; etc. Thus, if one says, 'Let's schedule the journey at the first, second or third cock-crow of the night, the addressee perfectly understands what is meant; that is, the time reference in question, say 2:00 am, 3:00 am or 4:00 am as the case may be. This presupposes a mastery of the moments of cockcrow in the course of the day/night. By the same yardstick, if the meeting is scheduled immediately the cows come home and are taken care of, the addressee comprehends very well what is meant (about 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm).

Natural phenomenon of rare significance or magnitude: When such happens, attempt is made to associate time to it in terms of dating of events. A specific example here would be the occurrence of a solar eclipse. Eclipses engender wonder; the type that has to do with the disruption of the rhythms of nature that is easily described but not explained. In total eclipse of the sun, for instance, the dramatics of this natural phenomenon is complete. If one pins the date of the birth of a child to the day or year that people witnessed the last or previous total darkness by midday, it becomes easy to underscore the natural phenomenon that the date of birth is being associated with. Even the exact date in this case would be easy to find. (On the lighter mood, there comes the added description of what really happened on the said day – how people, due to the sudden dawn of darkness began to grope their way, etc).

Natural disasters: Time is associated with disasters such as epidemics or even pandemics. While the epidemic is at the most regionalized, the pandemic is usually a global phenomenon. These may be referred to as indelible phenomena. Such occurrences are usually rare. Example: Some one's death may be traced to the time of a known epidemic or pandemic such as the flu, measles, etc. The last influenza epidemic suggests events of the early twentieth century.

Historical events: These are issues of historical importance that have found a permanent place in the people's psyche; for instance, the coming of the white man to Igbo land. An event dating to the very year the white man set foot in a given community in Igbo land is an event that could be remembered with ease. This is because this historical event has left a lasting imprint on the social consciousness of the people. This varies according to various Igbo communities-experientials. However, historically and in the broad sense, this period would refer to between the 19th and 20th centuries.

The World Wars: Agha mba uwa. These are realities that have left many Igbo communities with stories to tell; thus, not easily to be erased from the minds of the people. Numerous events are tied to these events of history. Specifically, these refer to WWI&II. The period being referred to here would be the early to mid-twentieth century.

Market days: The four market days of Igbo land are landmark-soft instruments for the regulation of Igbo social existence. They are ready tools for social order and re-ordering of

events/programs of action. The association of time to these is so conventional that they become common instruments for reviving memory/memory checks as well as playing existential roles in the daily activities of the Igbo. This is because any event whatever must fall on any of the market days. The association of time to the market days is inescapable for every Igbo person thereby raising this consciousness of time to an existential phenomenon. This of necessity instrumentalizes the market days! The market days are phenomenal factors of time.

Festivities: The Igbo have distinctive divisions of time over reasonable periods resulting in times for work and times for relaxation/celebration. The festive periods mark the latter and are quite many in different parts of Igbo land; e. g, Iri Ji (New Yam Festival); Ibonu (Festival of the breadfruit meal); Oriri onwa asato (the festival of the 8th month); etc. Issues are bound/tied to these periods for remembrance and commitment to given programs of action.

Return of the masquerade: Masquerading is well known among the people. It is marked specially by two significant periods: its return from the land of the spirit and its going back to the spirit world. Either carries with it pomp and pageantry! These are festivities to which important events in pristine Igbo communities are tied for easy remembrance and execution. Again, these are broad kairo events that the different Igbo communities regulate according to their own calenderization for purposes of convenience.

It is important to note that kairos has both its private and public domains. The private domain of kairos is as pertains to the individual who must build his private time references in association with the events that are particularly relevant to him/her existentially. Take for instance in the life of a dutiful mother who must have at her finger tips the dates and times (timeline) for the birth of his first child (second child, third child and so on); and associated development strides or landmarks – teething, crawling, walking, development of linguistic capacity and so on. Beyond this, it is the case that everybody has a private build-up or pool of time referentials. The public domain is a larger- scope-build or catalogue of timelines pertaining to groups or the community at large. Here, time is tied to such happenings as community festivals, intertribal wars or such large scale experiences as the World Wars; the coming of the white man. Of much more importance here is generational kingship – succession to the throne and the personalities involved. Kingship succession is never politicised or elected. Instead, it is succeeded. Succession is pre-arranged in divine order of primogeniture and sanguinity. The common root here is 'kin' from where one gets kindred, king and kingship. The king is always the overseer of the affairs of a people that can trace their ancestry to a common patriarch. This was distinguished from political positions which were subject to electoral conduct. There was never contestation of kingship stool as the path to it was clearly spelt out and respected by the people. This made for peace and created the atmosphere conducive to good governance. Perhaps kingship would be another interesting research area of pristine Igbo cultural adventure and administrative wisdom. However, for the moment, the concern is the kairos question in traditional Igbo concept of time. For

example – who was there (the reigning onyishi or clan or village head, town head, etc) when the thing in question happened? A calendar of events of historical significance is built on the personality and issues surrounding the reigning ruler or king (onyishi, eze).

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF TIME

Among the Igbo, time is a three-dimensional concept. Time is considered in its present, past and future dimensions. *The present* is the now we are conscious of. The present refers to kitaa, nwoshoa, oshua, ugbu a, ozigbo ozigbo, ozigbo nje. It is the awareness of the hic et nunc – the here and now! The present is fundamentally valued being the pivot on which Igbo conception of time revolves. If we admit that time has also its psychological dimension then the concept gets more and more central to the realities of human existence. The present is the centre that holds the other two components of Igbo dimensional time. Without the present, it would be difficult to begin to analyze the past or make references to the future. Buttressing the fundamentality of this dimension, the Igbo say, 'Nke m ji ka' – meaning literally – the thing in my hand/possession (what I have in the here and now) – the present moment is of much more importance than anything else. If the present is not here, there would be no ground for discussing anything else. 'Ndu bu isi' – Being alive is paramount (One cannot be said to be alive somewhat, safe in the context of experiencing the here and now; the present; this moment under consideration). Therefore, somehow, the past and the future are telescoped in the present. The present is the grand time.

The Past: The past is nothing but the present that once was. The past is the present that has now receded into historical existence; the present that was and is now stored in the archives of events. Literally, it is referred to as 'oge gara aga'. This begins from the smallest reckonable unit of time (say the last second) to years past. The past is important because the present is ever-flowing into it. The past is the great reservoir or receptacle of the present that was. The past is also important because it remained a support library of sorts in the preliterate Igbo society. It is the great storehouse of events. Effort is made to call up to memory events from the past as occasion demands. It is a basis for comparative analysis of values. 'The emebigo, n'oge gboo, odirokwa otu a' – things have gone really bad; in the past, things were better. This is an expression of the nostalgia for past values especially when the present generation tends to scorn/abandon those values that once made the Igbo society thick. The past is really meant to teach the present. One can look at the past and take corrections. A popular didactic saying is that which says that the wise man does not allow certain things to happen to him first hand; having learnt from similar circumstances of the past.

The Future: The Igbo lives in the future as much as he lives in the present and values the past. Present plans are meant to be concretized or realized in the future. The future inspires the present with expectations. The future looks bleak only if something has gone wrong. However, the Igbo acquire enough experience from the past and present to deal with the future positively. The future is hope-filled. The Igbo society has insight into the far-off

future or the very distant future. The Igbo would normally not join issues with scholars in the thinking circle of John Mbiti who in his research conducted among the Kamba and Kikuyu – tribal peoples of Kenya – concluded that the Africans have a sense of the present and the distant past but not the unforeseeable future. The African may entertain a sense of the future up to about two years. Anything beyond this, escapes his grasp since such events lie in the province of no time. Makinde brought out the thought of Mbiti in this regard very well. Hear him: According to Mbiti, time in the traditional concept, “is a two-dimensional phenomenon with a long past, a present and virtually no future”. ‘The future is virtually absent because future events have not taken place, i.e., they have not been realized and cannot, constitute time ... people set their minds not on future things, but chiefly on what has taken place.’ (Makinde, 2007, p. 83). There is no doubt from this reference that Mbiti denied Africans any knowledge of the foreseeable future thereby confining them to a two-dimensional time perception. Ocheng'-Odhiambo corroborated the observation of Makinde when he quoted Mbiti thus: “time is simply a composition of events which have occurred, those which are taking place now and those which are immediately to occur. What has not taken place or has no likelihood of an immediate occurrence falls in the category of 'No-time' (Ocheng'-Odhiambo, 1995, p. 48).

Mbiti's 'category of no time' is simply Africa's perspective on future time. Therefore, future time is practically 'no time'. Masolo emphasized again the two dimensionality of Mbiti's long past (zamani), a present (sasa) and virtually NO FUTURE as far as African people's relation with time is concerned (Masolo, 1995, p. 108). This present work is not meant to critically examine in a detailed manner Mbiti's position with regard to African people's conception of time. Mbiti's claim passes for thematic research of its own – a thing reserved for the future, as we refocus on the present project. Suffice it to say that the Igbo people of Nigeria not only have a distant past but a correspondingly distant future. Thus, the Igbo lay claim to three dimensions of time conception instead of the two canvassed by Mbiti. The Igbo project a lot into the distant future and plan for the future even beyond their earthly existence. Pristine Igbo society lived mainly on land and what it could get from it. They planted economic trees that would not only serve them in their life time but would continue way beyond their earthly existence. When the typical Igbo worked, he had his eyes not only on his own welfare but on that of the unborn as well. The three-dimensional conceptualization is dovetailed in another concept, 'azuka' – let my back be better, literally. In reality, it means that the Igbo plan such that the present form of things would improve going forward into the future; to such a state whereby when he must have left the stage, situation of things would be by far better than he experienced or left it. The orientation is towards development. Just like in the case of 'azuka', i.e., 'ka azum ka ihu m mma', 'Iruka' is another name that explains the Igbo projection into the future. Iruka or Nkiruka – the future will bring better things or the future has more goods to bring. Future here is generally understood as indefinite future. Thus, it can range from the very near future to the very distant. The Igbo also maintain that Nke m ji ka: the present moment is the quintessential moment. It remains the zero hour; the time of opportunity where everything happens. By

these personal Igbo names and proverbs, the Igbo express their deepest concern as they consider the three dimensional conception of time in the context of Igbo existentialism, i.e. past, present and future. Once there is life, the expectation is that of improvement on the present, *ceteris paribus*.

It has to be emphasized that the Igbo projection into the future is development prone. It brings to the fore their orientation to development; to the improvement in the condition of the *status quo ante*. That is why the Igbo mpi (dwarfish he-goat) says that prayers for him should be for life and not growth since he who is alive would attain growth. This again highlights not only the presence of the conceptualization of the indefinite future but also the development trajectory defined by that conceptualization. Again, the Igbo say, 'Echi di ime!' – Tomorrow is pregnant. The statement is followed by, O nweghi onye ma ihe o ga-amu' – nobody knows what it will deliver! The emphasis here is on 'echi di ime!' 'Echi' here is understood as an indefinite future. 'Echi' has no time-frame. It can range literally from 'tomorrow' to any number of years. It contains a whole lot of potentialities. 'Not knowing what it will bring forth' may point either way – the goodies or the ugly in it. Whether it comes with the ugly as sometimes it does or with the expected goodies, either is fundamentally immaterial to the spirit of the discourse. What is material is that it is an apt expression for an indefinite future.

Igbo three dimensional conceptualization of time is a function of the human memory; thus a correlate of the human psychological phenomenon. The past especially owes a lot to the human memory. The present and the future are as well realities of the human memory. However, this is as a primary experience. It has to be underscored that the human memory is not only the storehouse of realities that are time bound secondarily. This is because, even in the past, these primary experiences with time related events can be objectified in pristine Igbo 'hardware' equivalence. In pristine communities, values were preserved in carvings, supporting staff and crafts. Correspondingly in the software equivalence, values are left in songs, wise sayings and proverbs and other such oralities. These served as more tangible support to the human memory and encyclopaedic components of sorts.

TIME IN IGBO PHILOSOPHY

In the Igbo society, especially in pre-literate times, the meaning of time is its value. What is it that is the value of time? Time means value in real terms. Time is the reality that the Igbo are capable of converting into it or rather converting it to. In other words, it is the content of it, courtesy of the Igbo spirit of enterprise! Premium is not on chronological time. It has been observed that time in traditional African life 'was not the clock tickling there, fast and ongoing, hurrying one from one business to another (Iroegbu, 1994, p. 93). Time was not pushed to rush things in and out. To rush in life could mean to rush out of life (Iroegbu, 1994, p. 93). However, the Igbo are not oblivious of the importance of the observance of chronometric time. The Igbo appreciate this aspect of time especially in this saying, e. g., E mee ngwa ngwa, e meghara odachi – Doing things on time saves one unnecessary hassles

(very much like 'A stitch in time saves nine!')

The *kairos* perspective of time reckoning is very much valued. By this, time is woven into the complexities of Igbo social existence. By the association of events with time, history, for instance, can be reconstructed. Philosophically, the substance of time is the good therein; the good that can be extracted from it. The traditional African made use of time to serve his needs. He did not allow himself to become a stooge of hectic temporality (Iroegbu, 1994, p. 93). Therefore, time is peace in the family, community or between and, among peoples. Time is land dispute amicably resolved. It is inter-village quarrel settled; the re-uniting of in-laws torn apart by misunderstanding; progress in farm work; the construction of shelter; improvement in personal relations, etc. Basically, time well used is time that has been employed in the service of the two most essential values – peace first and the development that would be consequent on peace! To the extent that the real value of time is pursued, *chronos* is not necessarily a strict issue – what bothers the Igbo more is content – how can time be used to turn things around in the favour of the individual or community? Time is chiefly instrumentalized for the achievement of the 'common good'. This is the central theme in Igbo-temporality-bound conceptualizations!

CONTEMPORARY IGBO TEMPORALITY DYNAMICS

Philosophers of motion, dynamism and change would definitely have a lot to say to the Igbo with regard to time and all that it includes. Bergson for instance believes that reality is motion and the problem really would be how to achieve motion's temporary cessation in order to be able to account for things in time. Heraclitus' river-image was an empirical emphasis on 'the absolute continuity of change in every single thing: everything is in a perpetual flux like a river' (Kirk, 1962, pp. 196 – 197). Aristotle's interpretation of Heraclitus, which was an explication of the earlier Plato's, brings out the fact 'that many things (those that appear to be stable) must be undergoing invisible or unnoticed changes' (Kirk, 1962, p. 197). The implication is the demonstration of the almost pancosmicity of change. If this is the case, then we can be discussing contemporary Igbo society in the context of change. Contemporary Igbo world has known transformations in all aspects of life – cultural, social, economic, educational and political spheres. Time may not have changed; but moments on it actually have. Heraclitus, to return again to his insightful thought, chided those who fragmented time – believing that day and night are different realities. Heraclitus taught that day and night are one. He was not seeing and referring to day and night as such; he was seeing and referring to the linearity of time. Time is a continuum. The fragmentation of time is a surface reality only whereby one can rightly describe moments on it as day or night.

For the Igbo, whether of yesterday or today, time remains what it is fundamentally. This notwithstanding, there are phenomenalizations of reality – these are the circumscribable substantial issues of time that stand out as remarkable. The same time may remain but perspectives may have changed; Igbo existentialism has, in many cases, charted a different

trajectory and significantly, values have metamorphosed in the quest for novelties and contemporary pragmatics.

What does time mean for the contemporary Igbo? Has anything been taken away from the traditional Igbo temporality conceptualizations? Has anything equally been injected into the value chain of pristine Igbo time perception? Does the past have the capacity to inform the present with regard to the appreciation of temporality content prototypism; and beyond that, the actual experience of time contents? What does the contemporary era have to contribute to the concept and valuation of time? These form the relevant queries that need to be interrogated and further explored.

Time in contemporary Igbo world is more a function of haste than the measured value that used to characterize it. This is not entirely a disvalue if we underscore the fact that there are almost ubiquitous moments of the phenomenal on Igbo contemporary time. Programs to attend, businesses and the demands on schedules and the whole concatenation of the commonly action-packed Igbo contemporary world have to make demands on the Igbo time economy in order for the Igbo to be able to square up to these demands. More have to be accommodated with time and more have to be achieved in time. The determination to squeeze much into time calls for haste, stress, loss of the sense of the traditional measured valuation of time and sometimes, the inability to correlate time with health and other such negative attributes. However, haste is not the solution to the pressure being made on the Igbo with reference to time management. Haste is a contemporary phenomenon; yet there is always something negative about it. Haste does not achieve more; nor does it open the door to the Igbo world of success. If anything, haste connotes the absence of patience. In any culture whatsoever, especially in the Igbo past, patience was an esteemed virtue. Patience wins all. Convoluted issues are unknotted; thanks to patience. Warring parties come to know pacification and peace; thanks to patience. The untutored youth mature into wisdom; thanks to patience. Contemporary Igbo society need to cut a bit on needless haste; appreciate more of methodical approach to issues with perseverance, undying determination, in the spectrum of ends in view and the assiduity towards their attainment. If haste is uncommendable for contemporary Igbo although they are suffused in it; it does not imply that time-waste is recommendable in its stead. Both feature in the diagnoses of contemporary Igbo malady.

Contemporary Igbo society appears to have lost on some temporality cultural values. One of these that need to be brought to the fore is the sense of *kairos* time that reference Igbo market days. How many Igbo youth are still conscious of Igbo market days? How many are knowledgeable about these days in their cultural specificities? Experience has shown that the contemporary Igbo are not only unconcerned and ignorant of these fundamental cultural instruments of time management but indeed do regard these realities as anachronisms. How many Igbo children in the primary school know that the Igbo week is not a seven-day week but factually a four-day week? How many in the secondary school know that the Igbo month is not a thirty-day month more or less as in English calendar but culturally a twenty-eight

day month? These temporality values are seemingly lost to the ephemeral glitters of the makeshift world of cyberspace. Beyond the pragmatic and existential values of this kind of knowledge, the cultural value is worth appreciating as constituting part of Igbo conceptual arsenal and contribution to the traditional and cultural 'technologization' of the problematic of time.

Contemporary Igbo society has as well lost a good sense of history. For the pre-contemporary era, history was a sojourning into the values of the past with a view to harvesting wisdom from its rich stores. The past, needless to say, always has a plethora of didactic wisdom to impart the present. The Igbo forebears believed that this was enough cause for the existence of the past: to direct the present right and somehow make it easier for people to access values worth keeping. Indeed, the past was a short-cut to bettering the present and future. The obliteration of the past is bound to truncate the integrity of the human person. A generation pays dearly in this dereliction in that such an era would be of people without roots. According to N'Daw, there is no society of humans that can be described as cultural wilderness (). People do have culture although they may choose to neglect or lose it. Aligned to history is quality time that is marked out for moonlight tales, the extraction of philosophic ideas from myths and mythology which later may have to pair favourably with other such mythologies such as those of the Occident and the Orient.

Traditional Igbo conception of time is clear and unmistakable. They, the Igbo forebears, have not only shown the speculative aesthetics of Igbo temporality perspectivism, they have as well portrayed the utilitarian value and the pragmatic propensities of the dynamics of time. Contemporary Igbo society appears to have worked over on these realities as it endeavours to project a disproportionate conceptualization of time based on economic paradigm shift. Time is money. This, in its self, is true. The contemporary Igbo must definitely take this to heart if they have to find their way in the scheme things, not only within the Igbo world but also on the global stage. Money plays irreplaceable role in the life of any peoples. To a large extent, politics, physical infrastructure and development generally must have to depend on the people's fiscal realities on the ground to be able to take off and thrive. However, the equiporation of time with money in the disproportionate sense has caused untold distractions to the youth especially. This paradigm shift in its most negative conceptualization has worked in boomerang: instead championing development and civilization of the corporate entities and the persons in it, it has rolled back the hand of the clock in lost values regarding sensitivity to human dignity, moral-value appreciation and lack of concerns for principles that humanize the person – the pillar of community development. It must as well be noted that there exist in very good proportion, honest and patriotic Igbo who have contributed immensely to the development of not only the Igbo world but way beyond it. The Igbo make waves globally for their polyvalence, determination, economic sagacity, intellectual prowess and administrative skills. The proportion of the Igbo world that misconceptualize time in the unqualified sense as merely economic value need to sit back, have a deep peep into history, and understudy how the

pristine Igbo society understood time and utilized it in a balanced way to achieve their ends.

Finally, contemporary Igbo society may lose out on her gateway to her invaluable existential wealth. Wealth is a broad term that encompasses cultural values, social, economic, psychologic and spiritual potentialities and actualities. The gate way to the wealth of the people is their language. To what extent does the contemporary Igbo world value Igbo language? This is the language of pristine Igbo society. They did not know any other language. This linguistic tool built their society that they were proud of; gave beauty to their poetic expressions; their songs and music and ensured lively communications – all being routes through which values were transmitted to future generations. The Igbo is characteristically generous and open-minded. This dimension of their existence has ensured that in opening themselves to other cultural realities, sometimes there is this bedeviling in the tendency to forget the cultural-jewellery that is their linguism. Obviously, the average modern Igbo speaks English language better than the mother tongue or interpolates it unnecessarily while communicating in the mother tongue. The enculturation in other linguistic values definitely ought to pay off in a world of competitive existence; but this could only qualify as holistic experience when the Igbo prizes theirs dearly as well; as indeed invaluable and a thing of pride. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. This calls for the revivification of interest in the mother tongue and the push for the natural tendency towards its further development, not only within the geolocus of the motherland but also in the determination to globalize this value. The globalization of Igbo language utilization is a possibility that would be easier to accomplish than perhaps may first appear especially if one weighs on the reality of large scale Igbo presence in the diaspora that actually touches on almost all corners of the globe.

Conclusion

Traditional Igbo conceptualization of time is a philosophic protocol that can be said to be unique to the Igbo world. While the concept elicits intellectual beauty, the interpretation and application are facilitatory of Igbo dynamism and the practicality that are part and parcel of Igbo existence. Time was at the service of the Igbo. The Igbo was never at the service of time. This perhaps passes for a distinguishing feature between Igbo attitude to time and that of the Western counterpart. Time, for the Igbo, is valued in its real terms rather than as a chronometric calculus of succeeding events. Perhaps there is no where the Igbo conceptual capacity is demonstrated more than in the Igbo temporality question. This notwithstanding, the praxis dimension of time is no less real. Time is practicality. The pragmatic perspective of time is a substantial dimension of it.

Contemporary Igbo society has achieved a lot with time. However, with increasing population, the Igbo of today, may have to remind a chunk of its population that for all that technology can offer, there is need to understudy pristine Igbo temporality protocol with a view to tapping into this rich resource for adaptation to the issues of the day. This way, some of the problematic that stands on the way of integral Igbo development may be finally overcome.

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