

Review of: "Honorific Conception of Philosophy and Exclusionism in Nigeria"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

After reading the text and going through the previous reviewers' observations, doubtless the theme's choice is timelessly relevant. So instructive and enriching that I wish afterwards all concerned, Africans, especially Nigerians, read and learn more from it. The multifaceted aspects of exclusionism based on international literature and practices with the deferential vision of philosophy are meticulously delineated through historical and critical accounts. Hence, little hesitancy in agreeing with some of the reviewers about the authors' commendable efforts in at least introducing and elaborating such a complex theme.

Yet not all is a big pat on the back. Scientific work is neither exhaustive nor a signed, sealed, and delivered matter. Exclusionism as corollary of biased philosophical approaches to human interactions towards social development is no less difficult to dissect, especially when concern is its application to Nigeria, a checkered social and political terrain with intricate historical background. There are certain conceptual, analytical, and empirical aspects the authors tried to depict but without clearer, deeper, and coherent relational insights. Observable murkiness and shortfalls include generally the systematic, practical, and pedagogical nexus between theoretical discussions and empirical focus. Inevitably, this reviewer will this time resort to point-by-point, detailed comments and suggestions that befit the theme's complexity.

1. Conceptual interplay and empirical analysis of exclusionism

The analytical classification of exclusionism in various periods proved adequate. However, the interplay between philosophy, ideology, social and political exclusions before, during and after colonial rule, needs further clarification and proper empirical analysis. Except for colonial rule, the pre- and post-colonial periods are not yet well-studied as recapitulated by the authors, requiring that they throw more light on the philosophical and ideological dimensions of exclusionist interactions and practices. Though manifest in the title and stated later in terms of the emergence of modern exclusionism that placed 'philosophy in a position of honor' (honorific conception of philosophy), it is not clear enough for the reader, particularly nonacademic and non-philosophy students/scholars, what 'honorific' really implies as (conceptual?) qualifier of philosophy and exclusionism. For example, the literature review began with 'exclusionism' approached as 'political ideology and practice (...)'. Political ideology by itself is a broad theoretical concept. The extent to which political ideology qualifies exclusionism as dependent on honorific philosophy requires in depth analysis. Methodologically, there is the need to state clearly which factor or element significantly affects (influences or leads to) another.

2. Differentiating ideological and philosophical exclusionism from politics and policies

‘Inevitably then, one of the growing tensions in Nigeria is a result of exclusionism not just in terms of politics and policies but in terms of ideologies and philosophy’. From the above, the different terms of exclusionism that generate tensions in Nigeria as referred to by the authors need ampler exemplification for rendering the comparison more intelligible. The problem I think is the difficulty in clearly and meaningfully divorcing ideological and philosophical exclusionism from that of politics and policies. It is not understandable whether the authors are trying to portray the exclusion that occurs from political philosophy or ideology, broadly, formally adopted ideas and beliefs for collective orientation towards development or that from opposing values and ideas between persons or groups (intersubjectivity), independent of politics and policies. By solely focusing on a politically laden event, elections, for evidencing exclusionism practiced by ethno-regional and religious individuals, perhaps, engaged in intersubjective interactions, the centrality of politics becomes inevitable. To this end, the empirical analysis needs to inculcate wider social dimensions of exclusionism. Consider if and the extent the unilateral assertion of Sharia principles for arbitrating social disputes in a specific Nigerian ethno-regional and religious space, concurrently signatory to a previously established secular, liberal and formal constitution for promoting order and unity across the social spectrum, really depicts an ‘honorific philosophy and exclusionism’ at the socio-cultural sphere.

3. Dearth of integrative ideology and exclusionism in Nigeria

The dearth of an integrative ideology can be argued in the Nigerian case *assine qua non* to exclusionism. Such absence creates a hiatus opportunely filled with confounding ethno-regional and religious appeals and support, intentionally fomented and deployed by the elites for perpetuating social exclusion and domination. The unruly, incursive, and marauding herdsmen from a particular ethno-regional and religious group can be considered as tolerated by certain powerful ruling elites that identify with the former, whose victims across other regions lament helplessly and hopelessly.

4. Immediate antecedents of postcolonial exclusionist practices

Remarkable events before independence with subsequent dynamics have not been carefully analyzed in terms of causal chains. Ponder not only about the forced amalgamation of opposing cultural groups but also the distorted and selective forms social class structures were established, plus the option for a formal governance system that became entangled with an informal stratagem for conveniently handing over political power to a particular elite segment from a specific ethno-regional and religious group. This latter subsequently claimed the right to rule as against the liberally oriented democratic (free choice, circulatory) and meritorious governance form that negates exclusionism. Still, the worse vice than colonialism has been the Nigerian elites’ failure, amid huge developmental human and natural resource availabilities, to stem its bequeathed evils while building from its enduring utilities *circa* two-third century after political

independence. Legated infrastructures (road, railway, electricity, telephone and postal service networks, pipe borne water etc.) are examples that fell short of adequate maintenance or improvement by succeeding elites held up by select interests. Hence, state and government elite inaction, incompetence or capture can at least be assumed as additional forms of wittingly calculated 'honorific philosophy and exclusionism' of the mass people.

5. Exclusionism through ethnic language differences

In the subsection about 'Exclusionism in Africa: Nigeria: A Case Study', it is doubtful if and to what extent the seemingly anecdotal account (no excerpts annexed or inserted with time frame from the WhatsApp conversations mentioned by the authors) about objecting to vote for candidates outside own language group truly implies social exclusion, that is, without showing the persistence of ethnic patterns of voting through the postcolonial period. Ethnic (emotional) appeals, based on interlocking ethnic memberships, can play higher roles than discrete voter biased and exclusive choices or ideologically driven party programs (if any). A brief literature insight about the philosophical or political ideas Nigerian political party leaderships share with their supporters at the ethno-regional and religious identity platforms can contribute towards understanding more fully the weight of electoral influence (strong or weak) the former exercises on the latter. It means the authors need to expand empirical analysis.

6. Need for extended data analysis

Despite being a philosophical essay, the fact that the authors assigned a specific section for case study demands that higher attention be paid to facts for enhancing the paper's quality through extended data analysis. Socially undesired exclusions should not be confined to the swinging winner or loser majority ethnic groups that interact politically during elections. Exclusionism may be ubiquitous; however, clarity is needed as to when and where it is significantly the product of an agent's discrete reflections (philosophic leanings) about interactive social being or the result of manipulations by specifiable external forces beyond the individual's control. External forces include powerful agents situated and acting from outside the nation-state boundary and those acting within and under definable power resources they seek to maintain or amass by using others through, for example, ethnic symbols.

7. Exclusionism: Innate human nature or socially constructed.

In the conclusion, the authors affirm *inter alia* that 'Different forms of exclusionism were highlighted, and it is fair to conclude that the tendency to exclude is part of human nature and this arises in the quest for power and control, to identify oneself as superior and the other human being as inferior.' This conclusive statement appears to contradict an earlier critiqued one tracing exclusionism to a planned ploy and agency actions or interference by certain western [Eurocentric?] philosophers and colonizers. My take is that exclusionism is socially constructed, learnt, and enforced. Try link such ploy to Karl Marx thoughts about the rudimentary expropriation of communal production by collusive self-

interested members (agents), leading eventually to social exclusion or sharp social class divisions. Consider too the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau's opening statement in his seminal *Social Contract* that humans are born free but are everywhere in chains. These painstaking registries suggest human coercive choices through time and space. I think what matters most is the actions being taken by any people to break off imposed chains, gain and own the right to liberty and self-expression. Democracy is not a natural gift but the outcome of strenuous struggles. Yet, if the authors insist on this rather foundationalist view that exclusionism is an inherently entrenched part of human nature, then, it should be unambiguously expressed. Perhaps, under such position it is better stated as, despite being natural among humans, the tendency to exclude is socially undesirable amid the resonant (modern/contemporary), more acceptable, ideas of citizenship, human rights, and national development for benefiting all without flagrant exclusions.

8. Advancing studies with expanded contributions

Ultimately, it will be distinctly edifying if the authors advance studies to include the systematic contribution of African writers to endogenous philosophy, well referred to in the text. Inter alia, it will not only enhance the organic growth of African philosophy for forging an African development path but also the attenuation of path dependence that traces to western philosophical propagation, the authors described basically as biased. I will add that African, Nigerian, philosophical consciousness has come a long way. It needs to draw inspiration from the disinterred knowledge about well-thought-out, utilitarian, and artistic ideas that endured long before colonialism. The Nok Culture serves as the example of a highly imaginative capacity, superior phase dominance over iron smelting for farming and weaponry, and an eye-catching terracotta artistry. It still stuns the world, considering what Africa and Africans have been going through, that these epic legacies date to early West African inhabitants east of the Niger and north of the Benue rivers (between 900/500 BCE – 200 BC) in what is today northern and central Nigeria, with later extensions to Igbo Ukwu and Ile-Ife. Nok's high significance reposes on being 'one of very few civilizations in the world that transitioned from stone tools straight to iron tools without first learning how to make copper or bronze tools.' One wonders why this feat failed to evolve by garnering greater developmental strength and excellence through later periods. Have 'honorific philosophy and exclusionism' any role? A book collectanea with chapters centered on the theme of African, especially, Nigerian, philosophy and its prospects can be as instructive as inspiring. This reviewer is willing to sign into such project as organizer, co-organizer, or chapter contributor.