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**Rethinking John Dewey’s Instrumentalism Vis a Vis the Igbo
Notion of “Akonucheism”**

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Abstract

This work examines John Dewey’s instrumentalism postulate against the Igbo notion of “Akonucheism”. Dewey proposes instrumentalization of man, morality and knowledge in order to pragmatically solve human problems. He prescribes the experimental method for all disciplines and insists that science be allowed to operate without a moral umpire. This overemphasis on the scientific method constitutes one of the problematics of his pragmatism and engenders the receptivity of the sciento-technological rationality among strictly cultural societies such as the Igbo. On the other hand, the term “Akonucheism” is a coinage, which derives from Igbo words for *intelligence* (Ako or Izu) and *thought* (Uche). It describes the employment of intelligent thought, which entails the pragmatic integration of the positive elements found in the moral charter (culture) of the Igbo people of Nigeria, with acquired learning, knowledge or technical skill (amumamu and nka-na-uzu) to produce problem-resolving or relevant knowledge (now styled wisdom). This wisdom, contextually solves existential problems and the process of its extraction is what is called “Akonucheism”. Our aim in this paper, therefore, is to propose a balanced and rational integration, which makes it possible for the positive moral elements locatable in cultures to readily and complementarily fuse with the sciento-technological rationality in order to produce problem solving wisdom (Amamihe). However, we observe that among the Igbo, the circuit of knowing gets only completed when humane

solutions are achieved without loss of human dignity, personhood and moral values hence, our rethinking Dewey's instrumentalism. The analytical and comparative methods of enquiry are adopted for this research.

Key Words: Instrumentalism, "Akonucheism", Experimentalism, Wisdom, Knowledge

Introduction

Pragmatic theorizing endears itself as a commendable philosophy to twenty first century scholarship. This is consequent upon its result-orientedness and workability in terms of the practical achievements it has historically recorded. Scientific technology, which is the dominant paradigmatic ideology of this era has therefore found its fullest expression and relevance through its products. There is no gain saying the fact that science and technology have enabled higher yield in crops; efficient disease control in agriculture; increased output and indirect lower costs in industries; decreased errors and improved efficiency in jobs through the use of computers; faster and more secure electronic transactions in the banking sector; development of brails for the visually impaired and highly sophisticated armaments for warfare; supersonic crafts for land, sea and air transportation, among many others. These numerous achievements of sciento-technological rationality apparently give credence to her method. It is in view of the foregoing that John Dewey in his instrumentalism postulate advocates that man's sole nature is to successfully master his universe through science (*Experience, Nature and Freedom* (49)) and that "science should be allowed to operate without a moral umpire (*Common Faith* 32). He even prescribes that all disciplines surrender their methods to that of experimental science. Yet, we daily observe that "the forces of the techno-scientific economy are threatening the very foundations of human life, even while they create unheard-of material bounties for a minority of humanity. These same forces are giving rise to ever more complex social, political and moral questions" (Kim 1-2). Africa has been the most hit. Her cultural values, life ethics and mores have become so bastardized that scientific rationality is now held suspect.

This work therefore takes a critical look at Dewey's over-emphasis of the use of scientific method in his concept of instrumentalism. We tried to expose the moral and epistemological lacune created by Dewey's uncritical ingestion and glorification of the scientific method as a water-tight epistemological formula. We attempted to also compare Dewey's instrumentalism with Igbo folk worldview called "Akonucheism". "Akonucheism" is, however, an anglicized form of the Igbo words for intelligence (Ako or Izu) and thought or thinking (Uche or Echiche). When co-joined, what results is the Igbo word for Intelligent thought ("Ako na Uche"). This employment of intelligent thought is however, a process that fuses together the positive elements in folk worldview embedded in Igbo cultural patterns with acquired learning or skill to produce relevant knowledge or wisdom (amamihe). "Akonucheism" embodies further concepts that correlate and best describes, the Igbo epistemic circle. We shall argue that every culture has its own science, that is, its own basic assumptions about nature and a logic with which they interpret their existential realities and give meaning to their social living. Our analysis will reveal a nexus as well as a variance in the pragmatic concerns of both the sciento-technological rationality and "Akonucheism".

In order to achieve the foregoing, we shall address the following questions: Does the over-emphasis of the scientific method as couched in Dewey's instrumentalism really play down the place of cultural values and ethics? What nexus and variance exists between the pragmatic approaches of Dewey's instrumentalism and the Igbo notion of "Akonucheism"? What ethico-epistemological implications does the notion of "Akonucheism" hold for the Igbo that is beyond Dewey's instrumentalism. We argue for a complementary and symbiotic fusing of Western techno-scientific rationality with the Igbo notion of "Akonucheism". This makes it possible for science and technology not only to flourish in a more appreciable way but it also makes the sciento-technological adventure more acceptable and attractive within indigenous cultural contexts such as the Igbo's and by extension, other African societies. To our knowledge, no scholar has ever done this in the history of thought. Varied scholars have tried to analyze Dewey's instrumentalism (John Smith 1966, Ralph Sleeper 1987, Joseph Omoregbe 1990, Nick Turnbull 2004, Henry T. Edmondson 2006, T. Wilson 2007). However, our paper clearly veers off from straight analysis of Dewey and uses comparative analysis in seeking for an African way of enriching Dewey for the benefit of African cultures.

In what follows, we outlined Dewey's instrumentalism and its reaches, we also explained Igbo notion of "Akonucheism", then we compare both of them and eventually ratify "Akonucheism" as supreme and consequently reaching our conclusion.

Dewey's Instrumentalism and its Reaches

The America of Dewey's day was a state with an increased awareness of its powers and the possibilities of becoming the most advanced technological society in history; hence, she faced too many practical problems. Consequently, pragmatic thinkers of this era could not rest content with a lofty vision of reality as a whole. Traditional philosophies of empiricism and rationalism for those pragmatists, created gaps amid the complexity of man's environment. Dewey therefore accuses their philosophies of imposing certain pre-conceived schemes on human thought, which stall knowledge. Dewey considers these traditional philosophies as hindrances to the task of problem-solving. Dewey prescribes the instrumentalization of knowledge, morality, and education. He proposes a sort of reconstruction in philosophy, which will in turn subject all disciplines to the method of science, which interprets truth in terms of its practical function". Similarly, the revolutionary philosophy of Dewey becomes a practical philosophy, which is more concerned for social realities than that of James, and more involved in solving immediate problems than that of John Rawls. He calls this philosophy, instrumentalism.

In formulating this postulate, Dewey synthesizes the logical and scientific concerns of Charles Sanders Peirce with the moral and humanistic ideals of William James. Dewey's instrumentalism according to Luke and Mastin, "starts from the point of view of fallibilism: "that absolute certainty about knowledge could at least in principle be mistaken" (218). Dewey considers man in his environment as an active participating agent that keeps updating his intellect with ever evolving and new challenging experiences. It is this particular conception of man that gave birth to Dewey's concept of instrumentalism. It could rightly be said then that John Dewey built his

instrumentalist thought from William James' assertion that "theories are instruments, not enigmas in which, we can rest". Thus, Dewey in *his Development of American philosophy* conceives his version of instrumentalism as having as its aims, the establishment of precise logical theory of concepts, judgements and even various forms of inferences enabled by a consideration of the out-workings of thoughts in the experimental determination of future consequences.

The term, instrumentalism captures Dewey's emphasis that ideas are tools for both solving problems and shaping of man's environment to suit his ends. In Dewey's version of instrumentalism, thought, thinking, inquiry and ideas are all instruments for problems solving". By this, Dewey is found to have clearly articulated the views of his predecessors and by his introduction of the concept of adaptation, Dewey brings in a new outlook on reality as a dynamic entity. He proceeds to confirm earlier Jamesian and Piercian beliefs about truth, meaning, ideas, concepts, theories and in fact, all of reality. It could be recalled that Dewey couches his pragmatic thoughts in three dimensions. The first of these is its ecological side, which relates to the natural influence which human beings, plants and animals exert on the environment and the response they get from it. The second is the pragmatic aspect of his philosophy. Emphasized here are his teachings which border on concepts like verification, experimentation, truth and meaning of idea. Though Dewey never expressly called his philosophy, epistemology. Jones and Fogelin tell us that "he prefers the tag The Theory of Inquiry as more representative of his approach... pragmatism was not (addition mine) an epistemological theory, as it was for Pierce, but a therapeutic device" (36). Finally, the third aspect of Dewey's thoughts refers to the critical aspect of his theory of pragmatism namely, instrumentalism. A simple reading of Robert and Kathleen's *Short History of Philosophy* indicates that his theory revolutionizes traditional philosophy by launching a verbal attack on traditional notions of truth. Ihejirika observes that Dewey does this rejection by replacing potentially the old conception of truth as static, with new social order, which sees truth as communitarian and interactive. Robert and Kathleen posit that "by this rejection of traditional notions of truth, Dewey tends to have effected an epistemological revolution with similar contents as the works of Copernicus and Immanuel Kant in the history of philosophy" (256). Instrumentalism, which is our major focus fluctuates between the second and the third aspects of his pragmatic theory of truth. Understandably, Dewey calls his pragmatic theory, instrumentalism just to distinguish it from other forms of pragmatism.

However, our present problem with Dewey is his over-emphasis of the scientific method of experimentalism in his instrumentalism. Dewey, after his introduction of the concept of interaction, theorizes that truth, meaning, ideas, concepts, theories and reality as a whole are in a continuous state of evolution, where they, constantly grow on all sides adapting to new results, and perfecting themselves in time and given man's constant encounter with his environment. This Darwinian influence gives Dewey's pragmatism an orientation toward results and provides a futuristic account of life rather than that of the past. It is an application of a new logic which is based on consequences rather than antecedents. Ihejirika in *John Dewey's Instrumentalism: A critique* observes that "the mutual effect which is highlighted in Dewey's pragmatism is seen to the extent that as the scientist proceeds in an experiment, he questions the situation while facts impose themselves on him, and through this process of social interaction, the scientist

is able to arrive at a certain compromise called conclusion” (88). Besides, such conclusions arrived at the end of the experimental process are held as hypothesis rather than theories. Dewey calls this the experimental element of his pragmatism.

What Dewey’s pragmatism envisages in summation, is that, repeated experiments will do no less than strengthen earlier conclusion by way of confirming them. The implication of this, is that at every successive stage of an experimental process, the truth or reality being experimented acquires new adaptation as it evolves progressively and is to be considered only as a tool for problem-solving. This is why Dewey conceives inquiry as “a progressive transformation of an indeterminate situation into a more determinate situation towards a unified whole (*Experience, Natural and Freedom* 120-136). Even when the unified whole gets realized, the best this experimental process can offer humanity are mere probable conclusions. Probability, however, is not worth staking our lives for.

Granted that Dewey’s instrumentalist philosophy avails much progress and resolves hitherto trouble-shooting issues in philosophy such as bridging of the gap between theory and practice, datum and thing etcetera, it is also pertinent to note the problematics of his many bogus claims in justification of the scientific method. For instance, Dewey avers in his *Reconstruction in Philosophy* that “it was against the law of nature to use institutions of society, to monitor the operations of science” (159). In his *Common Faith*, Dewey suggests that “Science should be allowed to operate without a moral umpire” (32) and in his *Experience and Freedom*, Dewey further espouses the idea that “man’s sole nature is to successfully master his universe through science” (149). His suggestion that Ethics, knowledge and even human persons be instrumentalized entails wholesome relativization of almost everything. When ethics and knowledge are instrumentally considered, a relativized morality results and this leaves no possibility of a reference to any fixed moral code or umpire. That way, humanity will then become means to other ends too. Such ideology occasioned by Dewey’s suffocating projection of the method of science in his instrumentalism postulate can be dangerously destructive. It is against such tendencies that Bertrand Russell instructively opines that; “when science is not moderated by society, then we must have succeeded in sowing seeds of impiety and forms of immoral behavior towards the environment (cited in *History* 776).

Modern science as Alan Kazlev notes “...does not admit of any reasoning beyond the empirical... the mechanical model of explanation is what, most times, dominate the so-called value-free physico-mathematical science” (01). If, indeed, science is ignorant of values and cannot answer questions about aesthetic and metaphysical realities, it becomes necessary that we look for a complementary mode of thought which could take care of this. To limit the study of reality to the laboratory as Dewey suggests and to subject all disciplines to the experimental method of science (which in reality is impossible) is akin to studying theology with the laboratory equipage of the physical sciences. To jettison the moral dimension of knowledge all in the name of pragmatism, is to self-destruct. Alloyd Ihua was therefore right in his assertion that “...ours is an age that is marked by embarrassing contrast between the spectacular scientific and technological achievements on the one hand, and a shameful degradation of the human person on the other...at best, the legacy of Western scientific and technological civilization for the African could be summarized in what Thoreau says is an improved

means to an unimproved end” (*Truth, Knowledge and Society* 122 – 123). Since according to Albert Schweitzer “the prosperity of a society depends on the moral disposition of its members” (*Civilization, and Ethics* 76). We therefore present a complementary mode of thought in the Igbo pragmatic notion of “Akonucheism”.

The Igbo Notion of “Akonucheism”

“Akonucheism” is a coinage from the Igbo words for “intelligence” (Ako or Izu) and Thought (Uche). When co-joined, what results is *Ako na uche*. The conjunction ‘na’ in between the two is akin to the English, ‘and’. The ‘ism’ affixed at the end of ‘Akonauche’ (makes the word, a doing word, it is a verbal form of the word ‘Akonauche’). If ‘Akonauche’ literally means the employment of ‘intelligent thought’ in the search for solutions to man’s problems, the implication is that some thoughts are considered unintelligent and unintelligible in the Igbo context. How then do we best explain the term “Akonucheism” and what are its embedded concepts? “Akonucheism” is the intelligent application of our thoughts through a complementary integration of the positive elements of acquired learning and skill with folk wisdom (as found in cultures) in the human quest for pragmatic solutions to existential problems of man and his environment. “Akonucheism” therefore espouses the idea that what gets the knowledge tag among the Igbo is any idea which practically solves a problem but which is protective of human personhood, cultural mores, values and that which is both morally enriching and beneficial also to its context. As Ijiomah notes in his *Humanization Epistemology*, “every knowledge arises from a contextual problem and returns to it. It is also relative as long as it is a selective penetration of reality. This is so because it is a particular problem that determines a concomitant knowledge” (22).

Every knowledge therefore tends towards an end, namely, the solution of the problem that brought it about. Going by the above, it is impressed upon us that “problem solving” justifies knowledge at least from the pragmatic standpoint. Such problems must also be seen from the communal point of view. Granted that some problems are personal and could be the selfish interest of an individual yet, in the Igbo context, an individual becomes meaningful only in an organic complementary realm. In Igbo epistemic circle, there are concepts that co-relate. It is in this correlation, that we find the real nature of what Igbos mean by knowing or still what Charles Pierce calls “fixing of belief” (Buchler 2). Ihejirika reports that in the Igbo epistemic worldview, “Knowledge is understood as a continuum due to the correlation of the embodying concepts of “ako” (intelligence), “Uche or Echiche (thought or thinking), “amamihe” (wisdom and /or disposition aspect of knowledge and “amumamu or nka na uzu” (acquired learning or skills or technology)” (181).

When human beings get confronted with challenges, knotty problems or indeterminate situations (Mmekpahu or Ihe-imakanihu), “ako” (intelligence) is confronted and gets disturbed hence, it activates to its apex in search for a solution. It does this through the receptacle of “Uche” (Thought) and the process “ako” (intelligence) and “Uche” (thought) interact is called “echiche” (thinking). In the process of this reflection, the mind ruminates on a variety of all epistemic elements in its possession and awareness. It does this by way of experience, acquired skill or learning, familiar worldviews, cultural orientations and environmental influences. In doing this, there is a complementary and integrative assemblage of experiences. The implication is that

“Ako” gets activated in Dewey’s fashion when confronted with problems. (This activation is an activity of sieving the meaningfully relevant from the not so useful. Here then comes in the role of values and ethical orientations of the thinker, who considers what is socially acceptable in his context in this sieving process). But, for the Igbo, “ako” is always busy whether confronted or not because man is an ever thinking and ever conscious being. The Igbo rather has it that “ako” gets to its fullest mode of activation when challenged. When ‘ako’ is disturbed, it begins a search for solution (in the manner described above) and does this through “uche or echiche” (thought or thinking). “Uche or Echiche” Ijiomah holds, represent a receptacle in which there is a potency called ‘amamihe’ (wisdom). Wisdom here is understood as right appropriation or application of intelligence informed by the fusion of environmental and contextual influences of cultural values and social ethics etcetera) with learned experiences and skills (amumamu and nka).

“Ako” otherwise called “Izu” (intelligence) is however ambivalent. When ‘ako’ (intelligence is morally informed with humane values and is not only ethically guided but adequately educated in learning and skills, “amamihe” (Wisdom) results. On the contrary, when “ako” is bereft of proper moral and ethical grooming, it interprets and employs everything around it as tools to serve selfish interests, that then is called “aghugho” (treachery or craftiness). This cleverness is held condemnable in the Igbo society and does not qualify as knowledge. Treachery may bring solutions to selfish problems and could be applauded pragmatically, yet, it is disdained among the Igbos. Knowledge in this context according to Ihejirika, becomes “the moral application of ‘ako’ (intelligence) working in the receptacle, “uche or echiche” (thought or thinking) to resolve (complementarily with other worldviews including acquired learning and skills) to solve challenges or problems (mmekpahu or ihe-imakanihu), which keeps changing (not static). This is done in such a way that the personhood of the human person (Nma-ndu or Mmadu – literally, the beauty of life that is what Igbo call human beings) is protected and benefited” (183).

As long as existential realities reveal unending challenges, knowledge will always be revised to meet emerging needs and challenges. Again, in the notion of “Akonuecheism”, “amumamu” or acquired skill, learning and studying or agumagu (which enriches the intellect) must necessarily combine with our ethical orientations and values (couched in our cultures) to produce the needed pragmatic relevant knowledge “amamihe” (wisdom), which in turn brings (Ogbugbo mkpa) – solutions to problems.

It could be recalled that Chris Ijiomah had discussed a related idea in his *Humanizing Epistemology* (1996) but our position parts ways with his in the sense that Ijiomah limitedly conceives “ako” as wisdom and ‘amamihe’ as intelligence. He did not also reckon with cultural values as epistemic elements that can complementarily welcome a fusing of folk wisdom with sciento-technological rationality. While we may neither discard the strong points of his argument nor uncritically welcome his generatizations, it is our view that “akonuecheism” as explained above best represents the current Igbo epistemic circle and worldview, which could suitably gain universal applicability. Besides, it is still this humanistic spirit, which Alloy Ihua sees as “foundational to everything African” (180) that drives these notable philosophers of African descent to come up with their different philosophies. These include: Kwame Nkrumah’s

“Consciencism and African personality” (1969, 1970), Leopold Sedar Senghor’s “Negritude” (1971), Julius Nyerere’s “Ujamaa” (1971); Kenneth Kaunda’s Humanism (1966), Innocent Asouzu’s Complementary Reflections of “Ibuanidanda” (2011) and Godfrey Ozumba’s Integrative Humanism (2010). Our present work is our contribution to this humanistic epistemology.

Dewey’s Instrumentalism and “Akonucheism”: Any Nexus?

The chief commonality between Dewey’s instrumentalism and the Igbo notion of “Akonucheism” is that both philosophies are pragmatic. Pragmatism is not only a philosophy of action but also relevance. Hence, knowledge in Dewey is a mode of participation valuable in the degree to which it is effective, Dewey cited in Browstein’s *Basic Problems in Philosophy* expressly asserts that “knowledge is the perception of those connection of an object which determines its applicability in a given situation” (347). For anything to qualify as knowledge in Dewey’s perspective, it certainly must effect certain changes in things which agree with and conform to the conception entertained. “Any failure in that direction renders such ideas as mere hypothesis, theories, suggestions and guesses and are only to be entertained tentatively and be utilized as indication of experiment to be tried” (*Democracy and Education* 345). Besides, Dewey as described by Garth Kerneling considers all knowledge as mere tools for problem solving. Kerneling labels Dewey an outstanding exponent of philosophical naturalism. However, “philosophical naturalism (as Ihejirika explains) conceives human thought as having the capacity of crafting out solutions to life challenges. By proceeding from testing novel hypothesis against experience in order to achieve “warranted assertibility, that in turn yields coherent and meaningful action” (148). In the Igbo notion of “Akonucheism” ‘ako’ (intelligence) is instrumentalized to sieve knowledge from non-knowledge through the process of “Uche or Echiche” (Thought or Thinking). Man’s mind in this folk philosophy is seen as having the ability too, to generate novel ideas, which must be in tandem with the contextual values and the moral charter of the very community seeking solutions to their problems. The impression we have of both Dewey’s instrumentalism and “Akonucheism” is that both study social reality though through employment of different approaches. Nature in both philosophies is not considered static hence, knowledge becomes a continuum that is open to constant revision in line with the currency of thought and the social problems of the milieu of its practitioners.

Again, we find also that knowing in both modes of thought is context based and the thinker in both strands of pragmatism is an immersed participant in the epistemological adventure hence, Dewey has it that “knowing is an existential overt act” (*The Quest for Certainty* 233). Whereas the knower (himself) in “Akonucheism” perspective goes through the rigours of all correlating concepts in Igbo epistemic circle since there are no pre-determined knowledge but only a guide locatable within the cultural and the socio-ethical cum religious frameworks of the community. Yet, in these body of dos and don’ts’ (Mores) lie the approvable and the abominable, which guides in the determination of which idea to uphold, implement or reject. Knowledge in Dewey’s instrumentalism is relative so also, is knowledge in “Akonucheism” perspective. If there is any sense the relativity of both pragmatic worldview differs, it will be clarified in our next section.

Beside this, knowledge in both Dewey's instrumentalism and the Igbo notion of "Akonucheism" is conceived as self-reconstructing due to changing human needs and environment, hence, both pragmatic worldviews are not absolute. However, both pragmatic philosophies (Dewey's instrumentalism and Igbo "Akonucheism") give adequate consideration to human ecological concerns. The average reader of Dewey may fail to notice that one of the three dimensions Dewey couches his pragmatic thoughts is its emphasis on ecology. In this aspect of his pragmatism, he discusses the mutual influence which human beings as well as plants and animals exert on the environment and the responses they get from it.

Nevertheless, in the Igbo notion of "Akonucheism", the failure of man to maintain a balanced equilibrium in nature is considered a violation of a time honoured cultural norm thus, every misuse of nature or natural endowments is considered abominable as "Aru or Nso ala" (abomination). When such happens, the culprit placates, the gods of the land or ancestors, whom Geoffrey Parrinder cited by Ohale, considers as active policemen of the community though dead (62). Until libation is poured to them, balance is not restored to nature and this is pivotal to the economic and spiritual well-being of man in Igbo land. For this singular reason, even dead ancestors in Igbo land "continue to be held in awe for the roles they play to ensure social control. Onwubiko tells us in *Wisdom Lectures* that, "among the Igbos 'trees and animals believed to facilitate reincarnation are also sacred" (39). In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, we learn that "the field at which wrestling matches are held in Umuofia had big and ancient sick cotton trees, which are sacred. We learnt incidentally that this tree is connected with fertility. "Spirits of good children lived in the tree waiting to be born. On ordinary days, young women who desired children came to sit under its shade" (33). The point being driven home here is that there is also a serious ecological concern in Igbo epistemology which the notion of "Akonucheism" exemplifies.

"Akonucheism" as Supreme over Dewey's Instrumentalism

Dewey's bogus claim that demands the subjection of all disciplines under the method of science, his advocacy in his *Common Faith* that, "science should be allowed to operate without a moral umpire" (32) in addition to his assertion that "man's sole nature is to successfully master his universe through science (*Experience and Freedom* 149) brings a great imbalance to Dewey's pragmatic thoughts, which the Igbo notion of "Akonucheism" complementarily overcomes. Dewey by the above claims took his scientific fanaticism to a disproportionate level. The impression created is that the whole problem of man is the conquest of the universe through science. His prescribed method adopted for his instrumentalist postulate (namely, experimentalism) implies that all inquiries whether philosophical, theological or scientific must proceed through tests, observation and building of hypothesis, confirmation and pronouncement of judgement. Worse still, is a similar advocacy in his *Reconstruction in Philosophy* that "it was against the law of nature to use institutions of society to monitor the operation of science" (159). The foregoing indicates that man in Dewey's instrumentalism becomes just a mere tool employed for other ends. On the contrary, reality tells us that the method science employs only differ from that of philosophy in the sense that physical sciences make strict use of the laboratory; but in terms of subject matter, even theology and all disciplines similarly study reality. In consequence, the Igbo notion of "Akonucheism" maintains that science, being more often than not dispassionate about

moral values, suffers the crippling limitation of an inability to answer questions about aesthetics, ethics and metaphysical realities. “Akonucheism” therefore offers society a re-interpretation of science. This re-interpretation conceives Knowledge and /or Science as performance which could be contextualized to serve relevant purpose in an acceptably moral and ethical way in the society, where it is employed. Science in this sense, is not conceived as referring to abstractions such as theories and laws, the idea of scientific method, description of the world in a textbook etcetera. Rather, in the perspective of “Akonucheism”, knowledge is considered from the socio-centric perspective; where it serves not just personal interest but also, and more importantly, the interest of the community. As Alan Kazlev remarks; “it is the mechanical model of explanation that most times” dominate the so-called value-free physical and mathematical sciences” (01). Hence, modern science does not admit any other reasoning beyond the empirical. The notion of “Akonucheism” underscores the necessity to proceed from epistemology to wisdom. After all, all knowledge systems share a common element of localness and as Turnbull notes:

Their differences lie in the way they are assembled through social strategies and technical devices for establishing equivalences and connections between otherwise heterogeneous and incompatible components “...some traditions mode it through art, ceremony and ritual (Western, additions mine). Science does it through forming disciplinary societies, building instruments, standardization techniques and inviting articles” (*African Traditional Wisdom Magic and Medicine* 55-67).

Dewey’s Instrumentalism denies the institutions of the society any role to checkmate sciento-technological endeavours neither does it respect the personhood of man. Against this backdrop, the Igbo notion of “Akonucheism” in consonance with Bertrand Russell insists that “when science is not moderated by society, then we must have succeeded in sowing seeds of impiety and forms of immoral behavior towards the environment” (cited in *History* 776). This is because human societies are distinguished from animal groups on the criterion that the former are governed by moral norms and their observances. Omeregbe in agreement remarks that “the more the moral norms are flouted in the society, the more the society in question approximates the animals ground, and the less it develops” (*Knowing Philosophy* 198-199). These moral norms are however locatable in cultures of societies. Any failure not to consider our epistemological development alternatives along our cultural lines becomes a miscarriage of reason, which must certainly create an epistemological confusion which in turn breeds citizens of no particular culture nor identifiable distinction (culture confusion).

Furthermore, in Dewey’s instrumentalism, man is at best a mere work implement. On the contrary, “Akonucheism’s” humane pragmatic thought, has the human person, (who does the foregoing suggestion, who makes up nations and for whom all development or forward-looking ideologies and philosophies are meant to serve) as the focal point or pivot of all epistemological discourses. Man is not just a means to another or other ends but the summit of all means hence, the very end being pursued. This feeling is in tandem with the Socratic call to make the human person the focus of our philosophy. Fortunate too, this feeling has since the last century been re-echoed by the personalist philosophers. As Omeregbe observes “...the human person possesses an

inviolable dignity, an inalienable liberty, an inescapable moral responsibility... it is an offence against human dignity to treat the human person as an object. This is the reason personalism decries exploitation, instrumentalization and de-personalization of the human person (*Knowing Philosophy* 196).

Besides, the Igbo notion of “Akonucheism” overcomes a pernicious type of epistemological relativism prevalent in Dewey’s instrumentalism. For instance, knowledge in Dewey’s instrumentalist perspective is mercilessly relativized to such an extent that there is hardly left an objective criterion of knowledge and this has enormous implications for education. Succinctly put, the problem with relativism is the idea, or belief or judgement, that there are standards that must necessarily be met before anything qualifies as tenable and/or indubitable knowledge. Inability to meet such standard(s) eventually paralyses all thoughts. Hence, the real danger of all manner of relativism, moral or epistemological is that what “I” as an individual consider meaningfully relevant to serve my personal interest or at best, the interest of all that relate with me holds as knowledge for me. Regrettably, when such is the case, it is “I” and “mine” alone that gains and the rest of humanity becomes a corporate loser. “My” or “our” interest therefore becomes the umpire of acceptable actions. When knowledge is thinned down to such parochial scheme, be it of individual or of only a particular community, humanity will certainly be faced with a grandiose problem of epistemic naivety. It is true that every knowledge has an end, namely, the solution of the problem that generated it. Yet, Ijiomah cautions that “this problem must however be seen from the communal point of view... one may argue that some problems are personal and could be the selfish interest of an individual, but we know that the individual becomes meaningful (at least in Africa – additions mine) only in an organic complementary realm” (*Humanizing Epistemology* 24).

Albeit, the central problem of relativism as noted by Simon Blackburn is “one of giving it a coherent formulation, making the doctrine more than the platitude that differently situated people may judge differently, and less than the falsehood that contradictory views may each be true” (314). This coherent formulation of relativism is couched in the Igbo notion of “Akonucheism”. By its provision for the employment of the positive elements in all value systems and cultures to be welcomed in a complementary search for pragmatic solutions, the notion of Akonucheism” overcomes this problem of having plethora of truths without an objective criterion to which reference could be made in order to sort out what makes sense from nonsense. Being a mode of thought, which is more subtle and profound, a mode of thought designed without leaving or taking for granted principles of ethics, morals and axiology as they hold true in different contexts. “Akonucheism” overcomes a particularist contextual relevance but enhances the making of solutions that are applicable to different contexts and locations by first assimilating the mores of such societies. John Dewey apparently envisages these possibilities by affirming that “beyond being instrument for gaining control of situations, thought may also serve to enrich ...the immediate significance of subsequent experiences. And it may well be that this by-product, this gift of the gods is incomparably more valuable for living a life than is the primary and intended result of control” (*Essay* 17-18).

Regrettably, Dewey seems to have paid only a mere lip service to this possibility. This is the reason he relegates such a possibility to the realms of art and literature. This is

among the reasons Bourne (1992) accuses, instrumental thinking of limiting philosophy's range of possibilities. On the contrary, in the Igbo notion of "Akonucheism", knowledge is conceived as self-reconstructing and therefore not absolute. This notion accepts innovations even as research flourishes. Though it may have a hue of ethical relativism, yet, it does so only to smack off individualism. That way, it is well guided in order to yield universally acceptable results.

"Akonucheism" also agrees with Ijiomah's description of the Igbo conviction that it is at the point of solving human problems, which must connect the moralizing of human beings that a full circuit of knowledge is completed. We say this because among the Igbo's "amumamu" and "nka" (acquired learning or skills) which fails to produce a morally acceptable solution to human problems (Ihe ima aka nihu or Mmekpahu) and in keeping with the ethical values and perspectives of the people, cannot qualify as amanihe (Wisdom – the dispositional aspect of knowledge) hence, is held condemnable and useless. Knowledge in "Akonucheism" perspective is socio-centric such that positions of leadership will no longer be conceived as avenues for personal enrichment but of service to humanity. No man considers himself an 'ego solus' rather, society's interests hold paramount above selfish interests. The Igbo notion of "Akonucheism" over turns any structured orientations thriving in religious or secular circles, which withdraws children from their society.

Ayn Ryand criticizes Dewey's educational instrumentalism as "capable of not only crippling a child's mind but also arresting his or her cognitive development" (*Interpreting* 55). But any such ideology which inculcates in children values and knowledge, which make it difficult for them to return and fit in as responsible citizens of their societies are torpedoed in our notion of "Akonucheism". It could also be recalled that Edmondson accuses Dewey of reducing students to "lab rats" (164) but "Akonucheism" overcomes that too due to its non-singular adoption of experimentalism as her only method.

Another outstanding advantage the Igbo notion of "Akonucheism" holds over Dewey's instrumentalism is that whereas Dewey's instrumentalism only borrows from the scientific method, the poverty of which is that "it tells us how a process works and not why it works" (Bales 37), "Akonucheism" holds that knowledge (amumamu – acquired learning and skill inclusive) must integratively proceed to "amamihe" (wisdom) to enrich the intellect and produce palpable results and solutions (Ogbugbo-mkpa). This option combines the Western scientific paradigm derived from accumulated learning with African knowledge systems thereby bringing about an integration that comfortably accommodates theistic humanism with sciento-technological ideologies to achieve even the impossible. "Akonucheism" through its manipulative dynamism refines native intelligence into wisdom and forges it with "amumamu" learning, which may be scientific or otherwise to bring about humane solutions to human beings' existential challenges.

More so, just like all humanistic ideologies, the Igbo notion of "Akonucheism" upholds that the universe and all in it evolves but unlike other secular humanistic ideologies, it is neither non-theistic nor is it strictly founded on naturalism. Africans' being incurably religious find an instrumentalist postulate, which is totally opposed to humanistic ideologies very strange. Hence, the notion of "Akonucheism" therefore overcomes

Dewey's scientific bias and the over emphasis of the scientific method above humane, moral, cultural and religious interests. The notion of "Akonucheism" has a place for God thus, it holds that even the inner voice, (conscience) if not properly and morally conscious and God centered becomes seared. God therefore is referenced as an absolute criterion and grand norm. Its epistemology approves that the wise application of "ako" (intelligence) and "amumamu" (learning) takes into cognizance that man is not a happenstance on earth. It could then be said that "akonucheism" upholds creationism in consonance with the worldview of Africans. It additionally respects and sympathizes with non-living things and the environment as creations of "Chi-ukwu" or "Chukwu" (The Supreme God). Our societal values, being determined by our cultural settings must be in alignment with the approved ethical charter as custodied and prescribed by God or gods of the land through their agents in any Igbo culture. So, man must therefore connect with (Chukwu). The Supreme God and be at peace with Him for peace to reign in the land. Solutions to problems must have the seal of God or the gods before receiving widespread public recognitions or approval.

Conclusion

Dewey's instrumentalist brand of pragmatism has to a large extent, been explained in this paper. We were able to point out its shortcomings. Moreover, we have attempted in this paper to explore the Igbo notion of "Akonucheism" with the aim of finding how it can pragmatically, complement the sciento-technological paradigm through the integration of wisdom and acquired learning and skill. We made a strong case for the consideration of ethical values embedded in different cultures in adopting a knowledge system that may be instrumentalized to solve existential challenges of such contexts. In the process of our discussion, we observed the necessity of a grand criterion to which references could be made as a guide to the truth. That way, the excesses of epistemological and ethical relativism is curbed. We found out that the Igbo notion of "akonucheism" recognizes that owing to the unending nature of human problems (Mmekpahu or ihe-ima aka nihu) and the different phases of their manifestations, the search for knowledge becomes a continuum. In consequence, the solutions sought similarly varies as societies vary but must be crafted with a mindset that takes cognizance of the cultural, moral, ethical and socio-religious aspects of humanity. All the same, it should not downplay the fact that the scientific endeavour is part and parcel of that search for solutions to problems that confront humanity. The provisions made by "akonucheism" in its reference to or its recognition of a supernatural creator helps to set limits to human freedom thereby providing a framework against man's deification of self as found today among many practitioners of the sciento-technological epistemology. We observed that Dewey's instrumentalism opens its doors to moral nihilism and a kind of relativism that destroys truth and morality. This is exactly the reason Omoregbe in his *Critique of Dewey's Pragmatism* warns thus: "Remove objective moral standards from socio-political life, what are governments and society in general, but gang of thieves and treasury looters on a grand scale" (08). It is in order to guide against such regrettable development, which Dewey's instrumentalist thought could inspire, that our present rethinking assignment is undertaken and therefore become relevant and significant.

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