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Abstract

This paper delves into the potential of Neo-humanism to revitalise African socio-cultural systems. By employing a theoretical and analytical approach in examining the limitations of traditional humanism and exploring the potentials of Neohumanism, the study argues that Neo-humanism offers a more comprehensive approach that addresses both human and environmental concerns. It proposes that by fostering a spiritual connection to all beings, Neo-humanism as a framework can inspire a sense of compassion, justice, and ecological responsibility. Through a critical analysis of key Neo-humanist principles, the paper explores their relevance to African contexts. It examines how these principles can be applied to tackle pressing issues such as gender inequality, social injustice, and environmental degradation. By drawing on philosophical and ethical insights, the study aims to contribute to the development of more just, equitable, and sustainable African societies.

Keywords: Neo-humanism, African socio-cultural systems, humanism, environmental sustainability, social justice, gender equality, spiritual connection, holistic worldview, ethical behaviour, interconnectedness.

Introduction

Rich cultural traditions and a deep-rooted sense of community have long characterised African societies. However, in recent times, these societies have faced numerous challenges, including social injustice, environmental degradation, and political instability. Literature studied in line with relevant literary theories helps in social development. Theoretical discussions are relevant in combating the issues facing Africa and providing workable solutions. These theoretical discourses may evolve from humanism or human character that can be applied to societal experiences. Discourses on Africa and her socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-religious issues often engender reflections on Africa as one fraught with a myriad of challenges which calls for a refractive surgical rescue mission that will help to heal the scarring blight of the continent. Traditional humanistic approaches, while valuable, often fall short in addressing these complex issues. They may prioritise individual rights and freedoms without adequately considering the interconnectedness of all beings. Addressing these limitations, this paper explores the potential of Neohumanism, as a framework and a philosophy that emphasises the spiritual



and ethical dimensions of human existence. The paper delves into key Neohumanist principles by drawing on philosophical and ethical insights to explore their relevance to African contexts. It examines how these principles can be applied to address pressing issues such as gender inequality, social injustice, and environmental degradation in the African socio-cultural system with regards to problem-solving approach, human relationships, and people-oriented policies and how people care for their environment- plants, animals and the ecosystem. Also, it employs a theoretical-analytical approach to examine the potential of Neo-humanism in addressing contemporary challenges facing African societies. By critically analysing the limitations of traditional humanism, the study highlights the need for a more holistic and compassionate worldview. While not speaking of the African socio-cultural system to mean the same dressing or language for all African countries or nations, it refers to African socio-cultural distinctiveness in terms of common interests, interrelations, belief systems, values and behaviours that enhance humanity. This paper attempts to show ways that Neo-humanism can help rescue the African socio-cultural system if applied.

Firstly, humanism is a 20th-century doctrine or postulation that holds firm on moderation in life, encourages the dignity of human will, fosters a sense of permanent value, and a dualistic order of existence aligned with secularism. Humanism, the traditional approach to English studies, life, culture and values, seeks to create an enabling environment in which human relationships are pivotal, especially regarding social justice. However, it does not give importance to all living beings, making it limited in scope. It focuses on man as the origin and source of meaning, action and history, which displaces the philosophical cogito ("I think, therefore, I am), a self-love philosophy according to Catherine Belsey (1980).¹ Neo-humanism, on the other hand, is an ecologically and spiritually centred humanism. It widens the perspective of traditional humanism and gives importance to all living beings. This theory holds that living beings have intrinsic or existential value, regardless of their utility to human beings. This was born through the writings of a modern writer, social theorist, philosopher, and Indian spiritual guru, Pranhata Ranjan Sarkar, also known as Shrii Shrii Anandamurti in the tradition of Shiva and Krishna. He is the arrowhead of Neo-humanism and founder of the socio-spiritual movement Amanda Marga ("the Path of Bliss") Gauthier (2021). Pranhata Ranjan Sarkar's work titled *The Liberation of the Intellect - Neo Humanism* published in 1982 is a set of discourses given between December 1981 and March 1982 on the different facets of life and how spiritual meditation based on an absolute love of the Supreme can foster peaceful coexistence and social justice within and among all living beings.²

Now, the question is, why was there a new form of theory when there was an existing one? Peter Barry (1995) asserts that humanism as a theory holds that good literature is for all time. It is ageless and timeless that a text should be studied in isolation without recourse to background or contextualisation. He also avers that human nature is unchanging through different history and time,

¹Belsey, Catherine. *Critical Practice*. Routledge.1980.

²Gauthier, R.. "Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar's *The Liberation of the Intellect - Neo Humanism*. 2021. <https://anandamargabooks.com/books/liberation-of-intellect-neo-humanism/>

however, individuality is idiosyncratic.³ It is an essence which may develop or change but never be transformed. The summary of the tenets of humanism shows its limitation in scope as it has nothing on other living beings aside from humans, indicating the need for another theory that can handle the complexities of reality inclusive of other living beings.

Literature Review

Neo-humanism, as a philosophical and social framework, has been proposed as a means of revitalising African socio-cultural systems. This concept offers a transformative lens through which to examine African socio-cultural dynamics, challenging traditional humanistic paradigms, especially within African intellectual and cultural landscapes. Scholars such as Blaise Pascal (1970) and P.R. Sarkar (1982) have conceptualised neo-humanism as a progressive framework that extends beyond the boundaries of traditional humanism. Sarkar advocates for a broad understanding of human interconnectedness that surpasses anthropocentric views, emphasising universal compassion and social solidarity (Sarkar, 1982).⁴ Additionally, philosophers like Kwasi Wiredu (1996) have long argued for approaches that transcend Eurocentric frameworks, positioning neo-humanism as an essential tool for understanding human interconnectedness and for systemic transformation.⁵

Traditional humanism has faced criticism for its focus on human-centredness, neglect of environmental concerns, and failure to address social justice and inequality (Bowers, 2011). In contrast, neo-humanism offers a more holistic approach, integrating both human and environmental concerns. It stresses the importance of fostering spiritual connections to all beings and promotes compassion, justice, and ecological responsibility.⁶ The principles of neo-humanism have been seen as particularly relevant in the African context, where traditional humanism has been criticised for its failure to tackle issues such as social injustice and inequality (Osha, 2014).⁷ The emphasis in neo-humanism on compassion, justice, and ecological responsibility resonates with African values like Ubuntu (humanity towards others) and Ukama (interconnectedness) (Mbiti, 1969; Tutu, 1999). These values align with neo-humanism's potential to address pressing challenges such as gender disparity, social injustices, and environmental degradation.⁸

³Barry, P. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester University Press.1995.

⁴Sarkar, Shrii Prabhat Ranjan. *The Liberation of Intellect: Neohumanism* Kolkata: Ananda Marga

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⁵Wiredu, K. *Cultural Universals and Particulars*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.1996.

⁶ Bowers, C. A. *Critical Essays on Education, Modernity, and the Recovery of the Ecological*. Teachers College Press. 2011.

⁷ Osha, S. *African Postcolonial Modernity: Informal subjectivities and the Democratic Consensus*. Palgrave Macmillan.2014.

⁸Mbiti, J. S. *African Religions and Philosophy*.Heinemann; 1969. Tutu, D. *No Future without Forgiveness*. Doubleday. 1999.

Contemporary African philosophical scholarship increasingly recognises neo-humanism as a critical framework for addressing complex societal issues. Paulin Hountondji (2002) stresses the need for philosophical approaches that engage both indigenous knowledge systems and global intellectual traditions.⁹ Neo-humanism fits this need by prioritising a holistic understanding of human experiences that transcend narrow, anthropocentric views. This framework holds promise for revitalising African socio-cultural systems, with its strong commitment to interconnectedness and ethical regeneration. The work of Achille Mbembe (2001) in postcolonial theory underscores how neo-humanist principles can challenge historical power structures and offer alternative ways to envision social relations. By fostering spiritual and ecological connections, neo-humanism presents an alternative approach to addressing systemic inequalities that have historically marginalised African communities.¹⁰

Gender dynamics represent another critical area where neo-humanism offers transformative potential. Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí's (1997) research on gender construction suggests that neo-humanist approaches can facilitate more inclusive and fluid understandings of social relationships. This is particularly significant in African contexts, where colonial and patriarchal structures have constrained gender expression and social mobility. Neo-humanism's emphasis on interconnectedness and justice can aid in dismantling these limitations and reimagining gender relations.¹¹

Environmental sustainability, an area of growing concern globally, is another dimension where neo-humanism's philosophy is relevant in the African context. Environmental activists such as Wangari Maathai (2004) argue that environmental consciousness is fundamentally linked to social justice and community well-being. Neo-humanism provides a framework that integrates ecological responsibility with broader social transformation, challenging the extractive and exploitative economic models that often harm both the environment and marginalised communities.¹²

The spiritual dimension of neo-humanism offers profound opportunities for reimagining social connections. Ohajunwa, & Mji, (2021) explore how indigenous spiritual practices can provide philosophical foundations for understanding human-environment relationships. Neo-humanism encourages compassionate engagement with all responsive beings, moving beyond anthropocentric worldviews that have historically justified both environmental destruction and social marginalisation.¹³ Critical perspectives, such as those from Teodros Kiros (2001), remind us of the importance of maintaining analytical rigour when engaging with neo-humanism, highlighting the challenge

⁹Houstonian, P. J. *The Struggle for Meaning: Reflections on Philosophy, Culture, and Democracy in Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press. 2002

¹⁰Mbembe, A. *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2001.

¹¹Oyèwùmí, O. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1997.

¹²Maathai, W. *The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience*. New York: Lantern Books. 2004

¹³Ohajunwa, Chioma & Mji, Gubela. Expressing Social Justice within Indigenous Research: a Reflection on Process and Affirmation. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*. 2021, 17. 117718012110015. 10.1177/11771801211001567

of developing frameworks that are both theoretically sophisticated and practically applicable in addressing concrete social challenges.¹⁴

Bhowmik (2023) contends that neo-humanism, which emphasises human potential and universal consciousness, provides a promising approach to globalisation. This philosophy aims to break down barriers like nationalism and regionalism, fostering intercultural understanding and promoting universal human values. She highlights the potential of neo-humanism to create a more just and equitable world by ensuring necessities for all through economic policies like PROUT and instilling universal values through education.¹⁵ Similarly, Kesson and Oliveira (2023) argue that while traditional humanism has contributed to human progress, it is limited by its association with power structures and modern ideologies. In contrast, neo-humanism offers a more comprehensive and effective approach to global education, combining internationalism with interculturalism.¹⁶

Sarracino and O'Connor (2023) also propose neo-humanism as a solution to the shortcomings of GDP-focused growth, emphasising the importance of well-being, social relations, and sustainability. While their argument is promising, it lacks specific policy recommendations and oversimplifies the complex relationships between these elements. Nonetheless, they offer a valuable perspective for creating a more equitable and sustainable future.¹⁷ Comparative philosophical investigations by Jean and John Comaroff (2009) suggest that neo-humanist approaches offer valuable mechanisms for understanding cultural transformations, as they prioritise interconnectedness and ethical behaviour, providing alternative narratives to modernist and postcolonial discourses.¹⁸

The potential of neo-humanism extends beyond theoretical abstraction, offering practical strategies for social regeneration. Kwame Gyekye (2004) emphasises the need for philosophical frameworks that can respect cultural specificity while enabling progressive social transformation. Feminist scholars such as Sylvia Tamale (2020) have expanded neo-humanist perspectives by highlighting intersectional approaches that centre marginalised experiences. These contributions show how neo-humanist principles can be used to

¹⁴Kiros, T. Teodros Kiros (Ed). "African Philosophy : A critical/moral practice" *Explorations in African Political Thought: Identity, community, ethics*. Routledge. 2001, 200, pp1-6.

¹⁵Bhowmik, Sunandita. "Internationalization, Interculturality, and Neohumanism." *Philosophy of Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. Praxis Educativa*. 2023,18:1-11. DOI: 10.5212/PraxEduc.v.18.21501.028.

¹⁶Kesson, Kathleen and Oliveira, Marco Alexandre. 2023. "Diversifying Universalism: Neo-Humanism, Internationalism and Interculturalism in Education." *Praxis Educativa*, vol. 18, e21481. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5212/PraxEduc.v.18.21481.049>.

¹⁷Francesco Sarracino, Kelsey J. O'Connor. Neo-Humanism and COVID-19: Opportunities for a Socially and Environmentally Sustainable World in *Applied Research in Quality of Life Studies*, 2023, 18, 9 – 41. Retrieved 10th December from IZA DP No. 14980:Neo-Humanism and COVID-19: Opportunities for a Socially and Environmentally Sustainable World | IZA - Institute of Labor Economics

¹⁸Comaroff, J., and Comaroff, J. *Ethnicity, Inc*. University of Chicago Press.2009.

challenge systemic inequalities and promote more inclusive social configurations.¹⁹

As African scholars continue to engage with neo-humanism, the framework emerges as a powerful tool for addressing the complex challenges facing African societies. By fostering a holistic worldview that emphasises spiritual connection, ecological responsibility, and social justice, neo-humanism offers a compelling framework for reimagining African social and cultural landscapes. This ongoing intellectual development represents a significant contribution to understanding human experience beyond restrictive disciplinary and cultural boundaries. It has the potential to foster social regeneration, ecological consciousness, and ethical transformation.

Traditional Humanism, New Humanism and Neo-humanism: The melting point.

New Humanism was a critical movement that began in the United States between 1910 and 1930, with leanings on the literary and social theories of Matthew Arnold, an English poet, who advocates for a renaissance of past civilisation in the period characterised by industrialisation, materialism, and a relativistic worldview. It is a kick against traditional humanism, conventions, laws and dogmatism that is believed to cage the human spirit. Naturalism and realism were replaced with a more cultural and social approach to life. It is set to resolve tensions between tradition and modernity and seeks to bring together emerging individual rights with what is expected of the individual. In the words of Irina Bokova (2009), as quoted by Hans D'Orville (2015) "[I]t is to give fresh impetus to solidarity, to bring people together and awaken their conscience."²⁰ New humanists further argue that human beings are unique among nature's creatures and should not be subjected to inhibiting laws and dogmas but should be free to follow ethics and morals as deemed convenient. Neo-humanists on the other hand consider humanism as a barrier to social harmony and equality, this is rather intriguing because neo-humanism is built on the foundation of humanism, however, humanism here refers to degenerated humanism. By this, we mean action policies that trample on basic human rights and beliefs while paying lip service to humanism as the reason for such actions as examples such as peace talks, democracy, and brotherhood which is contrary to the real spirit of humanism.

To avoid the pitfalls of traditional humanism, neo-humanism advocates for psycho-spiritual practice, ensuring that genuine love for all is upheld as the main core of an individual life (Avadhuta, 2011).²¹ Traditional humanism came as a reaction to the excesses of religion, making secularism popular. From a Neo-humanist standpoint, this is like throwing the baby away with the bath water (the baby of spirituality thrown away with organised religion without human love). Thus, Neohumanists recommend balanced spiritual exercises such

¹⁹Gyekye, K. *Beyond Cultures: Perceiving a Common Humanity*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press. 2004; Tamale, S. *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*. Ottawa: Daraja Press. 2020.

²⁰D'Orville, Hans. "New Humanism and Sustainable Development" in *Cadmus Journal*. 2015, Vol 2, Issue 5. www.cadmusjournal.org.

²¹Avadhuta, A.V. "Neo-Humanism, Globalisation, and World Futures" in *Global Transformations and World Futures. Encyclopaedia of Life Support System (EOLSS)*, 2011, Vol.II. <http://www.eolss.net/Eolss-sampleAllChapters.aspx>

as meditation and yoga. One other point that neo-humanists supersede traditional humanism and new humanism is that they consider the existential value of any plant or animal and not just the use value of such like other humanisms. Sakar (2020), asserts that

Neohumanism is humanism of the past, humanism of the present, and humanism – newly explained – of the future. Explaining humanity and humanism in a new light will widen the path of human progress and will make it easier to tread. Neohumanism will give new inspiration and provide a new interpretation for the very idea of human existence. It will help people understand that human beings, as the most thoughtful and intelligent beings in this created universe, will have to accept the great responsibility of taking care of the entire universe, will have to accept that the great responsibility for the entire universe rests on them. (p. 101)²²

Neo-humanism is a socio-political and spiritual worldview characterised by love for the (Supreme) God, his creatures and all creations. This love flows by extension to every human race, tribe and culture. It governs how we treat one another. Loving the Supreme implies loving the objects created by the Supreme, both animate and inanimate. The neohumanist lifestyle involves the use of the rational faculty, the pursuit of knowledge, and learning to manage the ego. Culture being a way of life in each society, is responsible for people's dignity, integrity and self-worth. Neohumanism is built on the slogan "diversity, not identity, is the law of nature" (Sakar 1982), meaning that human equality can co-exist with diversity.²³ Neohumanism is appalled by dogmatism and encourages dynamism springing from the devotion and spiritual lifestyle of worship of the Supreme. As a theory, it considers the earth's peculiarities and the spiritual worldview's sublimity. Neo-humanists seek to achieve development while maintaining the biodiversity of the world. One aspect that is of great importance to them is *social justice*. They advocate a balanced, decentralised system where there is an even distribution of wealth, political development and regional development, which has far-reaching effects on the world at large Avadhuta (2011).²⁴ Although traditional humanism also focuses on human relationships regarding social justice, with the recent emphasis on environmental issues and the ongoing crisis on sustainability, there is a need for a more expanded humanism that will also cater for environmental needs aside from man's interpersonal relationships. Thus, Neohumanism came to the rescue, dealing with humanity and in relationship with other living beings and, of course, the entire ecosystem.

Neo-humanist education is rooted in the principles of neo-humanism, a philosophy espoused by P.R. Sarkar, which emphasises love and compassion for

²²Sarkar, Shrii Prabhat Ranjan.. *Neohumanism*. Kolkata: Ananda Marga Publications.2020.

²³Sarkar, Shrii Prabhat Ranjan. *The Liberation of Intellect: Neohumanism* Kolkata: Ananda Marga Publications. 1982.ISBN81-7252-168-5

²⁴Avadhuta, A,V.*Ibid*.

all beings, including humans, animals, and the natural world. Neohumanist education incorporates a harmonious blending of what they call oriental 'introversal' philosophy and occidental 'extroversal' philosophy science (Bussey, 27). Its methodology is flexible, creative and culturally sensitive, making it adaptable to different cultures and parts of the world. It facilitates the physical, cognitive, creative, spiritual, communicative skills, social skills and rational expression of man and his environment based on mutual respect.²⁵ Kesson and Oliveira (2023) argue that Neohumanism offers a more comprehensive and effective approach to education than traditional paradigms like internationalism and interculturalism. They criticise humanism's limitations and advocate for a holistic worldview that values all beings and promotes social justice.²⁶ Neo-humanist education encompasses a holistic approach that integrates physical, ethical, and spiritual development. It emphasises practices such as meditation, a healthy lifestyle, and character-building traits like truthfulness, compassion, and environmental consciousness. This educational philosophy aims to cultivate individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also morally upright and socially responsible. By fostering a sense of interconnectedness with all living beings, neo-humanism seeks to create a more harmonious and sustainable world.²⁷

African socio-cultural experience and Neo-humanism: The convergence.

As stated in the opening paragraph, our African society is one fraught with several socio-cultural experiences, ranging from race and ethnicity, socio-vices, religious bigotry, cultural disharmony and political instability here and there. Not to go too far, a case study of our Nigerian contemporary socio-cultural includes degradation in the African ecosystem, continued poverty of the masses and shameless corruption by the leaders leading to an increase in crimes by dissonant youths who engage in daring and dangerous means of survival by any means possible. These are among the many challenges bedevilling the African continent. African literature often explores the deep-rooted connection between humans and the natural world. Neo-humanism can inspire authors to delve deeper into this theme, highlighting the interdependence of all living things and the need for environmental sustainability. Human activity and decisions are expected to be guided by rationality, but people often respond to likes and dislikes without making rational deductions. These decisions made from mere likes and dislikes are what Neo-humanists refer to as sentiments. These sentiments inform the different approaches to Neo-Humanist study, including geographic sentiment, also known as geo-sentiments, socio-sentiment and devotional sentiment. These categories from neohumanist philosophy are employed to illuminate and challenge the limitations of mainstream humanism (Bussey, 31).²⁸

²⁵Bussey, Marcus. "Critical Spirituality: Neo Humanism as Method" in *Journal of Future Studies*. 2000, 5(2):21-35.

²⁶Kesson, Kathleen and Oliveira, Marco Alexandre. "Diversifying Universalism: Neo-Humanism, Internationalism and Interculturalism in Education. *PráxisEducativa*, Vol.18, e21481, 2023. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5212/PraxEduc.v.18.21481.049>

²⁷Jordan, S. "Era of Neohumanism: Towards a Cooperative Spiritual Society" in *Ananda Marga Gurukula: Global Education Network for People and Plane*. 2014. <https://gurukul.edu/newsletter/issue-38/era-of-neohumanism/>

²⁸Bussey, Marcus. *Ibid*. 31

The intersection of geo-sentiment, socio-sentiment, and devotional sentiment provides a lens through which contemporary African scholars examine collective identity and philosophical consciousness. Kwame Gyekye's (2004) work on African cultural philosophy suggests that these sentiments are crucial for re-examining African intellectual traditions and social experiences.²⁹

Geo-Sentiment in Postcolonial Contexts: Nationalism, Identity, and Power Struggles

Geo-sentiment, according to Sakar (1982:), is the sentiment borne out of the love for the indigenous soil of a country or a geographic location, it can be a man's love for his homeland or a nationalistic outlook to life that excludes other nations. Geo-sentiment, as explored by V.Y. Mudimbe (1988) in *The Invention of Africa*, deconstructs colonial cartographic imaginations, demonstrating how African geographical consciousness represents resistance and self-definition. Scholars such as Mahmood Mamdani (2001) further elaborate on how geographical sentiments challenge colonial spatial constructs, revealing the psychological and emotional mappings of territorial belonging.³⁰ This view is, however, refuted by Ouno, Victor (2020: 180); using postcolonial theories, he analyses Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novels to explore the complexities of cross-cultural experiences. He avers that characters navigate the tension between their heritage culture and their new cultural environments, thereby highlighting the challenges of cultural negotiation, 'othering', and identity formation in a globalised world.³¹ As harmless as it seems, geo-sentiments can become lethal tools in the hands of scheming and desperate power-drunk despots or politicians who to get people on their side and ensure continued leadership, instigate people through propaganda to go to war against perceived enemies in defence of their homeland. Geo-sentiment is expressed through geo-patriotism, geo-economics, and geo-religion, among others (Ghista, 2011).³²

Geo-patriotism holds that citizens of a particular nation or country must show commitment to the growth and prosperity of their country to the detriment of other nations. Love and patriotism for one's nation translates to settling for peace and stability in that nation or state. Regional and tribal identities often play a significant role in African politics and society. These identities can sometimes lead to divisions and conflict, particularly during elections and other political events. Take Nigeria, for instance; many people have lost their patriotic sense of duty to the country because of the regional and tribal divisions, unsavoury political situation, historical antecedents, and failure of the leaders

²⁹Gyekye. K. 2004. *Ibid*.

³⁰V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*. Indiana University Press, 1988; Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton University Press, 1996.

³¹Ouno, Victor Onyango. "Negotiation of Cross-Cultural Complexities of New Worlds in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novels" *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*. 2020. Vol. 3, 180-202.

(https://www.researchgate.net/publication/33964432_Negotiation_of_CrossCultural_Complexities_of_New_Worlds_in_Chimamanda_Ngozi_Adichie's_Novels/citations).

³²Ghista, Garda. "From Humanism to Neohumanism", *PROUT GLOBE*. 2011.

https://proutglobe.org/2011/08/From_Humanism_to_Neohumanism | Prout Globe

to chart the nation alright. There is so much disillusionment and gloom among the populace. Hence, the political leadership tells the body of politics that their country is best, and that others are inferior, sycophants who bootlick do everything within their power to fan the embers of political gimmicks for self-centred reasons while preventing the sincere and concerned people from accessing these politicians and making set societal issues alright. Now, one tool often employed by these politicians (in another version, 'politrikcians') is propaganda. It is the advocacy by a political leader to push for the superiority of their country/ state/ constituency above others for self-centred purposes in the guise of a nationalistic spirit. Historical and ongoing border disputes between African countries, often rooted in colonial legacies, can also lead to geopolitical tensions and conflicts. For example, the long-standing border disputes between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and between Sudan and South Sudan. Xenophobic attacks against foreign nationals, particularly those from other African countries, have occurred in several African countries, highlighting underlying tensions and prejudices. This propaganda may contradict geographical, economic, historical and cultural facts, which births passion and loss of reasoning, leading to conflicts, schisms and even bloody wars Avadhuta (2011). A continued geo-patriotic dissonance is obtainable in Africa, which breeds distrust, social apathy and socio-injustice, can only be curbed through a participatory, revolutionary sense of love, belonging and acceptance of the fact that situations can change for the better if people willingly work in unity and oneness which is a basic tenet of neo-humanism.³³

Geo-economics is strengthening the economic position of a nation or state or even a region at the expense of others (Ghista 2011). According to Garda Ghista (2011), a freelance journalist and founding director of the World Prout Assembly that aims to defeat fundamentalism with Neo-humanism and to defeat corporate capitalism through a movement for economic democracy to empower communities to recover their economic sovereignty in the form of a cooperative commonwealth.³⁴ Many African countries, particularly those rich in natural resources like oil, gas, and minerals, have implemented policies that prioritise domestic control over these resources (MAJR 2024). This can lead to tensions with foreign investors and multinational corporations.³⁵ The continued marginalisation and subjugation of the African economy by European countries through trade restrictions, making them more goods import-oriented rather than goods export-oriented, as the push for developing countries to depend on loans, often leading to the devaluation of their currency compared to other currencies. Some African nations, such as Zambia, Kenya Uganda and Nigeria have become increasingly indebted to China and other emerging powers (Zajontz, Reboredo and Carmody; 2023). This debt can be used as a tool to influence political decisions and shape foreign policy.³⁶ A typical example is the

³³Avadhuta, A.V. *Ibid*,

³⁴Ghista, G. *ibid*.

³⁵MAJR. "How does Resource Nationalism Affect International Trade?2024. Retrieved November 17th, 2024 from <https://majrresources.com/how-does-resource-nationalism-affect-international-trade/> - MAJR Resources.

³⁶Zajontz, Tim, Reboredo, Ricardo and Carmody, Padraig. "The Geopolitics of debt in Africa" *Review of African Political Economy*. ROAPE Publishers. April 2023. Retrieved November 17th, 2024 from <https://roape.net/2023/04/18/the-geopolitics-of-debt-in-Africa/>

present unstable economy of Nigeria which is greatly indebted yet pushes for more loans from 'superior' economies of wealthier nations of the world. The growing competition between major powers has led to increased interest in Africa, countries like China, Russia, and the United States are vying for influence in the region, often through economic and diplomatic means. China's recent push for channeling the resources of other nation's wealth is another case. "Meanwhile African governments and societies are left in limbo by these geopolitics of debt – at real human costs, considering that ever more portions of public budgets are used on debt service" (Zajontz, Reboredo and Carmody; 2023).³⁷ Many African writers address issues of social injustice, inequality, and oppression. Neo-humanism can provide a framework for exploring these themes, emphasising all individuals' inherent dignity and worth, regardless of their social or economic status.

Geo-religion refers to the belief that a specific religious tenet or sacred site holds exclusive authority, disregarding the claims of other faiths to that same site or belief. This often manifests in the conviction that one religion is superior to others, which leads to attempts to forcibly convert non-believers. Such practices can result in religious intolerance, sectarian divisions, and violent conflict, with tragic consequences in volatile regions of Africa. As noted by Bochinger and Rukpe (2017), the increasing visibility of religion in public life has sparked debates and conflicts, particularly with its use in politics and social movements, raising questions about the nature of the public sphere (3).³⁸ In recent years, extremist groups in Africa have exploited religious beliefs to justify violence and terrorism. These groups often promote a distorted and radical interpretation of religious texts to recruit and radicalise individuals. They target specific religious or ethnic groups, leading to sectarian violence, displacement, and instability. Examples abound of how religious extremism has fueled conflict in Africa such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, an extremist group, which emerged in northeastern Nigeria and has carried out numerous attacks against civilians, including schools, churches, and mosques. Their ideology is based on a strict interpretation of Islamic law, and they seek to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria. In Somalia, there is the 'Al-Shabaab' which is an al-Qaeda-affiliated group that has carried out numerous attacks in Somalia and neighbouring countries. They use a radical interpretation of Islam to justify their violent actions, including suicide bombings and kidnappings. Worse still, in countries like Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, smaller extremist groups have also emerged, often linked to al-Qaeda or the Islamic State. These groups exploit local grievances and religious tensions to recruit fighters and carry out attacks. Religion has become the most lethal weapon to silence opposition and entrench the fearful superior hegemony of faith over and above others, especially in cases where adherents happen to also be in control of political hegemony. Sakar (1982), attributes this to a defect in socio-sentiment regarding religious affiliations that destroys the well-being of other communities while defending the interests of their community [18].³⁹

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Bochinger, Christop and Rukpe, Jorg. Eds. *Dynamics of Religion: Past and Present*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH. 2017. www.degruyter.com

³⁹*Ibid.* 18.

One striking example of the dangerous consequences of religious intolerance occurred in late 2022 with the tragic killing of Deborah, a student at Shehu Shagari College of Education in Sokoto, Nigeria. Deborah was allegedly murdered by fellow students after making a statement attributing her academic success to Jesus on a social media platform, which some perceived as blasphemy. The event, which unfolded in a multi-religious student environment, shocked the nation. Despite widespread outrage, political and community leaders failed to take decisive action, prioritising the preservation of political power over justice for the victim. This case illustrates the harmful effects of unchecked religious intolerance and the failure of leadership to protect individuals from such violence.

Applying Neohumanism to the context described, particularly its emphasis on the practical life dimension—especially in terms of local and multicultural acceptance and inclusion—would have facilitated a peaceful resolution through simple dialogue and mutual understanding, thereby preventing the escalation of perceived conflict into violence. The geo-sentiments outlined above restrict human potential by confining individuals within narrow religious perspectives, ultimately causing more harm than benefit to both individuals and communities. Such sentiments distort devotional values, dehumanise individuals, and undermine the pursuit of human excellence. Garda Ghista (2011), corroborates this view below:

The defect of these geo-sentiments is that they keep people confined to a particular part of the world, inside a small box. This goes against the very fundamental nature of human beings, which is to expand, to be always in a state of dynamism. (Editorial Page) ⁴⁰

However, neo-humanists believe that stopping the recurrent devastating effects of geo-sentiment is through education, which will provide people with the necessary knowledge to make rational decisions in social, political and economic matters. It is necessary for people to have love towards one another and for them to be well-orientated and critically minded so they can make well-informed, rational decisions that jettison political propaganda, religious bigotry, ethnic and racial prejudice and hatred. Thus, applying Neohumanism to the problem of geo-religion with particular reference to the Nigerian socio-cultural peculiarity and to Africa at large, there is a need for socio-tolerance, equity, socio-justice and socio-harmony to be entrenched in the subconscious mind of leaders, religious leaders at all sphere, education through mass media at the grassroots, social media orientation and a concerted effort by the government and general populace to eradicate and all forms anti-social behaviours while advocating a deep-seated love for God with translates to love for all his creatures. With Nigeria as a case study, having multi-religiosity and religious bigotry, the question begging for an answer is this, can neo-humanism fix it all?

⁴⁰Ghista, G. *Ibid*

Socio-sentiment and its impact on social cohesion.

Socio-sentiment refers to the allegiance or love given to a particular ethnic/racial group, linguistic, religion or even to a particular sports club. The socio-sentiment dimension delves into the intricate interpersonal and communal relationships that define African social experiences. Paulin Hountondji's (2002) work stresses how social sentiments reconstruct communal bonds that were disrupted by colonial interventions. Léopold Sédar Senghor's (1964) concept of *négritude* offers foundational insights into how collective emotional experiences articulate resistance and cultural regeneration. Kwasi Wiredu (1996), explores how socio-sentiments mediate between traditional communal structures and contemporary social configurations, highlighting their role in maintaining social cohesion and cultural continuity.⁴¹ On the other hand, Sakar (1982), asserts that social sentiment though not conferring to a territory pervades a particular social group. He opines that it is the thinking in the interest of a group's welfare which excludes all other groups which in turn causes division and mutual distrust among human groups. In the same way, attachments are made to a particular geographical location or religion, so it is also made to social groups known in Neo-humanist view as socio-sentiments.⁴² The challenges of racism, xenophobia, and ethnic conflict are called socio-sentiment, the same way geo-sentiment often leads to certain destructive effects. Socio-sentiment is deeper and has far more far-reaching consequences than geo-sentiments. This is because mere education has not been able to put out the flame of racism, xenophobia, ethnic clashes and what have you.⁴³ According to Sakar (1982), eradicating socio-sentiment is found in "proto-spirituality" which is devotional sentiment.

What is the way to counteract this socio-sentiment? The only way to eliminate it is to develop a proto-spiritualistic mentality. The basis of this proto-spiritualistic mentality is *sama-samāja tattva* [the principle of social equality]. When people understand this principle from the core of their hearts, they spontaneously develop proto-spiritualistic mentality, proto-spiritualistic psychic structure. So, this *sama-samāja tattva* is very necessary to fight against socio-sentiment. There is no other way. (7)⁴⁴

Devotional sentiment and the African socio-cultural realities

Neo-humanists believe that the solution to the socio-cultural malaise of geo-sentiments and socio-sentiments can only be found in the neo-humanist medication known as Devotional sentiment. According to Sarkar (1982), the role of devotional sentiment is to "transform the sense of worldly existence into

⁴¹Hountondji, P. 2002. *Ibid*; Wiredu, K. 1996. *Ibid*.

⁴²Sakar. 1982. *Ibid*.

⁴³Sempijja, Norman and Mongale, Collin Olebogeng "Xenophobia in urban spaces: Analyzing the drivers and social justice goals from the Ugandan-Asian debacle of 1972 and xenophobic attacks in South Africa (2008-2019)" *Urban (In)security and Social Justice in Post-colonies. Frontiers*. 2022. Vol 4, pgs 1-11.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/frsc.2022.934344>.

⁴⁴ Sakar. *Ibid*.

the supreme spiritual stance.” (17). Thus, to rational and devotion sentiment facilitators, the brain is a social organ that is linked to others' brains, and it is adaptable to change. Devotional sentiment, which represents the interface between indigenous spiritual practices and contemporary philosophical reflections, offers valuable insights into African social and cultural resilience. Research on African spirituality highlight show devotional sentiments shape human-environment relationships, providing indigenous spiritual experiences as valid modes of knowledge production. Similarly, Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984) emphasises how communal spiritual consciousness moulds individual identity, arguing that the collective dimension of spirituality plays a crucial role in understanding human experience.⁴⁵ Using this model, African socio-cultural realities can be refracted through sensitisation laced with imitation and empathy, character building and values such as truthfulness, universal love, happy-hearted, helpful hands, a clean and clear conscience, and simple living among others. Now, sensitisation is repeatedly familiarising someone with a particular idea through sight, sounds, and thoughts as correct or wrong, for example, if a child lives in an environment where he is sensitised against being gender discriminatory; he no longer sees it as existent doing chores based on gender divide. No job belongs to a particular gender, such as cooking, doing the laundry, or even helping with house chores. Rather, he takes up that task and gets it done without making a fuss over it. We can see that human development with proper sensitisation from the early stage could affect the ways gender role is played out and this resonates with the tenets of neohumanist education. Ghista (2011) surmises that Neohumanism's emphasis on devotion and human potential is key to humanity's progress and well-being.⁴⁶

Sensitisation does not apply to children only; there are ways of publicising issues so that people are dissuaded from acting in certain ways because of cultural stereotypes or gender roles. Neohumanism considers all people irrespective of tribe, colour, race, gender or nationality as equal and one under the supreme love. All men are equal and should be treated as equal.⁴⁷ Thus, Neohumanism's social consciousness, equality and sense of justice can be used to correct the wrong perspective of people because of their gender be it male or female especially in terms of objectification. Objectifying a person implies seeing someone in the light as a stereotype based on their gender only and to objectify is to deny the individual's humanity which negates the love tenet of Neohumanism.

When neohumanism is applied to the social structuring of gender roles, with love as its foundational principle, it can eradicate the discrimination of one gender over another, enabling healing in societies divided by gender inequality. For instance, it is often regarded as a societal norm that the man is the head of the household and, consequently, the primary breadwinner. When, for economic reasons, he is unable to fulfill this role, he is frequently perceived as ineffective, lazy, or inadequate—an individual unworthy of being called a man. This societal expectation can lead to rash decisions influenced by socio-

⁴⁵Menkiti, I. *The Concept of Person in African Philosophy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁴⁶ Sakar, *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

sentiment and stereotypes, which may result in disastrous consequences for both the family and society at large. Such decisions may include resorting to desperate measures to earn money or even attempting suicide to escape the shame of failing to meet societal demands. Neohumanism addresses these issues in two significant ways: first, by challenging the misconception that one gender is inherently superior to the other, and second, by promoting the idea that both genders can contribute equally to the family. Love, tolerance, and understanding should serve as the cornerstones of all relationships, fostering social justice. Patience and mutual respect between the sexes must be central to their interactions. Furthermore, the convergence of geo-sentiment, socio-sentiment, and devotional sentiment offers a comprehensive analytical framework for examining neohumanist thought within the African context.

Conclusion

This paper examined the relevance of neohumanist theory with the African socio-cultural system, focusing on its approach to problem-solving, human relationships, people-oriented policies, and the care of the environment, including plants, animals, and ecosystems. It was shown that neo-humanism is a more expanded humanism that caters to both environmental needs and man's interpersonal relationships, which traditional humanism could not handle. It posits that logical reasoning guided by a spiritual devotion hinged on love for the supreme will translate to a projected love for all living beings, humans, plants and animals. Neo-humanism offers a framework to address pressing issues such as gender divides, social injustice, racial conflicts, religious bigotry, and political instability that have long plagued nations and the continent. By encouraging greater engagement and participation in matters related to African socio-cultural concerns, neo-humanism fosters collective action. It can help dismantle barriers created by geo-sentiments and socio-sentiments, promoting a more harmonious society rooted in socio-tolerance, equity, social justice, and socio-harmony. These values can be ingrained in the subconscious minds of leaders, including religious figures, across all sectors. Achieving this requires targeted education via mass media at the grassroots level, social media awareness campaigns, and a concerted effort by both the government and the general populace to eliminate all forms of anti-social behaviour. This transformation stems from a deep-rooted love for God, which translates into genuine love for all living beings and the entire ecosystem.

This interdisciplinary approach, as demonstrated by Achille Mbembe (2001) and others, generates a refined understanding of African experiences and cultural resilience.⁴⁸ Although this framework is not without critique, particularly in its potential for essentialising complex cultural experiences, it provides a valuable tool for understanding the dynamic nature of African philosophical and cultural expressions. The interface of these sentiments facilitates a deeper analysis of human experience, cultural resilience, and the transformative potential of neo-humanism in contemporary African contexts. This study thus suggests that the application of the philosophy and theory of Neohumanism, when applied to the African socio-cultural contexts, may

⁴⁸Mbembe, A. 2001. *Ibid.*

promote social harmony, environmental sustainability, and individual well-being.

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