
**NIETZSCHE'S RECONSTRUCTION OF MORALITY VIS-À-VIS MORAL
DECADENCE IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA: AN EXAMINATION****Rev. Fr. Prof. Bonaventure Anetoh**Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Tansian University Umunya

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Obidinnu, Vincent AzubuikéDepartment of Philosophy & Religious Studies,
Tansian University Umunya, Nigeria***Abstract***

This study examines Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality vis-à-vis moral decadence in contemporary Nigerian society. Nigerian contemporary society reflects a profound moral crisis, marked by deep-rooted corruption, hypocrisy as well as the disintegration of moral values. From a Nietzschean perspective, this moral decadence must be understood as the symptom of a deeper nihilism, the exhaustion of inherited ideals that no longer inspire vitality or creativity. Nietzsche's pronouncement of the "death of God" symbolized the collapse of transcendent moral foundations; in much the same way, the Nigerian moral order rests on fragile conventions, often religious or cultural, that have lost their genuine authority. What is in vogue in contemporary Nigerian society is a morality of convenience, where weakness is translated as virtue, and self-interest hides beneath the language of communal good. The basic questions are: What are Nietzsche's innovations in the domain of morality? What are the instances of moral decadence in contemporary Nigerian society? How can one interpret Nigerian moral crisis from Nietzschean point of view? What are the implications of Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality on Nigerian society? These and other allied issues are given scholarly attention in this article. Employing the philosophical methods of analysis and phenomenology, this study examines moral decadence in Nigeria through the lens of Nietzsche's moral philosophy. By unravelling the moral decadence that dominate Nigerian political, religious, and social dimensions of life, this study argues that the crisis is not merely institutional but existential. It is a crisis of meaning, wherein individuals and

communities cling tenaciously to unacceptable and discredited values rather than daring to create new ones. The study advocates for a “revaluation of values,” urging Nigerians to embrace creativity, and responsibility in moral domain. Such a revaluation seeks to reconstruct morality on foundations capable of sustaining genuine human flourishing. This enables Nigerians to confront moral decadence, not with despair but with the possibility of renewal.

Keywords: Morality, Nietzsche, Decadence and Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary Nigerian society is deeply bedeviled by moral crisis. This is evident in all aspects of life in Nigeria. The language of moral decadence has become very fashionable in political discourse, religious rhetoric, and everyday conversations. It seems that morality has been relegated to the background in contemporary society. Bribery, corruption, insincerity, embezzlement of public fund and hypocrisy are the order of the day. Very little or insignificant effort has been made toward eradicating these vices. According to Ehusani, Nigeria is plagued by “a crisis of moral probity, where leaders preach values they do not practice and citizens lament vices they are unwilling to abandon.”¹ The situation of Nigerian society in the domain of morality is very pathetic. It requires a radical philosophical interrogation as well as investigation of the very foundations of morality. This explains why this article examines Nietzsche’s reconstruction of morality vis a vis moral decadence in contemporary Nigerian society. This study argues that Nigeria’s moral decay is symptomatic of a deeper nihilism, a loss of genuine value-creating vitality, and a clinging to bad moral frameworks.

Friedrich Nietzsche’s notable pronouncement that “God is dead”² was not merely an attack on religion but a recognition of collapse of the transcendent foundations of morality in Western civilization. Nietzsche rejected divine authority or metaphysical absolutes, and conceived morality as a human construction, which is often sustained by weakness, fear as well as resentment. This led to his distinction between *master morality*, and *slave morality*. Master morality affirms strength, creativity and life, while *slave morality* arises from the envy and bitterness of the weak who translate the virtues of the strong as evil.³ Nietzsche argues that the modern societies, under the influence of Christianity and Enlightenment rationalism, had succumbed to slave morality that

masked weakness as virtue. He frowns at slave morality and maintains that such moral condition breeds nihilism.

It could be said that Nietzsche's moral insights illuminate Nigerian moral situation. It is obvious that Nigerian contemporary society, despite its religious inclinations and cultural traditions, appears trapped in a moral order that is very shallow and porous. Such moral disorder is very evident in Nigeria leadership system and in every other sector of life. This explains why Chinua Achebe lamented strongly in his critique of postcolonial leadership in Nigeria that, "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership."⁴ This leadership failure is not only political incompetence; but also moral collapse as well as the inability of leaders and followers alike to embody values promote the common good. Regrettably, Religion which ought to serve as a promoter of morality, is more often than not, reduced to prosperity preaching, and manipulated for personal gain as well as enrichment.

It could be said that Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality provides a useful framework for understanding Nigerian moral reality, especially in the political sector. Nigeria's political leadership, dominated by the recycling of specific individuals, thrives on blame-shifting as well as incompetency. The attitude of the citizens is also very discouraging. Citizens oscillate between complaints and indiscipline, perpetuating a tradition of moral depravity. Corruption is the order of the day in Nigerian contemporary society. Hence, Onigbinde notes thus: "Nigerians denounce corruption in the abstract but often celebrate it in practice, especially when it benefits their ethnic or religious group."⁵ Such contradictions are symptomatic of what Nietzsche would call decadence: a life-denying orientation where moral language conceals the absence of genuine vitality. The impending danger, as Nietzsche predicted, is nihilism, the collapse of meaning in which inherited values no longer inspire people. In Nigeria, this manifests itself in widespread cynicism: citizens no longer believe in political promises, religious pronouncements and institutional integrity. Obviously, Nietzsche did not stop at critique. His call for a "revaluation of values" is an invitation for societies to abandon hollow moralities and to create new, life-affirming ones. Hence, he urged contemporary societies to move "beyond good and evil," and to embrace the 'will to power'—the creative drive to adopt values that promote life.⁶ For Nigeria, this implies a bold reimagining of morality, which is rooted in creativity, responsibility as well as communal vitality.

The fundamental questions are: What are Nietzsche's innovations in the domain of morality? What are the instances of moral decadence in contemporary Nigerian society? How can one interpret

Nigerian moral crisis from Nietzschean point of view? What are the implications of Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality on Nigerian society? Employing philosophical methods of analysis and phenomenology, this article examines moral decadence in Nigeria vis-à-vis Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality. It argues that moral crisis in Nigeria is not only institutional, but also existential: a symptom of nihilism as well as exhaustion of inherited values. By unravelling the hypocrisies that pervade political, religious, and social sectors of life in Nigeria, this article seeks to illuminate the need for a radical reevaluation of values. Such a reevaluation is not an abandonment of morality but its reconstruction on life-affirming foundations. In doing so, Nigeria may transcend its decadence and envision a higher moral structure.

This article is divided into five sections. Section one examines Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality. Section two focuses on moral decadence in Nigerian contemporary society, bringing out very clearly the manifestations of moral decadence in different sectors of life in Nigeria. Section three analyses Nietzschean interpretation of Nigeria's moral decadence. Section four examines the implications of Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality for moral crisis in Nigeria. Section five is the evaluation as well as conclusion of the study.

NIETZSCHE'S RECONSTRUCTION OF MORALITY

Friedrich Nietzsche is one of the most radical critics of traditional concept of morality. He was not comfortable with the traditional notion of philosophy. Hence, he undertook the task of reconstructing morality. He not only dismantled the inherited moral frameworks, but also called for the creation of new ones grounded in vitality, creativity as well as strength. To understand Nigeria's moral crisis through Nietzsche's perspective, it is crucial to firstly examine his major critiques and reconstruction of morality.

Nietzsche's controversial proclamation that "God is dead"⁷ in *The Gay Science* is an indication of the heavy collapse of all transcendent basis of morality in modern life. It also symbolizes the decline of religious belief. This pronouncement does not merely signify atheism but rather the recognition that morality based on divine or metaphysical authority is no longer credible. For him, morality should no longer be based on divine or metaphysical foundation. Obviously, without such foundation, modern humanity faces the unfavourable prospect of meaninglessness. Nietzsche argues consistently that the traditional morality, especially Christian morality, was based on divine authority against which earthly existence was judged.⁸ Thus, with the collapse of this foundation, values should be conceived as human constructs, subject to critique as well as reconstruction. This insight is particularly relevant for Nigerian society which is bedevilled by moral problems.

One of the most famous aspects of Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality is his famous distinction between *master morality* and *slave morality*. His distinction between master morality and slave morality brought in demarcation in the concept and practice of morality. In his book, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, he traces the origin of moral categories to different social conditions. Thus, he argues that Master morality originates from strong individuals or groups who affirm their own vitality, creativity, and power. Goodness in this type of morality is synonymous with nobility, health and strength, while badness is associated with weakness and mediocrity.⁹ In contrast, slave morality emerges from the weak who, unable to assert themselves directly, redefine morality in terms of their limitations. Through *resentiment*, they label the virtues of the strong as "evil" and elevate their own weakness as "good."¹⁰ It becomes obvious that slave morality is a reaction against master morality. For Nietzsche, modern societies have largely succumbed to slave morality, which breeds conformity, resentment, and life-denial.

Central to Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality is his idea of *ressentiment*, a deep-seated resentment that characterizes those unable to express strength or creativity. Such resentment is very obvious among the originators of slave morality. Instead of affirming life, such individuals internalize their frustrations, developing moral framework that denounce strength and creativity as sinful. Nietzsche describes *ressentiment* as "the imagination of revenge," where the weak transform their limitations into moral condemnation.¹¹ This condition is very evident in contexts where moral language is used to mask envy, hypocrisy, or fear. Hence, in societies dominated by *ressentiment*, morality becomes less 'life affirming', but rather 'life restraining'. In this sense, Nietzsche's insights foreshadow the moral decadence observable in Nigeria, where virtue is often reduced to outward performance, while vice thrives under the surface. This will be given a more detailed attention in later part of this article.

Nietzsche further argues that the collapse of transcendent morality leads to 'nihilism', the belief that life lacks meaning or value. Such belief has unfavourable consequences. He warns that modern humanity stands at the threshold of this crisis. In his words: "what does nihilism mean? That the highest values devalue themselves. The aim is lacking; 'why?' finds no answer."¹² It is obvious that without new values, humanity risks sinking into despair, cynicism, or passive conformity. However, Nietzsche argues that nihilism is both a danger and an opportunity. This stems from the claim that while it exposes the emptiness of inherited frameworks, it also clears the ground for the creation of new values. In this sense, nihilism can be a stage on the path toward renewal, provided it is overcome by creativity and strength.

It ought to be noted that Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality does not end with critique. He also insists on the necessity of a *Umwertung aller Werte*, a revaluation of all values. Certainly, 'revaluation of all values' is an essential aspect of Nietzsche's idea of morality. This involves rejecting moral systems rooted in weakness, fear, or resentment and affirming those that enhance life and vitality. The principle underlying this revaluation is the "will to power," which Nietzsche describes not merely as a desire for domination but as the fundamental drive to grow, expand as well as overcome limitations.¹³ Nietzsche articulates this idea further in his book, *Beyond Good and Evil*, where he challenges humanity to move beyond simplistic binaries of good and evil, urging the cultivation of a morality rooted in strength, creativity, and responsibility. According to him, "Life itself is essentially appropriation, injury, overpowering of the alien and the weaker, suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms."¹⁴ Nietzsche insists that true morality is not passive submission, but the affirmation of life's inherent struggle and vitality. Such gives room for creativity and development

EXAMINING MORAL DECADENCE IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY

This section focuses on the examination of moral decadence in contemporary Nigerian society. Moral decadence has to do with behaviours that are morally unacceptable, and are not up to the expected moral standard. It is obvious that moral decadence is very rampant in Nigeria. If Nietzsche's critique of morality provides the conceptual tools, Nigerian contemporary society supplies a vivid social landscape in which his insights find disturbing confirmation. The Nigerian society of the twenty-first century is marked by corruption, hypocrisy as well as a pervasive tradition of moral crisis. Speaking merely of "corruption" risks trivializing the depth of the problem. What is at stake is not only institutional decay, but also a deeper moral crisis—a decadence that reflects the exhaustion of inherited moral frameworks and the prevalence of *ressentiment*. This subsection explores the manifestations of moral decadence in Nigeria, focusing on political leadership, religion, cultural erosion, and everyday social practices.

Political Leadership and Moral Decadence

Moral decadence is very evident in Nigerian political leadership. The situation of political leadership in Nigeria is very worrisome. This explains why Nigeria remains under-developed despite her rich natural and human resources. Since independence, Nigeria has grappled with a crisis of governance that many scholars interpret as a moral failure. Chinua Achebe bluntly declared that "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership."¹⁵ This problem of leadership has adverse effects on all sectors of life in Nigeria. The political elite, rather

than embodying values of responsibility and service, often pursue personal enrichment at the expense of the public good. It is quite obvious that the common good is sacrificed on the altar of personal gain in Nigeria political leadership. George Ayittey describes African leaders of this kind as “hippopotamus leaders,” bogged down in corruption and patronage.¹⁶ From a Nietzschean perspective, Nigerian politics exemplifies slave morality. Political leaders often mask self-interest under the guise of communal service, much like Nietzsche’s description of the weak elevating their limitations into virtues. Instead of affirming creativity and responsibility, politics degenerates into the recycling of elites, where power is hoarded but rarely exercised for life-affirming purposes. The result is a political order sustained less by strength and vitality than by fear, conformity, and manipulation—a moral landscape ripe with *ressentiment*. Hence, our politicians need total conceptual as well as attitudinal change in their approach to political leadership.

Religious Hypocrisy and the Commodification of Faith

It is very obvious that there is moral decadence in the religious life of Nigerians. Certainly, religion occupies a central position in Nigerian life. However, its role in shaping morality is deeply ambivalent. There are many churches, mosques and shrines in Nigeria. Most Nigerians patronize prayer houses on daily basis. On one hand, Nigerians are among the most religious people in the world; on the other hand, the nation consistently ranks high in global corruption indices.¹⁷ According to George Ehusani: “Nigeria is a country where churches are full on Sunday, mosques are full on Friday, but corruption thrives every day.”¹⁸ This contradiction echoes Nietzsche’s suspicion of Christianity as a system that sanctifies weakness and hypocrisy. In Nigeria, religious leaders often exploit faith for material gain, promising prosperity while indulging in flamboyant lifestyles. Religion becomes commodified, reduced to a transactional enterprise rather than a transformative moral force. As Nietzsche argued in *The Antichrist*, “wherever the will to power declines, there is every time also a physiological regression, a decadence.”¹⁹ Nigerian religiosity, in this sense, risks becoming decadent, a form of outward piety that masks inner hollowness. Hence, Nigerians need to be more sincere in their religious life.

Cultural Values and Moral Decay

Traditional Nigerian societies possessed strong cultural values rooted in integrity, responsibility, and mutual care. These values are deeply rooted in communitarianism. However, globalization, materialism, and the failures of postcolonial governance have eroded many of these values. Toyin Falola rightly observes that, “the collapse of indigenous institutions and the rise of individualism have led to a weakening of moral bonds that once held communities together.”²⁰ Nietzsche would

interpret this as symptomatic of nihilism. When inherited frameworks lose their authority, societies risk falling into meaninglessness or cynicism. It could be said that Nigeria's cultural erosion reflects not only external pressures, but also an internal failure to revalue and adapt traditions to new realities. The result is a vacuum where communal ethics are displaced by opportunism, and the rhetoric of morality survives without its substance. Thus, there is need for re-evaluation of the contemporary values in Nigeria.

Insincerity and Compromise

Discourse on moral decadence in Nigeria will certainly be incomplete if one fails to talk about insincerity and compromise. Moral decadence in Nigeria is not confined to the elite or religious leaders; it permeates everyday life of many Nigerians. From academic malpractice and examination fraud to the normalization of bribery in public institutions, insincerity becomes a way of life. Oluseun Onigbinde notes that "Nigerians denounce corruption in theory but often participate in it in practice, especially when it serves personal or group interests."²¹ This contradiction exemplifies Nietzsche's critique of *ressentiment*, the tendency to denounce publicly what one secretly admires or desires. This entails accepting internally what one denounced externally. The result is a society where moral indignation coexists with moral compromise, producing a cynical environment in which genuine integrity appears naïve. Here, too, Nietzsche's diagnosis of decadence is very evident: life-denying orientations flourish, while life-affirming values struggle to survive.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that examining moral decadence in Nigeria through a Nietzschean lens reveals the depth of the crisis. Political corruption, religious hypocrisy, cultural erosion, and everyday insincerity are not merely isolated problems, but rather interconnected symptoms of a deeper malaise. They point to a society entrapped in slave morality, suffused with *ressentiment*, and drifting toward nihilism. Recognizing this reality is the first step; the greater challenge lies in envisioning a revaluation of values capable of transcending moral decadence in contemporary Nigerian society, and affirming vitality.

INTERPRETATING NIGERIA'S MORAL CRISIS THROUGH NIETZSCHE'S IDEOLOGY

Having examined Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality as well as moral decadence in Nigerian society, this subsection attempts a more detailed interpretation of Nigeria's moral decadence through a Nietzschean lens. Nietzsche's ideas of slave morality, *ressentiment*, and nihilism provide

powerful tools for diagnosing why Nigerian society clings to hollow moral rhetoric while failing to embody authentic ethical vitality. This analysis does not merely describe corruption and hypocrisy, but also exposes the existential dimensions of Nigeria's predicament. The major considerations include the following:

Contemporary Nigerian Society and the Burden of Slave Morality

The distinction between master and slave morality lies at the centre of Nietzsche's philosophy. Master morality affirms life, vitality, and creativity; while slave morality, by contrast, arises from weakness, envy, and fear.²² From Nietzsche's perspective, Nigeria's moral order reflects the characteristics of slave morality. Political leaders and citizens alike often frame their actions in the language of virtue, service, or sacrifice, yet beneath these claims lies self-interest, fear of responsibility, or the desire for patronage. Hence, Peter Ekeh consistently argued that Nigerians often maintain a sharp divide between their moral obligations to the communal (primordial) sphere and their disregard for the civic (state) sphere.²³ This duality exemplifies the dynamics of slave morality: one sphere is valorized, while responsibility, on the other side, is evaded. Nietzsche would likely interpret this not as an accident of history, but rather as symptomatic of a society entrapped in a reactive morality, where values are defined by opposition, avoidance, and resentment rather than creative affirmation.

Ressentiment and the Politics of Blame

Ressentiment seems to be the Nietzschean concept that is most relevant to Nigerian situation. According to Nietzsche, *ressentiment* is a "poisonous hatred" that the weak harbour against the strong, transforming envy into moral judgment.²⁴ In Nigeria, *ressentiment* manifests in both elite and popular discourse. Leaders frequently deflect responsibility by blaming colonialism, opposition parties, or external conspiracies. Citizens, in turn, denounce corruption while simultaneously justifying it when practiced by their own ethnic or religious kin. This cycle of blame reflects what Nietzsche calls the "imagination of revenge,"²⁵ where moral indignation replaces genuine action. Instead of affirming responsibility, Nigerians often channel frustration into complaint or scapegoating. Hence, Wole Soyinka warns thus: "a culture of excuses is the deadliest narcotic of the Nigerian condition."²⁶ The pervasiveness of *ressentiment* perpetuates a reactive moral culture, where energy is consumed by denunciation rather than constructive transformation.

Nihilism and the Collapse of Meaning

It ought to be noted that beyond slave morality and *ressentiment*, Nigeria's crisis reflects a broader nihilism. Nietzsche conceives nihilism as the recognition that "the highest values devalue themselves" and that life appears meaningless when transcendent foundations collapse.²⁷ This has a lot of implications for contemporary Nigerian society. For Nigeria, this nihilism is expressed not in explicit atheism but in the disjunction between moral rhetoric and social reality. Nigerians invoke God in political speeches, court judgments, and public ceremonies, yet the gap between such invocations and practical life exposes a profound cynicism. This cynicism fosters an environment where promises are distrusted, institutions lack legitimacy, and citizens adopt a survivalist mentality. Nietzsche would interpret this as the triumph of decadence: a society clinging to forms and rituals while hollowed out by the absence of life-affirming values. The danger, as he foresaw, is not merely moral failure but cultural stagnation, a society that has lost faith in its own future.

The Failure of Value Creation

Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality emphasizes the revaluation of values and the will to power as the foundation of authentic morality.²⁸ Nigeria's moral crisis, however, illustrates a failure of value creation. Instead of affirming strength, creativity, and responsibility, Nigerian society often rewards opportunism, conformity, and mediocrity. Political patronage, religious sycophancy, and social compromise thrive, while genuine innovation and integrity are sidelined. Hence, Chika Okeke-Agulu notes that this failure is not confined to politics but extends to cultural production, where "art, literature, and public discourse often retreat into nostalgia or mimicry rather than daring new visions."²⁹ Nietzsche would interpret this as a society unable to exercise its will to power, settling instead for reactive forms of morality that mask decline.

TOWARDS A REVALUATION OF VALUES IN NIGERIA

The previous sections have demonstrated that Nigeria's moral problem is more than a matter of corruption, hypocrisy, or institutional weakness. It is fundamentally a crisis of values, a condition that Nietzsche would interpret as the triumph of slave morality, *ressentiment*, and nihilism. Yet Nietzsche's philosophy does not leave us at the point of despair. His call for a "revaluation of all values" (*Umwertung aller Werte*) is an invitation to radical transformation, to abandon old moral frameworks and to create new ones that affirm life, creativity, and strength. For Nigeria, such a

reevaluation requires reimagining politics, religion, education, and culture in ways that transcend hypocrisy and decadence.

Beyond Good and Evil: Rejecting False Moral Binaries

One of Nietzsche's most radical challenges is his call to move "beyond good and evil."³⁰ By this, he does not mean a descent into amorality but an insistence that moral categories cannot be treated as fixed, universal truths. In the Nigerian context, public discourse is often framed in simplistic binaries: corrupt vs. righteous, religious vs. secular, traditional vs. modern. These binaries, however, conceal deeper continuities of self-interest and hypocrisy. To move beyond good and evil is to reject such surface-level oppositions and to confront the underlying forces that sustain decadence. For example, the common contrast between "religious morality" and "secular immorality" collapses when examined closely, since religious institutions themselves often embody corruption and materialism. Thus, Ehusani notes, "the moral bankruptcy of Nigerian society extends into the very heart of its religious institutions."³¹ Nietzsche would argue that clinging to these binaries perpetuates decadence, whereas transcending them opens the way to life-affirming values.

The Will to Power as Creative Responsibility

At the Centre of Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality is the 'will to power', the fundamental drive not merely for domination but for growth, creativity, and the overcoming of limitations.³² For Nigeria, affirming the will to power requires a reorientation of both leadership and citizenship. Instead of viewing power as a means for accumulation and patronage, leaders must see it as a responsibility to create conditions for collective flourishing. Citizens, too, must exercise their will to power by resisting passive conformity and cultivating self-discipline, initiative, and accountability. This explains why Chinweizu argues that postcolonial Africa often suffers from "elite parasitism," where leadership feeds off the people rather than empowering them.³³ A Nietzschean reevaluation would invert this parasitism by redefining power as responsibility. In this sense, Nigeria's renewal depends not on a return to old moral codes but on the creative exercise of will, the courage to shape new moral horizons.

Cultivating an *Übermensch*-like Spirit in Leadership and Citizenship

Nietzsche's figure of the *Übermensch* (superman or overman) symbolizes the possibility of transcending nihilism by creating new values.³⁴ Although often misunderstood as an elitist fantasy,

the *Übermensch* represents the spirit of life-affirmation, courage, and creativity that individuals and societies can embody. For Nigeria, cultivating an *Übermensch*-like spirit means nurturing leaders who resist the mediocrity of slave morality and citizens who embrace responsibility rather than retreating into excuses. Hence, Chinua Achebe states that, “Nigeria is not lacking in capable men and women, but in leaders who are willing to rise above selfishness and fear.”³⁵ Such leadership requires not only competence but also the boldness to redefine values in ways that inspire genuine trust and responsibility. Similarly, citizenship must move beyond passive complaint toward active participation in shaping moral and political life.

Reconstructing Morality through Education and Culture

For Nietzsche, the creation of new values is inseparable from cultural renewal.³⁶ In Nigeria, this means rethinking education, religion, and cultural institutions as sites of value formation. Education must move beyond rote learning and credentialism to cultivate critical thinking, creativity, and ethical responsibility. Religion must recover its prophetic voice, challenging unjust structures in our society rather than reinforcing it. Culture, through literature, art, and public discourse, must dare to envision new possibilities rather than retreating into nostalgia or mimicry. Hence, Toyin Falola observes, “Nigeria’s cultural future depends on its ability to reinvent its traditions in dialogue with modern realities.”³⁷ A Nietzschean reevaluation would encourage such reinvention, ensuring that traditions do not degenerate into empty rituals but evolve into sources of vitality and creativity. Such creativity is very necessary for moral development.

Towards Life-Affirming Values

The ultimate aim of a Nietzschean reevaluation in his reconstruction of morality is to replace life-denying values with life-affirming ones. For Nigeria, this entails affirming sincerity, responsibility, and creativity not as abstract virtues but as practices embedded in social and political life. It requires rejecting the passivity of *ressentiment* and embracing the courage of self-overcoming. As Nietzsche states in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “man is something that shall be overcome.”³⁸ Nigeria’s moral crisis, then, is not a permanent condition but a challenge to transcend decadence through the creation of higher values.

IMPLICATIONS OF NIETZSCHE'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY FOR NIGERIAN SOCIETY

The relevance of Nietzsche's reconstruction of morality for contemporary Nigeria lies not only in its penetrating diagnosis of moral decadence but also in its unsettling demand for transformation.

Nietzsche's proclamation of the "death of God" in *The Gay Science* does not merely announce the decline of religious belief but demonstrates the collapse of all transcendent guarantees of morality.³⁹ For Nigeria, a society where religious rhetoric is very common public discourse but where corruption, injustice, and hypocrisy persist, Nietzsche's critique is very essential deeply. Obviously, the crisis of values is not just a matter of external systems, but a question of how Nigerians conceive power, responsibility as well as morality. From Nietzsche's perspective, Nigerian contemporary society must confront the shallowness of her moral pretences, and accept completely the necessary challenge of reevaluating values.

In political sphere, Nietzsche's critique of slave morality unravels the failure of Nigeria's leadership tradition. The political leaders often appeal to spirit of service, patriotism as well as divine mandate, but in practice governance degenerates to marginalisation, embezzlement of public fund and exploitation. This explained why Chinua Achebe lamented that "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership."⁴⁰ In Nietzsche's view, this would be interpreted as the triumph of mediocrity, the dominance of leaders who conform to herd values by maintaining the status quo rather than exercising the will to power as creative responsibility. Hence, politics must be conceived not as an arena of self-enrichment but as a space where leaders affirm life by cultivating conditions for collective flourishing. Such a transformation requires the courage of the *Übermensch*, who dares to create new values rather than clinging to decaying ones.

Also, Religion is profoundly cut in the web of Nigeria's moral crisis. Though Christianity and Islam command enormous influence, their social impact seems to be often compromised by materialism and hypocrisy. Nietzsche's suspicion of religious morality as life-denying finds striking confirmation in contexts where prosperity preaching eclipses ethical integrity.⁴¹ This is very evident in Nigerian contemporary society. Elaborating further on this, George Ehusani states that "the moral bankruptcy of Nigerian society extends into the very heart of its religious institutions,"⁴² where faith is too often materialized and prophetic witness muted. Nietzsche's controversial critique does not imply a wholesale rejection of religion, but a call to reject its degeneration into herd conformity and resentment. For Nigeria, this entails that religious

institutions must undergo their own revaluation, rediscovering authenticity by fostering responsibility, justice, and courage rather than reinforcing materialism and hypocrisy.

Education is another sector of life in Nigerian that is deeply affected by Nietzsche's critique of morality. Nietzsche consistently argued that the creation of new values requires cultural and intellectual renewal.⁴³ Nigerian education, however, has been plagued by rote memorization, credentialism, and deep-rooted corruption, producing graduates who lack critical thinking and moral probity. Elaborating further on this, Toyin Falola states that, "Nigeria's educational system remains entrapped in colonial legacies and bureaucratic stagnation, leaving little room for creativity and ethical imagination."⁴⁴ Applying Nietzsche's idea in this domain is to insist that education must cultivate free spirits, individuals capable of questioning prevailing dogmas and of creating alternative visions of social life. Such a transformation would not only enhance technical competence but also restore moral vitality by training citizens to resist herd conformity and embrace responsibility as well as creativity.

Culture is another area of life in Nigeria that warrants our attention in this discourse. Culture more broadly offers the possibility of renewing Nigerian contemporary society through arts, literature, music as well as communal traditions. Nietzsche affirms that cultural forms are powerful vehicles for the transmission of values, whether life-affirming or life-denying.⁴⁵ It is very regrettable that Nigerian culture, which is very rich in traditions and artistic expressions, is often torn between nostalgia for the past and uncritical imitation of Western models. The result is a hybrid culture where genuine creativity is stifled by mimicry and commercialism. This explains why Chinweizu laments that African elites often perpetuate "cultural dependency" by privileging imported values over indigenous creativity.⁴⁶ A Nietzschean revaluation would demand that Nigerian culture moves beyond such dependency, affirming its traditions not as static relics but as living sources of vitality. Literature, music, and art must become sites where new values are imagined and tested, enabling Nigerians to confront decadence with creativity as well as vitality.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the implications of Nietzsche's idea for Nigerian society revolve around the necessity of life-affirming values. To persist in slave morality, resentment, and nihilism is to sink deeper into corruption, hypocrisy as well as despair. To embrace the will to power, by contrast, is to recover responsibility, courage, vitality and creativity in the face of moral collapse. This is not a call for an utopic philosophy but a concrete demand for transformation in politics, religion, education, and culture. As Nietzsche states in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Man is something that shall be overcome."⁴⁷ Nigeria, too, must overcome herself—not by clinging to

exhausted moral values, but by daring to create new ones that affirm life. Only then can Nigeria escape the grip of decadence and move toward authentic renewal.

CONCLUDING REFLECTION

A scholarly discourse on Nietzsche's moral philosophy has revealed a radical and controversial critique of morality that resonates powerfully with the Nigerian condition. His argument on the "death of God" was not merely a rejection of religion but a disclosure of the collapse of all transcendent moral foundations. Nietzsche argued consistently that the greatest danger was not simply unbelief, but the moral vacuum left behind, a vacuum filled with herd instincts, resentment, and the temptation of nihilism. Nigeria's struggle with moral decadence shows that this vacuum is not a distant philosophical abstraction but a lived reality.

From the above discourse, it is obvious that Nietzsche's challenge to revalue all values is an urgent necessity. Nigeria's political life remains captive to mediocrity and opportunism, where leadership is often conceived as the pursuit of power for personal gain rather than a creative responsibility for the common good. It is unfortunate that Religion, despite its deep roots in the social fabric, frequently degenerates into ritualistic performance or prosperity-driven spectacle, leaving untouched the deeper task of moral renewal. Also, Education, instead of cultivating values, often produces conformists who replicate a broken order. It is regrettable Nigerian culture, which is rich with creativity and history, risks suffocation under the weight of imitation and dependency.

Contrary to these conditions, Nietzsche's vision offers both a warning and a hope. The warning is obvious: societies that refuse to confront their decadence are doomed to decay. The hope lies in the possibility of transformation through courage, creativity as well as responsibility. Nietzsche's call for the supremacy of the *Übermensch* is not to be read literally as a single heroic figure but symbolically as the awakening of individuals and communities who dare to affirm life in the midst of despair, who resist the comfort of slave morality, and who create values that reflect strength, integrity, and vitality.

For Nigeria, this means that the revaluation of values must begin from every level of the society, and must be extended to every sector. This entails that our political leaders must be judged not by their slogans or their appeal to divine mandate, but by their capacity to nurture justice, equity, and the flourishing of citizens. Religious institutions must rediscover their prophetic voice, reminding the nation that faith without morality is empty. Schools and universities must become spaces of liberation rather than conformity, forming minds that question, create, and innovate. Artists,

writers, and cultural leaders must recover the power of culture as a source of renewal, where the Nigerian spirit is neither enslaved to the past nor to foreign models but stands confidently in its own creative force. Such gives room for Nietzsche's revaluation of values in Nigeria.

This is actually a difficult task, but Nietzsche reminds us that genuine transformation is never easy. To overcome decadence is to embrace struggle, uncertainty, and even suffering—not as ends in themselves, but as the crucible in which strength and meaning are forged. Nigeria cannot afford to remain trapped in corruption, dependency, and despair. Such can only lead to 'nihilism', the very condition Nietzsche most detested. If Nigerians can summon the courage to change their attitude, to affirm life even in their brokenness, and to create values rooted in strength and authenticity, then they can move toward a renaissance worthy of its immense potential.

However, it ought to be noted that Nietzsche's philosophy does not provide ready-made solutions but demands responsibility. It places the burden of meaning-making upon human beings themselves, refusing the comfort of external guarantees. For Nigeria, this is both unsettling and liberating. It is unsettling because it dismantles the false securities of inherited moral values. It is liberating because it opens the horizon for new beginnings, for a future not dictated by the failures of the past but shaped by the courage to create new values. Thus, the fundamental task before Nigeria is not just to lament its moral crisis, but to confront it boldly with sincerity. To face corruption, hypocrisy, and moral decay with sincerity is already to begin the work of transformation and re-orientation. Furthermore, to create values that affirm life, dignity, and justice is to embody the spirit of revaluation. Hence, to do such collectively, as a country that dares to overcome itself, is to realize in practice Nietzsche's greatest insight: that humanity, and by extension countries, are not fixed but becoming. There is strong need for Nigerians to create life-affirming values.

Endnotes

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4. Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1983), 1.
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6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 260.
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10. Ibid., I.10.
11. Ibid., I.14.
12. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), 2.
13. Ibid., 488.
14. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 259.
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29. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 260.
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32. Chinweizu, *The West and the Rest of Us* (Lagos: NOK Publishers, 1975), 307.
33. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1978), Prologue, 3.
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