

UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT

**REASON AND THE DEMISE OF
INTEGRITY IN ACADEMIA AND
SOCIETIES: A DANCE IN RAGS?**

Valedictory Lecture

By

PROF. OMENIHU CHIEMELA NWAORGU

*Department of Political and Administrative Studies,
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt*

NO. 38

AUGUST 6, 2025

University of Port Harcourt Press
University of Port Harcourt,
Port Harcourt
Nigeria.
E-mail: uniport.press@uniport.edu.ng

© Prof. Omenihu Chiemela Nwaorgu

VALEDICTORY LECTURE SERIES NO. 38
DELIVERED: 6th August, 2025

All Rights Reserved

Designed, Printed and Bound By UPPL

PROGRAMME

- 1. GUESTS ARE SEATED**
- 2. INTRODUCTION**
- 3. THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S OPENING REMARKS**
- 4. CITATION**
- 5. THE VALEDICTORY LECTURE**

The lecturer shall remain standing during the citation. He shall step on the rostrum, and deliver his Valedictory Lecture. After the lecture, he shall step towards the Vice-Chancellor, and deliver a copy of the Valedictory Lecture and return to his seat. The Vice-Chancellor shall present the document to the Registrar.

- 6. CLOSING REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR**
- 7. VOTE OF THANKS**
- 8. DEPARTURE**

DEDICATION

To my late parents,
Elder Godwin Iheanacho & Mrs Bessie Wozichi, Nwaogu...
You raised us well and strong.

And also to the memories of my late siblings:
Mrs Love Uloma Ahuruonye and Bishop Tony Chidiebere
Nwaorgu.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I give the Almighty God all the praise and glory, and thanks for his mercy and grace, without which I could not have made it. The song, *There was Jesus*, by Zach Williams, Dolly Parton, Beathard, C., & Smith, J. (2019), summarises my journey here, at the University of Port Harcourt in the past thirty-three years. Dear Lord, I am grateful.

I would like to very sincerely thank the Vice Chancellor of this great university, Professor (Sir) Abraham Georgewill Owunari, for graciously approving this date, the 6th of August, 2025, for me to deliver my valedictory lecture. Esteemed Vice Chancellor, Sir, thank you immensely.

I greatly appreciate the Chancellor of Rhema University, Bro. Emma Okorie, and his dear and amiable wife, Sis. Chi Emma Okorie. Also, I wish to pay a great debt of gratitude to the following: The Vice Chancellor, Rhema University Nigeria, Aba, Professor O. C. Onwudike, and his dear wife. The Medical Director, Rhema University Teaching Hospital (RUTH), Aba, Dr Jude Ehiemere, and his dear wife, Sis. Esther Ehiemere, the Provost RUTH, Professor Awa. I also appreciate the Vice Chancellor, Nigeria-British University, Obehie Asa, Professor Hakeem Fawehinmi, and his very amiable wife. Professor Fawehinmi graciously offered me a one-year sabbatical appointment, where I became the first and indeed the founding Dean of the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences. Thank you, my dear friend. I greatly appreciate Professor J. A. Ajienka, a former Vice Chancellor of this great university, he set this ball rolling for me. He approved the September 11, 2014, date for my inaugural lecture.

I would like to appreciate a number of colleagues who either fought in the same trenches with me or impacted me in some very special ways: these would include, but are not limited to Professors S.W.E Ibodje, Eme Ekekwe, Eme Ndu, Osi Akpoghome, Mark Anikpo, Joel Ogbonna, Prince C.Mmom, Amadi, Matthew Ogali, Henry Alapiki, N.J. Nna, K.K.Aaron (my last HoD), Fidelis Allen, Edmund Obomanu, Timothy Nte, Emma Wonah, and Kyiale.

Now, to my dear and lovely wife, my endless love, Nnenna, I greatly cherish you for your understanding and inestimable support, encouragement, care, and prayers.

Let me appreciate here my wonderful children, the indomitable trio, Victor, Adaeze, and Vyne. Thank you for your love, care, and friendship. In the same vein, let me appreciate Promise, my daughter in-law, and especially my very intelligent and active grandson, Bryan. You are such a joy.

My siblings and their spouses have been so supportive; for which I publicly appreciate them greatly. Sandra Ugoezenwanne and Osondu, C'Laurel, Ngozi and Prince Usim, Phoeby, Nick and Bims, Queen, Prince and Karen and Pal. I will not forget Amarachi, Tito, Nathan, and Nzubechi. Let me appreciate Prince Onuoha Ugwuocha and his amiable wife, Okoroafor O. Ugwuocha, Ada and Chijioke Onwunali, I thank you all so much for your support.

It is important that I acknowledge the contributions of other colleagues, friends and students who contributed to my progress and the success story that I am today. Indeed, I agree with Anter Diop who wrote that "Everyman's success is made up of a thousand other's efforts". In this regard, I rise to salute first and foremost, The Speaker, Rivers State House of

Assembly, Rt. Hon. Martin Amaewhule, Hon. Enemi. A. George, Dr & Dr(Mrs) John Pedro, Hon. Inemo Diri, Hon. Gideon Ekeuwei, Hon. Ojingofa Nyime, Dr Chinyere Ihedioha, Dr Onyemachi Abengowe, Ameh Peter Ojonugwa, HRM Dr Jackson Angalabiri, Drs. Dele, Haruna Mohammed, Hyacinth Elueme, Meelubari Kpang, Callistus Ojirika, Kpalukwu, Ella Ezeadilieje, Dona-Carine Nwankwo, Onyeukwu, Obinna Onwubiko, Mezie-Okoye, Elizabeth Amadi, Benneth Owubokiri, Grant Amadi and Chimaroke Mgba.

I may not be able to adequately express my gratitude to following, for their invaluable assistance to me that provided great support, focus, and direction. I fondly call them the Amazing Friends of Nwaorgu, and they are Dr Chinemerem Alvan Nwankwo, Dr Obinna Nwodim (Editor-in-Chief), Dr Ekwi Adegbesan, Dr Victoria Azu, Dr Richard Adah (The Mayor), Dr Justice Ewelie, Dr Ekene Madueke Ojemba, Chukwunda Franca, Isaac Nkomadu, Stanley Dide, and Preye Hamilton.

Let me also greatly appreciate the following colleagues and bosom friends, Professors Sheriff Ghali, Ambily Etakpe, James Jacob, Ijeoma Kalu, Martins Ifeancha, Dappa, (able VC) Cocordia, Nnamdi Nwaodu, Barr. & Mrs Mike Ojiako (Mon Ami), Hon. Justice Kenneth Okezie Wosu, Barr. Chibuike A. Nwokeukwu, SAN, Pastor & Mrs Mbanefo Nwabia and Pastor & Pastor Mrs Pius Nzewuihe

Dr Kenneth Doe-Dartey, Engrs. Sunny Akinlade, and Olunmilayo Ayodeji, Chibueze Agbo, Dr Doris Chuku, Dr Mac-Alex Achinulo, Dr Herbert Ebimnamaonye, Chief Chijioke Uko, Dr Sylvester Ekpudu, Dr Adiele Okoroafor, Dr Ifeanyi Obulor, Mr & Mrs Osi Oji, Mr & Mrs Ike Martins Ike, Prof. Davidson Njoku, Dr. Felix Azuogu, Engr. Butter. Dean,

Faculty of Social Sciences, Prof. Clever Gbanador, Pastor John Ibiam and Mr Chidiadi Michael (Able Pilot). To all of you, I say a big Thank You.

REASON AND THE DEMISE OF INTEGRITY IN ACADEMIA AND SOCIETIES: A DANCE IN RAGS?

Life offers man, in all his stretch of existence and wherever he finds himself, principally two doors. It is imperative, inescapable, and unavoidable that he must use these doors, although at different times. No matter what the situation presents, the doors are the same in character – both impelling and compelling. The latter, nearly in all situations, may not be resisted successfully, except in very few cases where integrity deficit arising from falsification of age is involved, winked at, accepted, and shamefully accommodated to serve an illegitimate purpose and pursuit. These doors open at the entry as well as at the exit points. It is more like the proverbial or metaphorical procession and recession, like the colourful spectacle witnessed during inaugural and/or valedictory lecture rituals, such as we have just seen. However, a valedictory lecture, although it typifies an exit door of a kind, does not close the book of learning and knowledge, but could open another chapter in another exciting book. This is life for you.

Esteemed Vice Chancellor, Sir, I was born on the 9th of August, 1955, to the family of Late Elder and Mrs. Godwin Iheanacho Nwaogu. The door of this unique institution officially opened to me as a Lecturer II staff on the 7th of April, 1993, after successfully completing the mandatory one-year national service in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies of our cherished university. I trained at the prestigious Panjab University, in Chandigarh, India.

Dear colleagues and friends, today opens the exit door which dims presently nearly all the relevance the entry door ever held.

I mean the throbbing and restless emotions that characterise securing a job at the university – The Academia – which I choose to see as another form of society, deep, specialised, and definitely enigmatic, if not weird. This recognises the fact that there exists a larger society within which the academic society is located. However, beyond that is the global society that houses the two. Societies, regardless of their genre, geographical location, and level of development, perform similar functions, although with marked disparity in the degree of success in goal attainment. These functions run on two generally accepted trajectories, which are the input and output causeways (Nwaorgu, 1998). The input functions comprise: political socialisation and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, and political communication. On the other hand, the output functions are rule-making, rule application, and rule adjudication.

Esteemed Vice Chancellor, Sir, this valedictory lecture was borne out of long and deep reflection on societies' performance charts (at different levels) to appreciate the extent they have either been facilitated or hindered by two main variables. These variables in Achebe (1983) appear fused into one, which he identified as Leadership. He pontificates, "The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely, a failure of leadership." Who will ever contest this? Leadership is the mind (providing rationality – reason), and it is also the bulwark (providing strength and stability – integrity). It is from these that the title of the lecture derives, which is: REASON AND THE DEMISE OF INTEGRITY IN SOCIETIES: A DANCE IN RAGS?

“The role of intellectuals is to challenge authority not to serve” – Noam Chomsky.

And

“The greatest danger to the state is intellectual independent criticism” – Murry Rothbard

Where, I ask are the intellectuals today? What intellect still remains? Who amongst them can bite the bullet to challenge the Institution and the state? How could they when they are enmeshed in several irreconcilable contradictions. The end is really not in sight.

What is reason? What is integrity, and what beats the drums and sets the dance for them in the context of this exploration and discourse? The concept of reason has, in different epochs, climes, and through generations, been highly celebrated as mankind’s most outstanding discovery. So much has, no doubt, been arrogated to reason, making it appear that its absence will very much disadvantage man, especially in decision-making and solving almost intractable and complex problems. The age of Enlightenment glorified reason almost beyond hyperbolic proportions, ascribing all progress, especially in the realms of scientific advancement, ethics, and the governance of the human society, to it. It is no wonder, therefore, that Benjamin Whichcote referred to reason as the divine governor of man’s life and indeed the very voice of God. He went further to aver that, “Nothing can give peace to him who is at enmity with his own reason.” For Aristotle, the work of government is the architecture. It is, according to him, the part of reason to command, and the duty of weakness and of passion to obey. Herodotus, patronising reason and loudly eulogising it, says that those who are guided by reason are generally successful in their plans.

It is a bit worrisome that what is the bright and seemingly positive side of reason is what is nearly always presented to us. A careful interrogation of reason reveals that, notwithstanding the flamboyant testimonials and endorsements, reason is most of the time unreasonable. It is innately selfish and irredeemably biased. Should this duality not question even the very elevation it has so far enjoyed and cast meaningful doubt about its efficacy in human behaviour, especially in decision-making? Reason alone is not the elixir for humanity and its numerous needs. At the centre of reason is interest, which gives it focus, force, and direction. Individual human experiences, emotions, and desires help to shape the cognitive processes through which reason functions. The utilitarian's, who talk about the greatest good for the greatest number, would appear in our eyes today very rational, yet that infinitesimal few suffer and are made by the reason which favours the majority to endure hardship for the good of many. The lives of the minority matter also, and so does their well-being. This agrees with Friedrich Schiller's assertion that the voice of the majority is no proof of justice.

On integrity, the following quotes have been credited to C.S. Lewis and John Quincy Adams respectively, but I have no authentic proof of their authorship of the quotes:

1. "Integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching." – C.S. Lewis.
2. "Integrity is the seed for achievement. It is the principle that never fails." – J.Q. Adams.

These quotes bear so much relevance today, especially in the academia where staff and students live a devil-may-care life and compete with the larger society in every conceivable iniquity, from hate, extortion, sexual harassment, even murder. Perhaps the best example which aptly defines the phenomenon

of integrity is in the ethical handling and treatment of humanity by death. Death is even-handed and treats humans equally regardless of age, gender, or social status. Perhaps death is reasonless or unreasonable, as it neither demands nor accepts bribes. Death is incorruptible and devoid of bias.

In a nutshell, if pure reason is discarded and quickly substituted with its prostitute version, and if integrity is similarly snubbed and repudiated – especially within the Academia – our institutional relevance then becomes, indeed, *kwashiorkored* and in need of help. At such a state, stage, or condition, whatever dance we try to perform will be more like a chorea, uninteresting and unappealing to the audience... it becomes a dance in rags, not like an academic procession done in beautiful flowing gowns, with deliberate and measured steps and slightly swirling shoulders. The faces in the procession may be youthful or old, puffy fresh or somewhat shrivelled owing to several years of hard work, yet there is on each of the faces a rich and genuine flush of satisfaction such that can only come as a result of self-actualisation and excellence. However, all of these amount to nothing – absolutely nothing – if devoid of integrity. Indeed, it becomes a dance of the mentally deranged done in the marketplace and in rags.

Robert Frost, in his poem, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, penned this beautiful line, “I have miles to walk and promises to keep.” My promise to you, Sir, which I must try to keep, is that my presentation shall not be long. If it turns out to be long, then I promise to tender my apologies. This too will be, as Frost would say, “(another) mile to go and promises to keep before I go to sleep.”

I took a cursory look at some of the inaugural and valedictory lecture titles delivered by some erudite scholars here at our

university. They are simply amazing as well as intriguing. The titles reflect so much of quintessential cerebral activity, maturity, and unmatched integrity in all ramifications.

While Nwaorgu (2014) titled his inaugural lecture *Inactive Squares and the Rumbling State*, Mmom (2018) captioned his *Order in Disorder: Re-thinking Inside the Box*, and Allen (2025) came blazing with his *Power: Predators and Preys*. In these three titles, there seem to be a conspiracy of understanding, regardless of what their individual meanings may hold. All does not appear to be quite alright, and these scholars' minds are gyrating, seeking, searching for knowledge, wisdom, and understanding... in a rumbling state, asking if there can ever be order in disorder. There could be, perhaps, when we change our ways and re-think inside (not outside) the box. Wahala dey o!

On the heels of the rumbling, order in disorder, is Allen's quest to understand the concept and the utility of power. Power is for service leading to the achievement of noble ends. Power is not to be conceived within the Machiavellian corridors of usage and understanding. It should rather be a veritable vehicle for socio-economic development and the creation of greater access for a greater number. It should not constrict, constipate, or frustrate dreams of individuals, for any reason at all. The abuse of power in nearly all spheres of life has turned a large number of us into preys.

Late Professor Anthony Arinze (2016) refused to be economical with truth in his valedictory lecture titled *Ethnicity Problem in Nigeria – Impediment to National Development*. He saw ethnicity as a disturbing problem in Nigeria and vehemently decried it in all its manifestations. He acknowledged that there is ethnicity-flavoured discrimination

even within academia, as much as it is prevalent in the larger society. Those benefiting from it, he pointed out, “do not like discussing it.” “It is people who are hurt by discrimination that want to talk about it.” Such discrimination is at best illogical and unreasonable, except only for the negative calculations that informed it.

He concluded by presenting a dangerous quote from Nzimiro (n.d.) that very aptly explains the whole situation and graphically paints a clear picture of the predator and, of course, the prey, which we do not infrequently but regularly experience in our Ivory Towers. The quote mocks the situation whereby:

Intellectual lightweights, indeed intellectual Lilliputians, are catapulted to exalted positions on the ladder of ethnicity.

Our institutions and their products would find it very hard to compete with their counterparts globally, where excellence and not mediocrity is celebrated.

The last in this brief review of inaugural and valedictory lecture titles is Ekekwe’s (2019) *Here is What I Have Learned as a Teacher*. In this very interesting work, Ekekwe not only learned:

... that Plato’s philosopher-king is less about the king being a philosopher and more about the enthronement of philosophy as a means to ascertain the public good. It is also about the individual who must lead himself beyond the limitation of the intellect, striving on a daily basis to rise above the mundane and seek those eternal verities

that constitute the good... (he also learned not to withhold).

Ekekwe is indeed a very liberal millionaire who, more like in an academic *owanbe*, sprayed millions on several personalities who had played soulful tunes or gracefully danced in his life, the likes of his dear wife, Ifeoma, Ron and Hazel McGraw, Elder/Barrister E.E. Ukaegbu. All these folks got their millions – honestly, I mean a million thanks, certainly not cash.

Only a detribalised intellectual, rich, not in reason, but in integrity, would be this liberal, refusing and rejecting narrow-mindedness and parochialism that divide more than they help members of the academia to bond and make progress. Integrity fosters genuine freedom because honesty and openness free one from fear and the need to hide, reflecting Popper's philosophy of critical rationalism (Popper, 1963).

The individual is but a small particle of a large boulder. This means that this large boulder is an amalgam of innumerable and almost inconsequential particles now held together by reason of association and interest. It is possible that societies are formed by reason; however, their persistence and longevity will be determined by their integrity levels.

Not every reason is broadly reasonable. Reason has a large bias content since it is basically the product of idiots. I say this philosophically. Idiots are very selfish and do not so much as consider any other person or interests except those they are attracted to and fixated on, almost mindlessly like a moth on an electric light.

States, societies, and institutions – even ivory towers considered to be on the verge of failing or have failed already –

are known to have displayed a pattern of pathological paternalistic consistency in a closed and unelevated form of reasoning.

The product of such is largely myopic, tainted with primordial considerations, reeking of cronyism, unabashed bias, and selfishness, thus scoring very highly on the Acute Integrity Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) scale. AIDS, in whatever form it manifests, is not anyone's friend. The truth is that it kills individuals, institutions, and societies.

In 1955, my year of birth, Chomsky, in his *Failed States* (p. 1), succinctly argued that:

Among the most elementary of moral truisms is the principle of universality: we must apply to ourselves the same standards we do to others, if not more stringent ones. It is a remarkable comment on Western intellectual culture that this principle is so often ignored and, if occasionally mentioned, condemned as outrageous. This is particularly shameful on the part of those who flaunt their Christian piety, and, therefore, have presumably at least heard of the definition of the hypocrite in the Gospels.

An inaugural lecture presents the lecturer principally to the Academia and the rest of the barely literate larger society that does not possess the expertise, especially in the area of specialisation of the inaugural lecturer. All the audience can basically do is quietly take note and applaud if it finds the need to do so. No questions are entertained unless through a private

engagement with the lecturer long after the lecture. Even at that, the lecturer cannot afford to throw caution to the winds. He is constrained by certain factors ranging from institutional norms to personal expectations on career progression.

It is not so with a valedictory lecture and lecturer. It is a sharing of one's experiences on the job over the long period of time he served. It is a matter-of-fact thing, with no anticipation of promotion. It should be institutionally invigorating and provide strength. Since the content is expectedly transformative, the truth therein should not be sugar-coated, but rather brutally expressed to orchestrate healing. I shall try to do that within the time that I have left for this exercise.

The Courage to Speak

People fear to tell the truth

Why?

Because truth has weight

Carries consequences. It demands
responsibility

Telling the truth might mean losing
a friend, disappointing a family member,
standing alone or

Challenging the status quo...

When we hide the truth, we delay
healing. We allow injustice to breathe.

We bury what
could set us free

Truth is not the enemy...It's the
beginning of change.

It's what brings light to darkness, clarity
to confusion and strength to character

– Phantom -X

Vice Chancellor Sir, I opened the womb of inaugural lectures in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies – my department. Let me note here, Sir, that life is not a straight-line graph at all. I am today the second to deliver a valedictory lecture, after Professor Eme Ekekwe. This reminds me that I am not only an old man but an elder academic also. I give the Almighty God thanks for seeing me through every stage of my career here at the University of Port Harcourt. Like Zach Williams and Dolly Parton, I can loudly say, “There Was Jesus,” yes, there was Jesus!

My career was so peaceful, especially at the Departmental and even at the Faculty level also, until after my promotion to Lecturer I. It took a serious turn for the worse the moment I was promoted to the rank of Senior Lecturer. This is the rank of visibility and responsibility within the academia. Some colleagues’ attitudes towards me began to change drastically. Questions about my state of origin started popping up everywhere and at different strata of the university administration, where there were expectations of authoritative allocation of values.

One may ask: do such intrigues and permutations exist in the academia, such as are observed in the society outside? The answer is a resounding yes. There are humanoid AIs whose tasks include generating reasons for who should not get what and when. Not every reason is reasonable and supportive. They talk about resource control, lacking the wisdom to know that not every resource should be controlled like oil in the Niger Delta, if institutions and societies must breathe in the sustaining air of development. Leadership or expertise is a major resource that does not require any form of control, especially so in the academia.

It is so important not to confuse self-advocacy with arrogance. Humility can be problematic when it is fuelled by the fear of taking up space. People are wired to prioritise themselves, and self-advocacy is how you navigate spaces fundamentally designed to keep you SMALL if you never speak up...

– Vyne C. Nwaorgu – March 8, 2025.

Such control, however, is the norm in the society outside, which is dominated by greedy politicians who feel so insecure and plagued with an unnatural sense of entitlement. Such air would pollute everything ACADEMIA, as rendered here as a distinct society.

REASON, DEMISE OF INTEGRITY, AND THE ACADEMIA

Hunger with dignity is preferable to bread eaten in slavery...

- **Frantz Fanon**

What does academia represent in Nigeria, and how do we begin to conceptualise it? Do we see it as a group of people who are easily recognisable by their long-winding speeches that can scarcely put food on the table for their families? Not at all! It is a community of like minds with decent purposes and intentions for productivity and the advancement of knowledge and the knowledge industry. It is a large edifice that attracts and accommodates men and women who possess the mind and power to make substantial changes and challenges in the larger society – but regrettably cannot change things about themselves.

They are rather known for their negative individualism, self-seeking, subservience, sycophancy, and a readiness to melt into the trough and mingle with the political apparatchik, helping to launder its image by providing excuses intended to support a government that would rather complicate than alleviate the smallest of its existential challenges.

Let us, for a moment, see the very concept of academia – and by extension, the academic society – as an Ivory Tower. This suggests a high degree of refinement which distinguishes it from a low and base life, characterised mainly by a copious measure of orderliness. The tower motif reflects strength – a structure that rises so high that the society it appears to overlook sees and acknowledges it as a guidepost from any point and uses it to correct itself. Similarly, its imposing height places it in an advantageous position to scrutinise society, to which it has become (I do hope) its conscience and, definitely, a reference point.

It becomes an aberration so worrisome when the rot and putrefaction in the larger society – which the academia, yes, the Ivory Tower, stands to correct and cleanse – are now equally seen festering within it, with no one so much as batting an eye. Like an Amazonian anaconda, the larger society has constricted, overpowered, and swallowed up the Ivory Tower, with all its flaunted finesse. The scary staccato sounds of warning and alarm from the academia to the society – to shape up – have gone underground. If the academia is destroyed or enfeebled, reason will be greatly compromised, while integrity will become so weak and exhausted – like a retiring university professor delivering his valedictory lecture, after which he bows out.

Can this be the end of integrity?

For balance and objectivity, there is no law objecting to the coexistence of reason and integrity in the academia. Reason should be reasonable enough not to overemphasise self, selfishness, and such things that kill teamwork and social cohesion. While reason reflects and explains the external material conditions, integrity, on the other hand, presents concrete and incontrovertible evidence of the internal composition of the individual and the society in which he resides. A society where the wheels of reason are clogged with the mud of bias and selfishness will hardly rise to a level of making meaningful impact, but will wallow in ignorance and grave uncertainties. Such a society has gradually drifted out of control, with an integrity rating that is very low. This is a serious predisposing sign of rot, decay, and imminent death.

It does not require any form of amplification that the tapestry of academia – in all its complex mosaic – is beautifully held together by the strong threads of integrity. It beams the radiant light of virtue, which is capable of providing the needed firm foundation for the growth of knowledge and trust. It is disheartening, sometimes, to observe that the mundane cravings and complications of our materialistic world seem to constrict – as well as deliberately hold in check – the ancient principle known as integrity, for which the academia was largely known and associated with. Not anymore.

Societies today have come under a devastating erosion of their very essence, fragrance, and character – and the academia is not spared. This explains why the state of origin of a staff must be confirmed before considering them for certain positions in a federal institution. This explains why cases of forgery, plagiarism, or falsification of documents may be winked at if

the offenders are from the “right” place or belong to the clique in power.

Integrity – unlike reason, which is more like a picture we show of ourselves to people – is really who we truly are from within. The lack of it can make your dear friend ask what you are doing here at this university (not particularly the University of Port Harcourt, as this obtains and is experienced in nearly all institutions, both state and federal), since you are not from “our dear and beautiful state.” “Do you not have a university where you are coming from?”

I ponder, and wonder, where else would I be coming from when I am a Nigerian and not a foreigner? This is ethnicity at play – relentlessly fighting and subduing the purpose, creativity, and ultimately the development and transformation that characterise the Ivory Tower: a community without internal walls and restrictions, watered freely and continuously by radical – not paternalistic – ideas and considerations. Is it not amazing that what we see in the outer society is now fully entrenched inside the academia? Only the philosophical idiot – who is an idiot not because he is uneducated, but because he is selfish and thinks about himself and no more – can ignore this. Here, we may need to resist the temptation of laying the blame solely at the feet of the individual. The issue of integrity being present – or, on the contrary, lacking – transcends the ineptitude of any individual or person. It is symptomatic of systemic decay and the power of nothingness. It is, certainly, the demise of integrity in the human society.

We now live in days of radical social changes occasioned by breath-taking development in hi-tech. There is the new and accelerated economic dynamism, which is sustained by restless globalisation. These, no doubt, are products of reason –

intended to bring about multi-dimensional development. But we ask: for what purpose, and for whose benefit? This underscores the need for a critical evaluation of their integrity content. Such an evaluation, it is hoped, will unravel whatever existential crisis appears to bedevil the academia and the larger society. This can only be fruitfully done by elucidating more the nuances of reason and integrity, since the two – in their different ways – impact our institutional choices, the academia, and society.

In *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant (1785) defined reason as “the faculty that forms concepts and principles, which guide our actions and judgments...” In the considered opinion of David Hume (1739), “reason is and ought only to be the slave of passions.” My problem here is that what an individual is passionate about may not have a universal appeal. It may still be exhibiting so much of self and selfishness with very low integrity content. There is no denying the place and importance of reason: in its pure state, it provides the academia with the intellectual springboard for revolutionary discourses, rational reflection, and interrogation of ideas. It becomes the launch-pad for the Ivory Tower in the productive process of transformative knowledge. This knowledge goes beyond everyday conjecture, stepping out to illuminate the dark alleys of society, bringing about innovation and engendering development.

It is sad to note that in the academia, just like in the society outside, reason has been heavily diluted and made to serve only immediate local needs, with all its sophistry and sophistication. Thus, we see an academia trapped and hemmed in debilitating obstacles that frustrate the free pursuit of knowledge and the intellectual cross-fertilisation of ideas. Chief among such obstacles, though not limited to them, are

ethnic chauvinism and an irrepressible greed to gerrymander, control, and appropriate a public good or resource of universal proportion. This canker festers all over the Nigerian academic space and is, no doubt, firmly and deeply entrenched in the larger and outer society.

We need to stand up to recover the academia and arrest the devastating drift we see today – or watch what all those before us tried to build go down the drain. Our concept of academia here is a large structure that provides accommodation for those Plato referred to as the philosopher kings. These possess the mind, sharp mettle, and intellectual prowess to cause substantial positive change to happen in society. Regrettably though, this cream of intellectuals has proved they can redraw the lines in the society but cannot change what really concerns them. They are content with wearing fine suits and long neckties, speaking long grammar on growling, hungry stomachs. The members of the academia must fight for their survival and the survival of the Ivory Tower, and not exacerbate the problem. Soyinka (1992) would no less be right when he opined that:

...we (members of the academia) would be shirking our responsibility if, on discovering that we are being brainwashed into accepting such abnormalities as norm, we do not immediately call attention to them. This is how traditions are established, even of the unsavoury kind..., when matters reach a certain level of unseemliness; when conduct at rarefied levels is propelled into more hyperbolic distortions of reality by an increasing

army of sycophants, self-seekers and social climbers. We dare not wait until our new democratic replacements and their appendages adopt what, in effect, are abuses... (of established order) – my words.

Although the above quoted passage was part of Soyinka's address at the authors' conference on November 2, 1992, at Abeokuta, yet after these many years it appears to resonate well with the matter we are presently discussing. It also graphically captures the present state of affairs in the academia, where the heightened and bloated abnormalities in the larger society have found their way into the academia and become firmly entrenched. It is evident that the academia is nearly exactly now what the larger society is. Where then is the Tower? Where is the *Ivory-ness*?

Corruption, ethnic chauvinism, clannishness, and mediocrity have taken centre stage and changed the order of things in the universities. As much as Nigerians clamour for political restructuring, perhaps such a restructuring should well begin with us in the Ivory Towers. The landscape of Nigerian academia and society has witnessed an unprecedented erosion of discipline and integrity and has introduced a twisted form of reason and reasoning which is mostly parochial, paternalistic, and self-serving. This state of affairs does not make for intellectual development and growth, but rather encourages mediocrity and dishonesty in all its ramifications. It is, indeed, to say the least, a collateral damage in form and content – especially to the academia and the larger society.

Such dishonesty and indiscipline provide a fertile womb for the fertilisation of the germs of the now entrenched

institutional cancers, manifesting in the forms of – though not limited to – diverse types of falsification, plagiarism, cheating, sexual harassment, and sex-for-grades. These are such that require a *Natashaistic* treatment, no matter who is involved. It is about time, really, the concepts of *Akpabioism* and *Natashaianism* are carefully interrogated, with a view to understanding their utility in a society where power is seen to be everything, and marginalisation a veritable vehicle to silence the poor, weak, defenceless, and powerless.

It certainly goes beyond all this and touches issues such as course allocation, project supervision, and supervisee abuse. In the case of the latter, supervisors now pressurise most students working under them to provide them with juicy contracts – or their work will be delayed. In some other cases, project files will only be read expeditiously if a good envelope is placed within the pages of the manuscript. Academics have, in a sense, turned kidnappers demanding ransom – and sometimes, after the payments have been effected in cash or in kind or both – the student may not receive the promised or negotiated grade.

Recently, The Punch (April 2025), published that, “No fewer than 50 lecturers across Nigerian public tertiary institutions have been indicted for sexual misconduct between April 2021 and April 2025.”

What a number. What a great display of reason and reflection of integrity!

How high is the Ivory Tower today in the Nigerian society? How will it and its inmates effectively correct the larger society? Would the academia not be taken for a joke and thus, laughed to derision? It will have choreographed the most laughable dance in rags.

There can be more to talk about still, as the dwindling integrity among the managers of academic programmes and administrative platforms at either the Department or Faculty levels is alarming. Here, mindless brutal internecine wars by some lecturers are fought, especially at Departmental and Faculty graduate proposal and seminar presentations. On the whole, no academic advancement or contribution would have been made – rather, what we get is what Shakespeare described as “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing...” It has become like the Nigeria politics of the 1980s, premised on the revenge philosophy of “You Tarka Me, I Dabo You.” It is the student that is grossly short changed. The frustration and aggression theorists have posited, in a sense, that there is a limit capacity beyond which a cup can no longer continue to receive and hold water. When that point is reached, the cup is bound to spill its content and ultimately mess up the entire space. The academia will soon get to this point, and this lecture pleads that everything should be done to hasten the arrival of that day if whatever is left of both individual and institutional integrity will not soon become extinct.

On the 23rd of April, 2025, the Vice Chancellor, Professor Georgewill Owunari, while declaring open the election process for the election of Senate Representatives into the University Governing Council and to several other positions and portfolios, passionately requested Senate members to uphold the tenets of integrity and shun every form of pseudo and prostitute reasoning and consideration. He reminded members of Senate that the university is one indivisible entity that exists for the common good of the university community. Only persons of proven integrity and track record of professionalism, devoid of ethnic, religious, and paternalistic considerations, should be voted for. Right from the onset of this discourse that

marks my exit from this great institution, the questions about reason and integrity in the academia have been the central plank of our discussion. It is, therefore, so heart-warming to hear the Vice Chancellor passionately make the remarks that he made. If only they fell on fertile ground, then there will be hope.

The University of Port Harcourt Anthem says it all in its second stanza and the last three lines:

Opportunities, unlimited and equal (please refer to the University Anthem). Where are the opportunities? How unlimited are they? And is there equality, really? How about state of origin, local government area one hails from, as well as what in-group or cult one belongs to? If these that we frown at in the larger society are seen to be prominent in the academia, then how can we correct the society outside or initiate transformative changes? Every sane person who wishes to dance would do so in a beautiful robe or regalia, and not in rags. Really, a dance originates from the inside – like integrity and character – and then manifests on the outside. For any dance to be worth its salt, it must have firm dance steps of integrity; otherwise, its social relevance and impact will be zero. If there is no difference between us in the academia and the professional politicians whose stock-in-trade is primitive accumulation, womanising, assassinations, etc., then our dance of correction, revolution, and rebirth would have been one done in laughable rags.

There is what I consider an outstanding example of a valedictory message that I should like to share with us here. It is the one by Prophet Samuel in 1 Samuel 12:3-4 (KJV):

Behold, here I am: witness against me
before the LORD, and his anointed;

whose ox have I taken? or whose ass
have I taken? or whom have I defrauded?
Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose
hand have I received any bribe to blind
mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it
you.

Any day the academia – and indeed, the leaders of this unique institution and our great country, Nigeria – could honestly say like Prophet Samuel in the above quote, then the social sanitisation and ethical revolution would have begun.

Please listen and enjoy this song that says everything about my journey here at the University of Port Harcourt:

The Song – There Was Jesus.

I THANK YOU ALL, FOR LISTENING.

May 23rd, 2025

REFERENCES

- Allen, F. (2025). Power: Predators and preys. *University of Port Harcourt Inaugural Lecture Series No. 195*. UPPL Publishers.
- Arinze, A. (2016). Ethnicity problem in Nigeria – Impediment to national development. *University of Port Harcourt Valedictory Lecture Series No. 7*. UPPL Publishers.
- Aristotle (1925). *Nichomachean ethics: Book II* (W.D) Ross Trans). The Internet Classics.
- Chomsky, N. (1967). The responsibility of intellectuals. *The New York Review of Books*, 16(3), 27 – 34.
- Ekekwe, E.N. (2019). Here is what I have learned as a teacher. *University Of Port-Harcourt Valedictory Lecture Series No. 14 UPPL, Publishers*.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth*.
- Frost, R. (1923). *Stopping by woods on a snowy evening*. In New Hampshire (p.87) Henry Holt and Company.
- Herodotus (2003). *The histories* (A.de Selincourt, Trans), Penguin Classics. (Original work published ca. 430BCE)
- Lewis, C.S. (2012). *Mere Christianity*. Williams Collins
- Mmom, P. C. (2018). Order in disorder. *University of Port Harcourt Inaugural Lecture Series No. 153*. UPPL Publishers.
- Nwaorgu, O.C. (1998). *Dimensions of political analysis*. Du & Pal, Lagos
- Nwaorgu, O.C. (2014). Inactive squares and the rumbling state. *University of Port Harcourt Inaugural Lecture Series No. 110*. UPPL Publishers.
- Nwaorgu, O.C. (2023). The state, its several idiots, prostitutes and gladiators: Interrogating Professor Ndu's concept of *Nwankporo Madu*, in O. Amadi, F. Allen & M.D Ogali (eds), *Discipline, civilisation and politics, (essays*

- in honour of Professor Eme Chibuike Ndu.* Next Generation Press.
- Nwaorgu, V. C. (March 8, 2025). Interview.
- Popper, K. (1963). *Philosophy of critical rationalism.*
- Rothbard, M.N. (1974). *The anatomy of the state.* Ludwig Von Mises Institute.
- Soyinka, W. (1992). *Address at Authors' Conference at Abeokuta.*
- Whichcote, B. (2008). *The moral and religious dialogues of Benjamine Whichcote* (edited by J.A. Passmore). Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, Z. P., Beathard, C., & Smith, J. (2019). *There was Jesus (song) on rescue story.* Provident Label Group.

CITATION



PROFESSOR OMENIHU CHIEMELA NWAORGU

Esteemed Vice Chancellor Sir, I consider it a great privilege to read at this occasion, the citation on a rounded gentleman, a restless yet, unassuming scholar, an accomplished academic, the valedictorian today.

Professor Omenihu Chiemela Nwaorgu, was born on Tuesday, the 9th of August, 1955, at Umuogele Umuakwu, in Isiala Ngwa North LGA, to now late Elder Godwin Iheanacho and Mrs Bessie Wozichi Nwaogu. He is the first child in a family of eleven children. As will be revealed shortly, Professor Omenihu C. Nwaorgu has several other firsts apart from being the first born child of his family.

The civil war in 1917 paused his early education which he picked up again, at the end of the war in January 1970. At Wilcox Memorial Secondary School Ogbor Hill, Aba, in Abia

State now. He in June 1974 passed his West African School Certificate (WASC) examination in brilliant colours. In 1975 he sat for and cleared his London General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level papers and later, the Advance Level papers in Government, Economics and History. On the insistence of his headmaster father, he went to the Teacher Training College, Uzuakoli, to be trained as a teacher. His academic record remains very outstanding till date.

In 1980, young Omenihu Chiemela Nwaorgu gained admission to study Political Science in one of India's prestigious universities, the Panjab University, Chandigarh, and in 1982, he earned with honours a bachelor's degree in Political Science.

- In 1985, he earned a Masters in First Class.
- Then a Post-graduate Diploma in Population Studies in First Class.
- In 1990 he bagged a Ph.D and made history by being the first African to earn a Ph.D since the history the University in 1847 at Lahor and its relocation to Chandigarh in 1947.

On return to Nigeria, in 1992/93, Professor Omenihu Chiemela Nwaorgu served in the NYSC, at the Department of Political and Administrative Studies of the University of Port Harcourt. On the 7th of April 1993, he was offered an appointment as Lecturer II, and from there he rose slowly but steadily through the ranks. He has served as Acting Head of Department in 2004, Chairman Departmental Book Review Committee, Chairman Faculty of Social Sciences, Book Review Committee, Member Petroleum Museum Committee of University of Port Harcourt, First Editor, Development Round Table, A Journal of Development.

He has supervised countless number of undergraduate projects, more than forty master's degree dissertations and over twenty

Ph.D Theses. He became the first to produce at a graduate external defence, six Ph.Ds, Professor Omenihu C. Nwaorgu is indeed phenomenal. He has served as an external examiner and Assessor for professorial promotion to several universities in Nigeria like University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), University of Abuja, University of Lagos, UniBen, UniCal, UniUyo, UniCross, ABSU, IMSU, Igbiniedion University, etc.

- He served as the First Dean of the College of Management and Social Sciences, Rhema University, Aba, Abia State.
- First and Founding Dean of the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Nigeria British University, Kilometre 9 PH/Enugu Express Road, Obehie Asa, Abia State.
- He became the first to deliver an inaugural lecture from the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, University of Port Harcourt.

This academic colossus has authored/co-authored many publications, and holds membership of several professional bodies.

He is happily married to beautiful Nnenna Ugo Nwaorgu, a lady with the heart of gold. The marriage is blessed with three children, and now a wonderful grandchild.

Esteemed Vice Chancellor, Sir, what an honour and rare privilege to present to you, a humble scholar, pastor, a very distinguished gentleman, to deliver his exit lecture, Professor Omenihu Chiemela Nwaorgu.

Prof. Abraham Owunari Georgwill
Vice Chancellor