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A Critical Review of African Communitarianism

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Abstract

What motivates this paper is the over-romanticization of African communitarianism in the philosophies of some African scholars where the subjectivity (individual-self) of the community-members is subsumed under the communality of the community (social-self). This over-romanticization has triggered the question of right and freedom of both the community-member and the community itself. Its scholarly response is the emergence of a dual conceptual versions of communitarianism referred to as 'radical' and 'moderate'. This paper therefore argues that in as much as the centre can no longer hold following the division of Africans among varieties of belief system and creeds, that the communitarian radicalism held by some African scholars is no more obtainable hence the proposition of a communitarian version where individuals' rights are observed to the extent that they contribute positively to the 'community-welfarism'. In other words, it advocates for a version of communitarianism that begins from the notion of individuality to community, and resolves the question of freedom. This paper shall employ philosophical contextual analysis in addressing the issue.

Key Words: Africa, communitarianism, freedom, community-consciousness, community-individual.

Introduction

The word 'Africa' and 'African' here, refer to the 'continent' and 'her people', and by division 'Igbo' and the 'Igbo people'. Two reasons are behind the usual reference to 'an ethnic nationality' with the 'African' as if 'Africa' is 'an ethnic nationality'. (1) The spirit of 'Pan-Africanism' which is an ideology that aims at the recollection of the African-consciousness, and the unification of African peoples after the existential uprootedness (enslavement, colonialism, etc.) that befell them. Note that Pan-Africanism is an ideological-

expression of communitarianism and a search for an authentic African identity. (2) Because of the similarity of existential experiences and conceptual schemes that cut across African nationalities.

Having made this clarification, this paper thus makes bold to say that there are two main factors that identify what is an African value: humanism and community. Whatever is an African value must express humanism and a communitarian value where actions are evaluated based on how such actions promote the welfare and well-being of others within the community. This perspective of value-system presupposes that the concept of community expressed in communitarianism is primary to the concept of individual expressed in individuality. The implication therefore is that community (connoting the idea of 'social-self') then becomes the determinant of the individuality (connoting the idea of 'individual-self'). The question now becomes what is the place of individuality in the communality? It is against this position that this paper defends a thesis that based on the realities today, primacy of the communitarian principle should be returned to the 'individual-self' from the 'social-self' while the 'social-self' exists in complementarity with the 'individual-self'. The expectation from this paper is a reversal version of communitarianism that restores the primacy of right of the community-individuals in the communitarian consciousness of the community as an entity. The paper shall employ philosophical conceptualization, analysis and clarifications to critically evaluate the African communitarianism in the midst of the African existential realities.

African Communitarianism

It is no doubt that this concept, 'communitarianism' is as old as what an African personality or what is to be African, could be. For the African, the meaningfulness of existence is best expressed in collectivity as evidenced in relatedness; and so, to exist is to exist with-and-for-and-among-'others'. The rudiments and implications of existence is expressed holistically in plurality, relationality and communality. In its most commonest expression, when two Africans greet, it goes thus: *kedu ka unu mere?* (how are 'you' doing?), and the response would be: *anyi di mma/oyi* (we are doing fine) instead of, *a di m mma/oyi* (I am doing fine). In English, the second person 'you' is both singular and plural, and when being analyzed in the third person, it thus depends on number present. Thus, if it were in English that the greeting is rendered, the normal response, even though 'you' is both plural and singular, would be 'I am doing fine' because it is between only two persons- one responding to the other. But in the very opposite, the response to the two Africans would read: 'we are fine'. Now, the question will be: 'Why the 'we' instead of 'I' as an individual responding to an individual, in the greeting?' The reason is as simple as that 'you' as an individual is an embodiment of ontological value and conceptual phenomenon. In this, the 'you' even though an individual, represent the whole of his/her 'we-family, we-community'. From the visible, the idea of invisible surfaces. The individual 'you' ontologically picture in representation, both his immediate and extended family members, village, clan or community members. Though his existence, his beingness is singularly perceived, it goes beyond singularity as physically perceived, to ontologically include the invisible phenomena of his existence. The 'you' not only represent his/her own personal individual image, respect, honour and dignity, but also those of his family in entirety, his ancestry included. Any misbehaviour is a dent to the image of his invisible family members, ancestry, and by extension, the Supreme Being whose image the 'you' ought to picture in his/her attitudinal disposition. The consciousness of this existential ontology burdens existence as a concept with a whole lot of moral obligations, for any bad act committed is never left unpunished by the whole being, whose dignity, respect, fame, honour and image, the singular individual 'you' physically represent. This conceptual scheme tasks existence with a lot of responsibilities on an individual as a picturesque of his ancestry; it is equally the rationale and patriotism behind the enthusiasm for protection and cherishment of patrimony for patrimonies are reminders and images of the ancestral sweat, struggle and integrity left for future generation which the generation, with every sense of oughtness, must preserve and keep safe. Patrimonies represent ancestry, just like the existence of an individual 'you' does, even to the Maker of the ancestral generation. Thus, the word *Anyi* (we) best describes the African, his existence and his experience. At this juncture, it must be understood that for the African, the sense of existence portrays 'we' for even if

an individual does exist, he exists for and on-behalf of the ‘others’ both of whom are visible and invisible. This existential conceptualization bestows on every existent a sense of humanism, solidarity and communal obligation. From this perspective, existence takes on not only social, but also ontological dimension.

In the African past, before the African-European contact, similitude in belief system and creeds cut across African ethnic nationalities and generally Africa as a continent. For instance, the people were bound by one religion and religious belief system- African Traditional (Indigenous) Religion (AT(IR)). No one saw ancestral reverence and the whole ancestral ontological influences as yoke, curse, backwardness and bondage that must be broken by fire and force as conceived today owing to western disorientation. In fact, ancestors are spiritually invoked and prayed to, to intervene in the family affairs which they positively did regarding the level of moral consciousness to attract them. Certain cultural phenomena like *Àlà* (the Earth goddess) is conceived as a deity whose spirituality/ontological-manifestation highly detests any form of immorality against one another (Abah & Ugwu, 2021). The consciousness of this spirituality stood as a sincere bond among the people for harming a neighbour is subsequently harming oneself and by ontological effectiveness, every member of the community. When the ‘community’ stood and decided, all obeyed, for there was no division among the community-people based on creed. Regard for deities and divinities, their festivals and commemorations were communally observed and participated in, by all. Cultural events and festive periods were participated in, by all, and these facilitated among the people, the spirit of oneness, unity and consciousness of *nwanneness*, unlike today when, due to the ignorance of *nwanneness*, relatives engage in abnormal relationship with his blood relative and may eventually end up committing sexual taboo or even marriage with him/her. Therefore, when the parts (individuals) come together to form a whole, then there is a holistic knowledge and bond of relatedness for more strength for not only survival, but also existential improvement. This necessitates the validity of the saying: *onye mara nwanne ya* (let everyone know his/her relative). This ‘knowledge’ of *nwanneness* is not only socio-ontologically vital, but also economically, politically, developmentally valid for facilitation of existential well-being. This expression can be corroborated with Malcolm X’s assertion that “when ‘I’ is replaced by ‘we’ even illness becomes wellness.” Though, his ‘replacement’ idea could be ambiguous, but, the African communitarianism places emphases on the fact that in ‘we’, the ‘I’ is more powerful and progressive, and that explains certain aphorisms like: *ìgwè bu ike* (multitude/community is one’s strength), *ibe bu ike* (relatives (expressing relatedness) is one’s strength), etc. All these communal engagements kept reinforcing, among the people, the consciousness of commitment, sincerity and moral obligation; and reminding them the attached moral obligations towards one another, failure of which attracts punishments from these spiritual entities.

At this juncture, it could simply be said that in the pre-African-European contact, existed the reality of *onye ayana(aghana) nwanne ya* (let no one leave his/her relative behind) because the house does not fall without the *uko/ebede* (inbuilt space). When it hurts the mouth, both the mouth, eye, ear and nose begin to cry; and so, it becomes a collective obligation of the whole not to allow a part to be hurt for hurting one is hurting the whole, expressing the saying that *mere nwanne, mere onwe ya*. Thus, when the African knows that hurting *nwanne* is self-hurting, then he would quickly conclude it that *onye a muru, muta nwanne ya* (when you are born(favoured), automatically, you are in obligation to born(favoured) your relatives). In other words, an alone-wealth is a curse and burden, but a collective-wealth is really a blessing. An individual’s richness is incomplete unless it indicates and facilitates the well-being of the ‘other’, hence in the ‘other’, you are richer. This portrays the sayings that *mmadu ka ego* (the gift of humanity is more valued than money and wealth), *onwere mmadu ka onwere ego* (he who has human being is richer/wealthier than he who has (only) money), *mmadu ka ihe/ife* (the gift of humanity is more valued than any other thing, anything at all), *mmadu ka aku* (the gift of humanity is more valued than wealth), etc.

It is still from this perception that it could be said that the African ‘even in his thinking, thinks in pluralism- in relation with the welfare of both himself and that of the ‘other’ for he is fully aware of the moral burden

of doing so'. In the reality of the African communitarianism, the African does not only 'think' or 'mind', he also 'feels' with his heart. The two humanitarian characteristics become intertwined and inseparable modes(aspects) of existing or socio-ontological reality. Thus, the African becomes a thinking-and-feeling being. This African existential personality aspect is the reason some Western scholars accuse Africans of illogicality and uncriticality to the existential issues as they do. Sometime ago, a relative's WhatsApp update captures the essence of the African communitarianism. A small bowl filled with white rice, stew spread on the top, different coloured rubber spoons fixed on the rice, ready to be communally consumed by a multitude of an extended family members, is placed, and a short communitarian-characterized-write-up placed behind it. The write-up reads: 'Back in the days when we didn't know the difference between cousins and distant cousins, nephews and nieces. When there were no envy. When nobody wants to kill anybody. When there was no step in mothers. When no mother would tell her son that the father's people are evil. When there no half in brothers and sisters. We weresimply brothers and sisters.' The update indeed reminds of whatever African communitarianism ever means and implies: when there were many more innumerable to mere sharing. But it must be known that the divisive strategy to distinguish relationship with terms like siblings, uncles, aunties, brothers, nephews, nieces, etc, is western oriented; and because Africa has been dominated by the product of westernization, Africans today have cousins and distant cousins, brothers and step brothers, mothers and step mothers, etc. Even though the above citation summarily describes the African conceptualization and terming of relationship with only 'brothers and sisters' (brotherhood and sisterhood), this paper goes further to posit that it is described with only *nwanne* (relatedness). All is related following their communitarian personality principles. The African conceptualization and description of *nwanne* (relatedness) has no distinguishing logicity and principles as critically obtainable in its western conceptualization. Nonetheless, another critique may argue that envy, killing are as old as human beings, the point of emphasis is that it may be true, but westernization with its discreteness, existential individualistic emphasis and conceptual divisiveness have practically aided them the more in Africa as against how they may have existed in Africa considering the African's consciousness of their inherent immorality and ontological consequences. In the communitarian flow as obtainable in the African past, every home was a home for all for if darkness caught a child where s/he went for playing, the family was obligated to take care of him/her just as their own child/ren, a neighbour was first relative, who fed and beat the hell out of you for wrong deeds even before Papa and Mama were involved, every cooking pot was indeterminate as to how many people would eventually share from it, reckless shedding blood were so minimal, and most time, by accident, as against how consciencelessness and unconsciousness over the ontological consequences, have aided them today, land was communally owned and the community was obligated to intervene in a community-member's existential challenge like when s/he was befallen by fire incident, age that s/he could no longer carry out certain personal and or family responsibility, etc. It was an era when true and sincere love played among the people, facilitating oneness and ontological bond that parenting was communally observed as a woman could entrust her neighbour with her child to look after while she went to market, farming, fetching of water, firewood, etc.

Thus, when addressing the African personality of communitarian attitude, it is pivotal to differentiate between the African-pre-western-contact, and the African-post-western-contact eras. The later has created a new-consciousness influencing 'what is to be African'; hence, it has become paramount to address communitarianism to suit the social realities of the two eras. In the African past, as noted above, when the centre was still peacefully held, none of those cultural activities that bound the people together was conceived as evil, and ontologically irrelevant as conceived today following westernization of Africa and African minds. Today, Afrians tag their own evil, archaic, awkward and even hold that they deserve destruction; yet they turn around to accept foreign belief systems that are essentially no different from their own rejected ones. What they threw out through the door, they rushed out, became brainwashed and accepted and brought back, with more enthusiasm and stronger belief and allegiance to protect, through the window. For instance, they have been disoriented to tag their religion heathenism, fetishism, diabolism, sorcery and idolatry, but

turned and accepted religions with same method but westernly re-fashioned. Their own ancestral images are yokes and curses to be broken, but they accept to worship through the images of those whom they do not know and some of whom history has it, have questionable characters and have committed series of scandals, but who are today clothed as ‘saints, martyrs, etc’; they dismiss many of their own beliefs and tag them illusion, superstitions, but turned to accept same as divinities, sainthood, martyrdom, etc; even the communitarian instrumentality of ostracism is rejected and termed ‘un-biblical’ but they practice ex-communication which many (like Baruch de Spinoza) who dared to say the truth faced, among many other practical instances under foreign religions. In fact, they have turned to religious beliefs that reduce God to mere ‘religious-participations’, ‘events’ and ‘festives’ and ‘images’ in the form of statues of saints, martyrs, etc which are used for personal gods for protection.

A clear and practical implication of this is that the unified, and Africanly-universal-communitarianism is now segregated-communitarianism. Africans now have a divisional communitarianism of like-faith, a situation whereby you do not ‘communitarianize’(commune) with me if you are not of the same creed/belief-system with me. A communitarianism where by protection, concern, humanness and communitarian moral obligations are determined by who you are, or identify with, and who you are in communion or are communitarianizing with. ‘Communal’ protection and well-being of the ‘other’ is never holistic/community-minded, but partly and according to the input of the fellow like-faithful. A communitarianism where the ‘other’ is suppressed because of creed/belief-system and the ‘other’s’ existence is negatively and egoistically manipulated and disfigured. A communitarianism of survival of the fittest where if my communitarian-fellows can dominate and impose on you our own creed principles, and in disregard to the principles of communitarianism. Humanism and according to humanitarian recognition to the ‘other’ is based on belief-system and not by sharing from the same substance of humanity. A communitarianism of disbelief in one another, of domination, of conquer and rule, of avoid him for he is an enemy, evil and kill him, of various negative labellings. That is why the African Traditional Religious community(communitarians) are suppressed and oppressed and tagged diabolic, falsehood-epitomized and evil and worth nothing than destruction, and practically, they are being intimidated and attacked, and their religion and religious symbols and items destroyed. By this, a sort of forceful-communitarianism is formed, where members are both victims and victimizers. A communitarianism of crack, and internal-cracked-communitarians(others). A communitarianism that could economically be described as individually instead of communally driven, where egocentrism and the principles of *onye na nke ya* (each for each’s business), and the sayings that ‘when you succeed let the bridge cut (disconnect)’ and ‘if you stand, I pull you down, it is only me, the knig who will stand’ predominate. Politically this communitarianism could be described as individualized or sectionalized within ‘my’ people- parents, husbands/wives, children, and not extending even to the whole clan let alone the community. Religiously it is perceived as a communitarianism of westernization through Christianization and Islamization, ruled by the tenets of ‘if you are not of our religious creed, you deserve to be hated and dehumanized, and if possible, existentially eliminated’. Developmentally, it is a class-characterized communitarianism where intimidating gates and fences are used as demarcations from a set of communitarians from the other. Culturally, it is a communitarianism of westernization where almost every aspect of African lifestyle is damned but the western lifestyles, some of which are highly ontologically, decently and health wise negative- be it in food, clothing, occupation, etc., have become the norm, new normal. Linguistically, it is a communitarianism of foreign languages-domination to the detriment and extinction of the local languages, to mention but a few (Ugwu, 2017).

Be that as it may, one vital feature of the African communitarianism is the instrumentalism and functionality of ‘ostracism phenomenon’. Among Africans, any act against the common welfarism of the community, is punishable by being socially/communally excluded from the community-engagements. This is called *Mwuchi/N-wuchi* or even *Iwuchi Mmadu*. This term takes its root from *Iwu* (cultural traditions that must be obeyed). *Iwu* in turn derives from the verb *Wu* which means ‘institutionalization or to institutionalize’

something (custom and precepts). Thus, to be ostracized implies that the ostracized has breached the contract or principle of *Iwu*; in other words, s/he has committed against the institutionalized customs and laws that every member of the community is expected to abide by, for the community welfarism. So, violating this socially does not just end socially, but ontologically for the spirits of the forebears who are the forerunners of the institutionalized customs and precepts for the community welfarism must be angry with the violator for denting their existential integrity/sense of 'good' which these customs stand for. This explains why any ostracized is excluded from the social community engagements, and ideally, this does not end here, the person will not be in good terms with the land, its inhabitants and produces of the community. In fact, the person will not be in favour with nature, for as s/he is excluded, rejected socially from the community, so is s/he ontologically ostracized from the circle of the ancestry of the community. This would continue as long as the person refuses to find existential cordiality with the community-members socially and ontologically. The practicality of ostracism was the case of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* when he shed the blood of his kinsman; such a sin could negatively affect the whole community if the community keep quiet at such taboo (Achebe, 1958).

Nevertheless, time as understood today, is an indisputable existential factor in the discourse of reality. The reality is that in Africa, 'things have fallen apart' as Achebe (1958) would say, but it is left for Africans to restructure towards co-existence with the reality of every era. Practically, the reality is that those means through which the people display this identifying attitude of communitarianism have all been conceived evil, diabolic and devilish following the disorientation from western-contacts. Those cultural events, festivals, practices, ceremonies and rituals that united the people: children with their maternal and paternal lineage, children with their mother-land, language, social norms and all the 'dos' and 'do-nots', brothers/sisters and all the *umunna* and *umunne*; the local religion which all believed in, then and through which the people displayed high sense of ontological communion, sincerity and togetherness, even forming and belonging to village meeting which united the people and their offsprings, are all today conceived devilish, dedicational means to negative spirits, archaic, and almighty 'un-biblical', hence no longer of value (Ugwu, 2021). This scenario is the reality, factor and the African-European contact-implication which raise certain issues concerning the African communitarianism which this paper would address.

Following this contact-implications as they concern this African identifying attitude of communitarianism, a differentiation, therefore, has to be made as to when 'things are still intact', and when 'things have fallen apart'. In the African pristine era when the above analyzed value-system was in vogue, the people were in every sincerity with one another, and strongly unified in their traditional and cultural creed. What held them were stronger and cherished than what divided them, and they made life very easy, more of communitarian and humanistic than individualistic and conscienceless. There was one belief-system and not diversified, thus, the principles of communitarianism guiding their lives had no, or very insignificant challenges as what is obtainable today. Today, all these cultural factors and unified belief-system have been shattered following the intrusion of foreign beliefs and creeds. In Africa, anything western especially as it concerns religion and life orientations, is individualistic to the extent that even in one creed system- say Christianity for instance- there is division and accusations belonging to a true religious family that owns God, accusations of engaging in fake worship of God and idolatry, etc, against one another. Africans have been deceived into believing that foreign religions and individualistic lifestyles following their guiding creeds are better off than their own, hence division even at the family level where religious creeds divide mother from father, and both from their children each of whom may be found in different faith.

Radicalization of African Communitarianism

Talking about the African communitarianism, one thing stands out: that it is the conceptualization of, and a high emphasis placed on the African communality (a life guided by communitarianism), that breed the extreme communitarian conceptualization found in scholars like Mbiti, Okolo, etc. This is because if the

African worldview/value-system should be guided by the principal principles of communitarianism as embedded in, for instance, the philosophies of Mbiti and Okolo, existence and unalienable-human-right therefore are no more ontological but derivative which is totally conceptually 'what is not to be African'.

Indeed, existence(beingness) in the African worldview has always been perceived in terms of the 'other'. Existence is existence-in-and-among-and-with-others-in-and-within-communities. No being is existentially conceived in isolation from the other; and drawing from that, existential quiddity is enshrined in the 'community' where every member-being lives and fulfils its destiny and aspirations. Thus, the value and essence of 'community' places a high influence on the African experience; hence the position that communality best describes the African personality. This 'communality-phenomenon' has been designated with some terms by some African scholars like Senghor and his 'Negritude', Nyerere and his 'Ujamaa', Nkrumah and his 'Consciencism', Azikiwe and his 'Eclecticism', Mbiti and his 'I-and-We Existential mantra', Okolo and his 'Being-with', Asouzu and his 'Ibuanidanda-Complimentarity', Ozumba and Chimakonam and their 'Njikoka-Amaka Integrative-Humanism', Nze and his 'Communalistic-Brotherhood', Edeh and his 'EPTAISM of Mma-di-in-Closeness-not-Closedness', Kanu and his 'Igwebuiké', Odimegwu and his 'Inter-Presencing', Maduka and his 'Madukakism', Ugwu (forthcoming) and his 'Anthropocentricism of Madjvuruism', among many others.

Be that as it may, the reality of division among the people after Western-contact, according to foreign creeds has questioned the long aged unity of the people that when the community say 'we are to do this today', an individual would say 'I am not among, it is against 'our' faith'. In a scenario like this, what is the place of the individual as a human subject with unalienable right to choices, in the community consciousness? Thus, the failure to observe this reality by most African scholars when interrogating the African communitarianism is a challenge which would always end in questions about individuality or subjectivity and rights of the community-members. But following the consciousness of this reality, modern African scholars have initiated a conceptual move to salvage the situation by propounding what is referred to as 'moderate communitarianism' to differentiate what is referred to as 'radical communitarianism'. By the categorization by these modern African scholars, all the African nationalists, in the spirit of, and the quest for pan-Africanism and in search for an African identity, could be described as radicalist/extreme communitarians.

In almost all the literature of Achebe, the radical version of communitarianism is never hidden even as he writes with the consciousness of the reality— the divisive manifestations of the western-African contact (Achebe, 1958; Achebe, 1969). In fact, the lamentation of this division begins Okonkwo's 'Introduction' in *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1958). Later in the work, it is equally acknowledged that the coming of the westerners gains more ground and converts like Kiaga, Enoch, Nneka- Amadi's wife, other converts among whom is Okonkwo's first son Nwoye who joined when he (Okonkwo) is on exile at Mbanta his maternal home (Achebe, 1958). This marks the disruption of the African communality; in fact, when Okonkwo's closest friend- Obierika who amazingly keeps seeing Nwoye around the missionaries, asks him about his father's welfare, he responded: "I don't know. He is not my father". His 'father' and 'relatives' now are the 'missionaries' and fellow 'converts' with whom he now shares the new faith and the spirit of communitarianism, no more his biological father and blood relatives.

Still in the same spirit of undivided communality, Mbiti (1969) writes that "the existence of the individual is the existence of the corporate" hence the individual can simply say: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1970). From the Mbitian dictum, there is no 'I-existence', subjective-existence expressed in subjectivity/individuality; but there is 'we-existence', objective-existence expressed in objectivism/community and 'we-ness'. Okolo (1993) has earlier posited that "relationships constitute self to the extent that the African could well echo *Cognatus Ergo Sum* ('I am related [to others] therefore I exist')" hence it could be summarized: "As a matter of fact, individuals only become real in their relationship with

others, in a community or a group. It is the community that makes or produces the individuals such that without the community, the individual has no existence” (Okolo, 1992). The reality of an ‘I-existence’ (individual-self) is dependent on the community (social-self) expressed in relatedness. By this, the existence of the individual is dependent on the individual’s socialization and so, if s/he does not relate/socialize-with-the-other, he does not exist. This is too radical when compared to Aristotle’s position on the same issue when he posits that “one who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god” (1998). At least, he acknowledges his/her existence as a beast or a god, however, with strong emphases on relatedness/socialization, but not denial of his/her existence as Okolo posits.

Menkiti (1984) is not exempted from this oblivion of attributing existence-primacy to the ‘social-self’ than the ‘individual-self’. In his African normativist personhood conception, he asserts that “in the African view, it is the community which defines the person as person, not some isolated static quality of rationality, will or memory.... personhood is something which has to be achieved, and is not given simply because one is born of human seed” (Menkiti, 2004). To be really seen as a person is not ontological, rather, achieved in/from the community (community-dependent). Without the community, an individual does not really exist as it is left for the community to existentially define him/her. He further insists that “the human community plays a crucial role in the individual’s acquisition of personhood” hence personhood is achieved by observing social dictates following one’s age which is determinant in one’s epistemic gauge based on eldership-doctrine- that the elder should know more than the young, and so, should understand, from this epistemological inclinations, the worth of social norms, and abiding by them, failure of which, makes him/her not really a person. Of course, other African normativists like Gyekye, Gbadegesin, Egbunu, Ikuenobe, Imafidon, Dzobo are not left out from the discourse and erroneous conception (Ugwu & Ngwoke, 2021).

From the foregoing, it is clear that the community (portraying the social-self) in which individuals live is placed over and above its individual-members. By this, the ‘community’ becomes primary, while the ‘individual-members’ become secondary, implying that the right of the community-individual-members are not ontological and internal in(with) them, but a derivative one where the community determines the extent of their sense of freedom and right to pursue their personal aspirations and intentions. It is against this radical/extreme communitarianism that moderatist communitarians emerge. They claim that moderate communitarianism grants the community-individual-members rights. But a critical look at the moderate communitarianism, and to a logical conclusion, finds out that it is as guilty as the radical version (Famakinwa 2010; Majeed 2018; Matolino 2009).

Critique Against the Radical African Communitarianism

Existence is indeed not outside the scope of community; and community-living characterizes the African life to the core. The African extended family system, unconsciously communal lifestyle of sharing from same cup, same plate, and inter-personal relationships displayed in meetings and family-family-inter-dependency, communal love for one another and obligation to redress a fellow’s life, that stand as core sources of essence to the African life, say a lot about this claim (Ugwu, 2019). But this attains ‘radicalism’ when some scholars posit that one’s existence becomes real or gets validity in the ‘community’ as seen in Mbiti, Okolo, Menkiti, among others with such an extremist view. The implication is that if the African worldview or value-system should be guided by the principal principles of communitarianism as embedded in the aforementioned radical communitarians, existence and unalienable-human-right therefore are no more ontological but human-derivation which is totally conceptually un-African. Thus, instead of Mbitian and Okoloist dicta, this paper would rather propose: *We are because I am, and since I am, therefore We are; and I am related [to others] because I exist; or, I exist, therefore, I am related [to others]* respectively. This is because, if there is no ‘I’, no ‘he’, no ‘she’, no ‘it’ (connoting the whole sense of both individuality and individualism (individual-self)) who also relates, there will never be a ‘we’ or ‘they’ (connoting the whole sense of collectiveness(social-

self)); hence the abstract-objective 'we/they-existence or consciousness depends on the concrete-subjective 'I/he/she/it-existence'. Put differently, the sense of the 'I-existence' should be the ontological primacy, while the 'we-existence' ontologically subordinates and depends on the 'I-existence'. The 'social-self' expressed in 'communality' is formed for the benefits of the 'individual-self'; therefore, the consciousness of the 'individual-self' should form the centrality of the 'social-self'. Thus, very important feature of this communitarianism is the symbiosis, or principles of complementarity that synergize the community(social-self) and the community-member(individual-self); by this, the effectiveness of the 'We' complements that of 'I' for in the 'we', the 'I' becomes stronger and productive. Thus, the question of right of the subject(ivity) or individual(ity) becomes more relevant.

Bearing this in mind, this paper further proposes therefore that the consciousness of the rights of the community-members should form bases for the community consciousness. This is necessary following the reality of division by the 'foreign-contacts'. By this, rights of every community-member are centrally there in the communality-consciousness of the community. All divided creeds have to be considered, subjected to, and measured under a sort of 'general or community-welfarism' phenomenon. By this, you are free but you are not free. You (as a community-member) are free when observing your rights do not harm the sacredness/unity of the whole community; but you are not free when observing your rights, does otherwise. Interestingly, your not-being-free is conditional upon its effects on the 'community-welfarism'. This 'all-inclusive' version/brand of communitarianism is feasible but must be guided by the 'principles of community-welfarism'. Many Africans of diverse creed today pose threats to social peace, tranquillity and the 'community-welfarism', all in the name of their creeds differing from that of the community. To resolve this, every community-member's creed must be inculcated in the community-consciousness and placed side-by-side with the phenomenon of 'community-welfarism', and if threatening to this phenomenon, should be faced by the community in every sense of reasoning and principles of communality. By this, you, as a micro, are free to be free to any creed that may differ from others', but you are not free to be free to disorganize and harm the nucleus of the macro family, the 'community-welfarism'. At its final logical view, abiding by any creed that threatens this phenomenon is a self-destruction, and the community in its consciousness for communality towards the 'community-welfarism' at large from where you share, is obligated to avoid you from such an awkward self-imposed experience. That is to say that whereby the community-member whose rights are consciously valued and are part and parcel of the community-consciousness, appears extremely individualistic and agent of disintegration and threat to the rudiments of being-with-ness of a community, the community should decisively deal with him/her thereby disregarding his/her individual right, however, in accordance with the principles of their communality. It is from this angle that the saying: *ndi nwe m na ndi m nwe* (people who own me and whom I own) applies. This principle of ownership that cuts across the individual(ity) and the community must be secured for the 'community-welfarism'. The 'general or community-welfarism' becomes a regulatory phenomenon, mediating-factor between the rights of the individual (the individual-self) and the rights of the community (social-self). Thus, as a community-member exists and ontologically affirms his existence, he socially lives for the general good, community-welfarism of his own existence and those of fellow existents. Thus, it could be conclusively said that existential safety is in the hands and relationships of one being with the others for what one does, directly or indirectly affects positively or negatively, the whole interrelationship system.

This brand of communitarianism is one that accommodates rights of every community-member in so far as they rhyme with the principles of 'community-welfarism' and the 'spirit of communality'. The goodness and contribution of your right to the community-welfarism determine the continuity of your right to co-exist among others. In other words, you own and must acknowledge the ontology of your existence and the unalienable rights accrued to it, but they must be in favour and alliance with the 'community-welfarism' phenomenon. By this, even though every right is observed, every possible radicalism of rights based on the different creeds into which community-members are divided and believe in, is tamed by the welfarism of the

community. Suffice it to say then that the community(social-self) can interfere in your existential unalienable right (as an individual-self) only if your right would ruin both you and the community thereby hampering the generation of the community and the communitarian continuity. Thus, even in your individual right, you do not exist independently of the community, that is why the community still intervenes in the exercise of your individual right- and that is called communality. This is where the humanism of communitarianism plays out, for the community is obligated to see for the well-beingness expressed in the principle of community-welfarism, of every community-member. This humanism justifies the interference of the community(social-self) in the right exercises of a community-member(individual-self) that may lead to both self and community destruction. So in your individuality, there is communality with the 'other' of-the-community. The significant implication of this communitarian brand is the curtailing of the individualistic and capitalistic tendencies that westernization has instituted in the African lives today. The brand of communitarianism projected by this work expresses the vitality of *Egbe beru*, *Ugo beru* (let the 'Kite' perch, let the 'Eagle' perch too). The 'kite' and 'eagle' phenomena here portray the reality of varieties in belief system that western contacts have instilled in Africa. But the continuity of you as the 'kite' or 'eagle' to keep perching (existing) is based on your contribution towards the community-welfarism. If your perching would deter the welfarism of the community in any aspect, then your (the individual-self) 'feathers' shall be weeded by the community (the social-self) following the principles of communality.

Even though theirs has only led to atomistic individualism threatening Western lives and civilization in the form of alternative life-style and excessive freedom, it must, as a referential point, be recalled that in some Western traditions and enlightenment movements, like Existentialism as understood and expressed by Sartre, Kierkegaard, etc, the African notion of community/group-living-identification/personality expressing the African rudiment of existence, especially as upheld by the above radicalist communitarians, has no place. For them, it is a life of the 'crowd' which is detested and called 'bad faith' in the Sartrean tone; and existential 'in-authenticity' in the Kierkegaardian word. Such life is anything insincerity, disappointment, abomination and unfair to the human inherent capabilities and inclinations which lead to the Heideggerian *Dasein*'s existential expression of 'existentiality' as his nature which is all about man's creativity, existential authenticity, self-identification and existence-towards-every-possibilities. The radicalist African communitarians subdue man existentially towards nothingness and dependency which could be best described as 'cowardice' in the Sartrean tone.

Conclusion

This paper has ably interrogated the term, 'African' and why its referential application to individual African ethnic nationality. It has equally identified two African value-identifying-factors, two of which are embedded in the African attitudinal personality of communitarianism. It has equally explained African communitarianism and how it attains negativism through radicalism; and why and how its nitty-gritty is no longer obtainable in Africa for the unifying affairs have fallen apart due to the difference creeds into which the people are divided. Finally, it has proffered a way forward through identification of a new brand of communitarianism that begins communalism and community-consciousness (social-self) from the consciousness of the community-individual (individual-self).

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