

‘We’ Best Describes an African Person: A Discussion on African Personality

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Abstract: *The discussion on African personality has taken many dimensions some of which could be described as social, normative, communal or communitarian and even attitudinal. This may force one to ask ‘which one is the most defining personality of the African?’ What are the implications behind it especially in regards to the modern society that is seriously becoming more individualized and divisive among a people? To which extent is its universalism among Africans? It is in responding to these questions that this paper argues the view that communalism designated with the term ‘we’ best describes African personality. In view of this, the paper is thus expected to (1) analyze and appraise the communalistic view of African personality and from an African existential experience, (2) enumerate its challenges in the 21st century, and (3) proffer solutions to these challenges. The paper finds out that the African ‘communalistic’ mode of social living in the pristine era has been replaced with ‘communitarian’ mode of social living in the 21st century hence the movement from ‘community’ to ‘society’. Significantly, the paper therefore stands to add to scholarly materials traditionally expressing a communalistic view of African personality; and as a reference material to grasp the knowledge of who an African truly is, yesterday, today and tomorrow. The paper shall adopt a phenomenological method so as to expose, interpret and appraise the communalistic view of African personality. It shall also adopt a comparative method to juxtapose the African and the Western modes of social living.*

Keywords: *‘We’, Anyi, African Personality, Communalism, Communitarianism, Community, Society, radicalism, moderatism*

Introduction

The real personality of the African has been seen discussed in different views. To argue for the correctness or wrongness of one over others is not the focal point of this paper; rather, to analyze and explain why such positions and their social relevance and finally identify the one the paper is projecting as to why it best describes the African person, is what the paper intends to argue. Some take to communal view (communalism) which could be represented, to some scholars, with 'communitarianism' or even 'socialism' which holds the position that the livelihood or existential worth/value of one person depends on the other. Others take to normativist view which posits that to really become a human person or be 'Africanly' seen as such, the individual must be conscious and conscientiously be abided by the social norms guiding the people, and to be able to do this, must have attained a certain epistemic level so as to be able to know the normative or ethical values or relevance of those guiding social norms hence the necessity of abiding by them. By this, age becomes a central factor for it is believed that the more elderly one becomes, based on one's experiences and exposures, the more wiser one becomes; and this expresses the saying that what an elder sees sitting down, climb the highest tall tree, you as a child will not see it. A few African scholars have taken to the attitudinal view of African personality which sees a particular attitude as the personality of African peoples. This attitude has variously been referred to as the 'spirit' of a people, say, the 'Igbo spirit', the 'Nigerian spirit', the 'African spirit'. It points to the untiring attitude, the attitude always subconsciously flowing from a people in their attempt to truly exist meaningfully.

It is in this light that the paper would ask: 'what is the place of the individual and the place of the community in these positions on African personality? How realistic are these positions in the 21st century driven by technology, individualistic consciousness and personal ownership with strong defensive mechanism available? What are the social, political, economic, and even religious implications of these positions? In addressing these questions the paper finds out that the African 'communalistic' mode of social living in the pristine era has been replaced with 'communitarian' mode of social living in the 21st century hence the movement from 'community' to 'society'. The paper thus defends the view that communalism designated with the term 'we' best stands as personality of the African. The African exists, lives and grows in full consciousness of communalistic principles as his/her guiding tenets in life.

Adopting the phenomenological and comparative methods, the paper shall analyze the values of communalism and how communalism has been lived and sustained among Africans. It shall define the limits and flaws of other positions that make them unfavourable as the defining personality of the African. Thus, from an African scheme of values, some are intrinsically un-African as they are against certain African values.

A Comparative Study of the African and the Western Social lifestyles and Orientations

This section would lead to analytic description of the social outlooks of both the African and the Western: which between the concepts 'community' and 'society' could best explain the reality of livelihood of the African and the Western. By this, the paper will examine two concepts.

The term 'community' comes from the Old French *comuneté*, (but currently *communauté*, which comes from the Latin *communitas* meaning 'community' or 'public spirit') derives from the

Latin *communis* which means ‘common’.¹ Thus ‘common’ (commonness) is the essence of ‘community’. Characteristically, the human ‘community’ “may have intent, belief, resources, preferences, needs, and risks in common, affecting the identity of the participants and their degree of cohesiveness.”² Essentially, it portrays that sense of common ownership among the community-members. Community could exist based on ‘location’, ‘identity’, and even ‘organization’; and these stand as pointers to the varieties of its inherent relations like the ‘grounded’, ‘life-style’ and even ‘projected’ community relations. Of course it could also be applied in reference to invention era in human history.³ At this point, community could be seen as “a group of nations having common interests,” or a “group of people living together,” or a “group of people with a common religion, race, or profession,” or even “the holding of attitudes or interests in common.” Suffice it to say that it is “a social group of any sizes whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage.”⁴ It could also be put differently thus, as “a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common,” or even “the condition of sharing or having certain attitudes and interests in common.”

The term ‘society’ derives from the 12th century French *société* meaning ‘company’. Latin *societas*, deriving from the noun *socius* implying ‘comrade, friend, ally’, and its adjectival form, *socialis* are “used to describe a bond or interaction between parties that are friendly, or at least civil.”⁵ In other words, it means “a group of individuals involved in persistent social interaction, or at large social group sharing the same spatial or social territory, typically subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.”⁶ It is “characterized by patterns of relationships (social relations) between individuals who share a distinctive culture and institutions; a given society may be described as the sum total of such relationships among its constituent members.”⁷ This explains why society could be applied to certain discourses like ‘gender’, ‘kinship’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘government and politics’, ‘trade and economics’, and even ‘conflict’. As a concept, it differentiates humanity based on levels of inventions in reference to the ‘pre-industrial’, ‘hunting and gathering’, ‘pastoral’, ‘horticultural’, ‘agrarian’, ‘industrial’, and even ‘post-industrial’. All these explain why the term ‘society’ could be applied to refer to the ‘western’, ‘information’, and even ‘knowledge’ societies. Thus, ‘society’ could be referred to as “people living together in an ordered community, an organization formed for a particular purpose” or even “the aggregate of people living together in a more or less ordered community.”

Many scholars, among who are Scheler, Walther, etc., have rendered their descent voices to the categories of human socialization of social formations. Scheler, for instance points out four categories of human socialization or social formation. First is the primitive formation otherwise

¹ ‘Community’ *Oxford Dictionaries*, 2014

² Bulu Melih, *City Competitiveness and Improving Urban Subsystems: Technologies and Applications* (IGI Global: Technologies and Applications 2011)

³ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community>

⁴ www.dictionary.com

⁵ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society>

⁶ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society>

⁷ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society>

known as mass or hordes, primarily constituted ‘through the processes of contagion and involuntarily imitation’. It has two characteristics: one, absence of an individual self-consciousness and self-responsibility, and two, does not yet amount to any real we-formation.⁸

Two, is what he calls ‘life-community’ (Lebensgemeinschaft). This social unity is characterized “by some amount of empathy and experiential sharing, since the individual members have some understanding of and solidarity with each other, but it remains a non-objectifying understanding.”⁹ Remarkable of this social unity is Scheler’s emphasis on “the primitiveness and immaturity of the life-community when remarking that it is made up of “people who are not of age.”¹⁰ Scheler’s third social unity is called society (Gesellschaft). ‘This is an artificial unity of individuals which lacks the primordial and organic living-with-one-another (Miteinanderleben) characterizing the life-community.’ “The society lacks co-responsibility and true solidarity in the form of one for all and all for one, and is instead based on contractual obligations and instrumental and strategic interests. Distrust remains the basic attitude.”¹¹ The fourth and final form of Scheler’s social formation is the ‘personal community (Persongemeinschaft)’. “It amounts to a unity of irreplaceable individuals that together form a collective person (Gesamtperson). Although this (ideal) social unity is not an actual synthesis of life-community and society, essential characteristics of both are... co-given in it.”¹²

At this, it must be noted that “one’s true individuality flourishes and comes to fruition in the social unit, which would not be the unit it is, were it not for the individuality of its members.” In regards to these four social units, it has to be noted too that “it is not as if homo sapiens first gathered in hordes, then moved on to the more developed stage of life-communities, and then after some time of maturation adopted a form of societal existence, in order finally to enter the personal-communal stage. No, the four formations are elements that occur in any concrete social unity”¹³ or “at all places and at all times all of these forms and their corresponding ethoses have in some measure been present in various mixtures.”¹⁴ Attempting differentiating between the society and the community and holding a view of primacy of community to the society, Scheler is of the view that “there can be no society without life-community (though there can be life-community without society). All possible society is therefore founded through community.”¹⁵ Going further, he

⁸ M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism*, (trans.) M. S. Frings and R. L. Funk (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 526

⁹ Dan Zahavi, “Intersubjectivity, Sociality, Community: The Contribution of the Early Phenomenologists,” *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Phenomenology*, Dan Zahavi (ed.), June 2018, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198755340.013.29, 739. www.oxfordhandbooks.com

¹⁰ Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 529

¹¹ Zahavi, “Intersubjectivity,” 740. Cf. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 528–9

¹² Zahavi, “Intersubjectivity,” 741. Cf. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 539

¹³ Zahavi, “Intersubjectivity,” 741.

¹⁴ Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 541

¹⁵ Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 531

contends that ‘this does not mean that any societal group must necessarily also be bound together as a community.’ It only means that 1) individuals who enter into societal relations must previously have participated in a communal life, and 2) that any concrete societal combination of individuals is only possible if the individuals in question are at the same time communal members (though not necessarily members of the same community).¹⁶ Put differently that “the kind of being-with-one-another found in a life-community serves as a precondition for the kind of analogical reasoning found in society.”¹⁷

Significant in Scheler is the contention that ‘the individuality of the community members is somewhat derived’. As he writes, “the experiences of an individual are given to him as single experiences, but only on the basis of a special singularizing act that clips him, as it were, out of the communal whole.”¹⁸ Community ‘members are rather defined by their communal position and function, in say, the family, clan, or tribe’.

Walther in his doctoral dissertation titled *Ein Beitrag zur Ontologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften*, tries to re-examine the nature of the social community, and in this, she has on her own differentiated between the community and the society as human social existential concepts. She argues that society stands for a total sum of persons who decide ‘to join forces based on purely strategic or instrumental considerations’ while community ‘is formed by individuals who understand themselves and others as members of a ‘we’, and who are tied together by bonds of solidarity’. For her, ‘a community is distinguished by the fact that its members have something in common, there is something they share’ while a society is formed based on the fact of finding oneself within a group of inhabitants who may, before hand, be foreign to one another and accidentally form a habitation.¹⁹ Both community and society are characterized by communication, but the knowledge of one another, common practice and belief and fear of what is believed, shared objects, goals, rituals, conventions, norms etc., decreases suspicion among communal inhabitants than societal inhabitants. For her, a community is distinguishable by ‘an inner bond or connection (innere Verbundenheit), a feeling of togetherness (Gefühl der Zusammengehörigkeit), or reciprocal unification (Wechseleinigung)’, shared experiences, actions, goals, aspirations, desires, etc. (in contrast to similar or related experiences, actions, etc. that can be present in societal relations).²⁰ According to Walther, the direct awareness of and interaction with others allows for a special kind of community, one that Walther labels purely personal communities or life communities (rein personale Gemeinschaften or Lebensgemeinschaften). In some cases, these communities are organized around the pursuit of shared external goals. In other cases, like friendships, families, and marriages, there is also a shared goal, but rather than being external, the goal is the flourishing of

¹⁶ Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 532

¹⁷ Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 531

¹⁸ Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 527

¹⁹ G. Walther, “Zur Ontologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften,” *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung VI*, E. Husserl (ed.) (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1923), 19, 20

²⁰ Walther, “Zur Ontologie,” 33, 63

the community itself. Walther calls these forms of communities “reflexive communities” (reflexive Gemeinschaften).²¹

Characteristically, which form of social unity could best describe the African social outlook by between the concepts: ‘community’ and ‘society’? From the foregoing, the ‘we’ that best characterizes the African existential experience is not an artificially formed we, but one stemmed from the consciousness of the African culture, day-to-day experience from the antiquity. It is a ‘we’ that is a product of blood bond, family bond, cultural bond, daily experience bond and the bond proceeding from the facticity of inhabiting a geographical area where same religion, beliefs, rituals, practices, traditions, norms, real personal knowledge of the other rule high. In that case, the ‘we’ characterization of the African life is a ‘we’ of community not a ‘we’ of society. Thus, the community ‘we’ which characterizes and stands for the African life and personality that attitudinal disposition which the African exhibits not just consciously but even subconsciously in his day-to-day life, the attitude that feature bodily contact in thought, speech and action, the disposition that features subject-subject communication, where a subject puts not only his/herself first, but also the other subject first and in consideration. Any social unity form above the description of community relationship, interaction or communication is not adequate even though it may portray a sort of community relationship. Thus, when ‘socialism’ as a concept is applied to point to the African personality, as some African scholars most prominent of whom are the nationalists like, Nyerere, Awolowo, Azikiwe, among others do, it is inappropriate or not in a best description. But the factor behind their application of such designations to imply the African we of community is not unknown. It is their contact with the West where they have been filled with such version of ‘we community’ as expressed through the concept ‘society’ as obtained in the Western social life. Coming back and fighting for the African liberation from the shackles of colonialism and slavery in every form and political, religious and economic independence of Africans, they exhibit the Western influence which has not just psychologically but socially downplayed the consciousness of their own brand of social unity and relationship as expressed in the we-ness of the community as a concept. At this, the we-ness of the ‘society’ as social relationship or unit concept dominates their psyche and even attitude and they keep applying ‘socialism’ to designate the African we-community relationship. This socialist we-ness of society communication is the nucleus of the Nyerere’s Ujamaa, the focal point of the Senghor’s Negritude, found at the heart of the Mboya’s community emphasis, the nitty-gritty of the Awolowo’s socialist democracy, located at the centrality of the Azikiwe’s eclectic welfarism, forms the central message of the Nkrumah’s philosophical ideology, forms the basis of the Kaunda’s humanism, among others. This point expressed above equally explains why there are questions bordering on equity, justice and class in their brand of African personality designated with socialism as a concept. Practically, there are elements of self-centredness in their socialist brand which they exhibit in their various political offices in one time or the other, and there and then, kingdom or kingdom inherently characterized by classes comes to be. In the we-ness of the African personality,

²¹ Walther, “Zur Ontologie,” 67

kinghood is plural, never in singular as is obtainable in the kinghood that accompanies the Western socialist we-ness as imported by these nationalists.²²

This point here narrated above presents an insight as to why some scholars both of whom are of African and non-African origins, argue on the recentness or antiquity of not just the African personality but also the African philosophy. Referring to the African personality, Achebe in an interview holds a recent view arising from the African consciousness of the African predicaments ranging from the Atlantic Slavery, colonialism neo-colonialism, racism and apartheid, etc.²³ But to prove the position of this paper more right, that is a self-contradiction to Achebe for holding such a view regarding his view of the African life and social unity which he has earlier described as the African personality in his works *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer At Ease* written in 50s and 60s respectively.²⁴ Kwame A. Appiah in his *In My Father's House, Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, has equally held a similar recent view on the African personality thereby discarding a sort of biologically rooted identity/personality of the African.²⁵ From the same line of influence prompts the Matolino and Kwindigwi's argument from the South African experience as it concerns the *Ubuntu* (we-social form of unity) that though it is community-focus for human welfarism but it is a post-Apartheid elitist invention mantra for political independence struggle and restoration of the African humanity which has been deterred to marrow during colonization and Apartheid white dominance in south Africa as a political sovereign entity.²⁶ Influences from the position is certainly the why behind some African scholars holding a recent view of African philosophy having been indoctrinated into the Western mannerism of philosophizing where the western philosophy stands a standard to measure and certify every other philosophical tradition as worthy of being referred to as and if successfully pass the Western pattern of logicity and criticality.²⁷

It could be summarily put that while the African personality of the we-ness of community renders best description of the African personality and which African scholars who try to 'Africanly' philosophize while damping the consciousness of influences from Western contact, the African personality of the we-ness of society renders inappropriate or inadequate description of

²² Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu and George Ohabuenyi Abah, "The Question of Democracy: A Discourse on the Igbo Socio-Political Society," (forthcoming)

²³ Chinua A. Achebe, in an "Interview" cited in Kwame A. Appiah, *In My Father's House, Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 173

²⁴ Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, *A Critical and Hermeneutical Enquiry into the Notion of the Self in Theophilus Ibegbulem Okere*, (A PhD Thesis to be presented to the Department of Philosophy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka)

²⁵ Appiah, *In My Father's House*, 173-80

²⁶ Bernard Matolino and Wenceslaus Kwindigwi, "The End of Ubuntu," *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 32, no. 3, 2013, 197-205. DOI: 10.1080/02580136.2013.817637

²⁷ Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu and George O. Abah, "A Discourse on the Meaning and Implications of Philosophy," *International Journal of Humanitatis Theoreticus*, 5, no. 1, (May, 2021), 29-30, 39-49. Cf. Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, *The Notion of the African Person in Chukwudum Barnabas Okolo*, A Master's Dissertation Presented to the Department of Philosophy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2019. 1-2, 32-37

the African personality and which African scholars who philosophize with heavy influence of western contact propose. While the former is a typical replica of the African personality and prevailed in the African pristine era, the latter is not and prevails in the African modern era. Put differently, the latter is an adulterated, watered version of the former, implying that the modern African lives in a society while the pristine African lives in a community; though the personalities of the two era has some qualities in common. But it must be accepted that the latter is independent of the former, rather it is a corrupted version of the former, unlike the position maintained by the three scholarly critics evaluated above.²⁸

On the Concepts– ‘Communitarianism’ and ‘Communalism’

A community connotes pluralism. By this, the African has a pluralistic conception of existence. Even as a single individual, the human being is complex not just in his/her physics but also in metaphysics. Even when referred to the biblical origin of humans, a ‘we’ created humans and in their image and likeness. Humans in reference to Africans live in a community of pluralism. But it must be noted that we is not thought of, without the pluralistic singulars ‘I’ whose its conglomeration forms the ‘we’. This African personality of ‘we’ community not the ‘we’ society is the day-to-day attitude by which the African is identified. It is the African spirit or attitude or breath. It is appropriately identified with communalism. It is not communitarianism for communitarianism is an aspect of, or an unelaborated communalism. Describing this ‘we’ concept as communalism is to pigeonhole the power and efficiency of the ‘we’. The implication becomes a question on the individual, the community and the communication that lies between the two. Thus, what is the relationship of the individual with the community and vice versa? How can and to which extent, the individual influence/affect the community and vice versa? In this ontology, where is the place of both in the communication lying between them? Address this, the concept communalism, the term that explains ‘we’ in its might, has to be explained. However, it is thus necessary to differentiate between the two: ‘communitarianism’ and ‘communalism’.

Communitarianism is a philosophy that emphasizes the connection between the individual and the community. Its overriding philosophy is based upon the belief that a person’s social identity and personality are largely moulded by community relationships, with a smaller degree of development being placed on individualism.²⁹ Community here refers to pluralism expressed in persons or even as large as family members. A source also holds the view that communitarianism “is the idea that human identities are largely shaped by different kinds of constitutive communities (or social relations) and that this conception of human nature should inform our moral and political judgments.”³⁰ Another source from a socio-political angle sees it as

²⁸ Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu and Leo Chigozie Ozoemena, *African Philosophy, Cultural Conceptions and Experiences: A Collection of Essays* (Mauritius-Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2019), 41-57. Cf. Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu and Gabriel Asuquo, “The Challenges of African Communitarianism in the 21st Century: An Igbo Perspective,” *NASARA Journal of Philosophy*, 7(1), 2022, 76-02

²⁹ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communitarianism#>

³⁰ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/communitarianism>

“is a 20th Century political and social ideology emphasizing the interests of the community over those of the individual.”³¹ It is often seen as the opposite of liberalism. Another source even holds that it is a “social and political philosophy that emphasizes the importance of community in the functioning of political life, in the analysis and evaluation of political institutions, and in understanding human identity and well-being.”³² It arose in critique to contemporary liberalism that fights for personal autonomy and individual rights and the libertarianism which fights for the protection of individual rights- especially the rights to liberty and property.

Traces of communitarianism have been established of the West, China, Hebrew expressed in the Old Testament of the Bible and the Christian New Testament of Acts of the Apostles, early Islamic concept *Shūrā* (consultation), Roman Catholic Social thought (the Papal encyclical *Return Novarum*, (1891), in Moderate Conservatism of Edmund Burke and in Social Democracy of Fabianism.³³ In another to this, some sources trace it to the early monasticism and works of Ferdinand Tönnies, Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement, Amitai Etzioni,³⁴ and works of scholars like John Rawls.

Communalism³⁵ as it bears on the African life and experience is “a system of interdependence in rural Africa.” In fact, a source holds that “communalism is an ideology which is considered unique not only to south Asia but is also found in other continents such as Africa, America, Europe, Australia, and other parts of Asia. In fact, development of communalism is believed to have its roots in the ethnic and cultural diversity of Africa.”³⁶ From a socio-political perspective, it is “a theory of government in which autonomous communities form confederations.”³⁷ According a socialist, Murray Bookchin, communalism is “a theory or system of government in which independent communities participate in a federation.”³⁸ Another source holds that communalism is “a political philosophy which advocates followers of a particular religion to have political allegiance to their own religious community.”³⁹ Following this, in some parts of the world, especially Asian continent, communalism portrays negativity as it arouses religious fanaticism and extremism leading to religious crisis on the process of religious allegiance formation.

A clear fact about the ‘we’ expressed in communalism is that both in definition and root traces of communalism Africa feature. It is the culture of Africans; in that, even though Africa as a continent is made of thousands of ethnic nationalities and languages in more than fifty countries that make up the continent, but communalism remains a lifestyle that cut across every African culture. There may be variants and brands based on certain factors, but it remains an element of every African culture. This may give an insight into why Africans are seen by people groomed in different cultures as foolish people who do not know what personal ownership is. The attitudinal

³¹ <https://www.thought.com/communitarianism-definition-and-theories-5070063>

³² <https://www.britanica.com/topic/communitarianism>

³³ <https://www.britanica.com/topic/communitarianism>

³⁴ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communitarianism#>

³⁵ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communalism>

³⁶ <https://www.gktoday.in/topic/communalism-definitions-types-characteristics>

³⁷ <https://www.gktoday.in/topic/communalism-definitions-types-characteristics>

³⁸ <https://www.gktoday.in/topic/communalism-definitions-types-characteristics>

³⁹ <https://www.gktoday.in/topic/communalism-definitions-types-characteristics>

characteristic of communal is impersonal ownership. Ownership is of the community. Fruits of general cultural significance *Udara* is never owned, and the ownership of some economic trees by families are exclusive to those still on the top of the tress, anyone fruit that falls on the ground is not owned, anybody who meets it first takes it. Following this, Africans are invaded by people who teach them what personal ownership is and the worth that accompanies it. And to do, Africans are first owned before their natural resources are owned by the same people- the colonizers, imperialists. Personal ownership is a taboo to Africans, and this played out in the loss of their values and civilization evidences at Temples in Egypt where all were lost to one great fighter, Alexander the great who loots all and offers them to his tutor Aristotle as a reward.⁴⁰

To be communal is to do or share by all the community-members. It connotes communal participation; and the central characteristic of community participation is irrationalism. Other qualities are empathy, feeling. Thinking, and its criticality and logicity do not go without emotion, feeling and empathy when the African person is concern. Conceptualization is not in singular like it is obtainable in the Western philosophizing where the ideal, ego or the mind exists in dependent of the empirical, the body. The African perception of reality is in whole, in that, the thinking-mind is never conceived without the feeling-heart for doing so amounts to monism and expression of the unreal from the African experience.

From the foregoing, talking about Africa is talking about communalism. In communalism, all the community members participate, and the question of right does not rise. The community owns the individual but individuals make and form the community. In its simple Igbo expression, it is said: *Qha nwe Onye* (the community(social-self) owns the individual(individual-self)). In the question of *Qha*, the sense of community, social-self, the community-members prevails. And the individual pride, integrity and dignity, strength and respect lies with the *Qha* (the community). In the *Qha*, the existential fulfilment and reality of the individual come to fruition and realism. This *Qha* is the 'we' and this 'we' is, in connotation, the communal activities upon which the strength and existential ingredients of the community-members stands and gets firmed. In the *Qha* or 'we' connoting the community, an individual of the community becomes foolish; the foolishness here points to irrationalism and feeling in reasoning instead of reasoning-in-feeling. The individual's right is in the 'we', the 'we' right you as an individual, they own you and orders you on what to do or say or act provided the 'we-strength' and welfarism are secured and held high. An individual do not disobey the 'we'— *otu onye anaghi esiri Qha* (one person does not cook (fight against) the 'we') because the scab that may result may stay generations to come. Recognizing the influences of the 'we' from an African perspective, the Igbo answer as names *Qha-bu-enyi*, meaning that the community is as big, important and influential as the elephant when size is compared in the animal kingdom. Western existentialists, especially Jean-Paul Sartre, can never accept this position for the western existentialist tradition conceives such a lifestyle as an epitome of existential inauthenticity,

⁴⁰ Ugwu and Abah, "A Discourse on the Meaning and Implications of Philosophy," 48

a life of the crowd, instead of subjectively live to register individual existence in the annals of self-fulfilments and meaningful existence.⁴¹

It must be noted here that while communalism does not deny an individual his/her existence or posit that the existence of an individual is because of, or depends on the 'we', as if a 'we' is a human maker, creator, rather, the emphasis on 'we' points to the fact that livelihood of an individual's existence is best enjoyed in and within the 'we'. The fact of existence is ontological, no person or any 'we' creates or does any individual owe his/her existence to any 'we' as some scholars⁴² have posited in their attempt to radicalize their conceptualization of the 'we', but the socio-ontological sustenance of this existence lies in the community- community of humans and non-humans, and that is a reference to the 'we' here.

Deducible here is the view that communalism is the personality of the African person. All that can be said of the African personality is community-life, a life of sharing, a life characterized by community-participation. For the Africa communalists, community-life is all that can be said about the African person. By this, the African is therefore understood as that being who is always-in-communion with his/her fellows having understood that the fellow also deserves humane approach for his/her wellbeing. But worthy of note is the fact that this communalistic personality draws from the African conception and practice of humanism, "the humane and socialist attitude of life" in Africa, the African's "concern of man-for-man or an involvement of man-with-and-for-others." Suffice it thus to say that the 'we' African personality is a life guided by the tenets of community-living expressed as *egbe беру, ugo беру* (Live and let live). This living is living with others hence where one is seen, the others are seen. And when one is in danger, the other is obliged to render aides (*o nuru ube nwanne agbana oso*). All these emphasize the necessity of *agbata obi* (neighbourhood) who must not be your immediate family member, but the neighbour upon you call when you are in dire need; and following this, it is advised that one and one's *agbata obi* should not go into fights and grudges because he may be the one to help one out of problem. Seeing the emphasis on the we over 'I', the Igbo say that the thorny animal covered all its body with thorns but leaves its head barred where its relatives could access and touch it. One(I) must live and in agreement with the 'others'(We). The simple saying that could picture this is: *mmadu ka ego, mmadu ka eji aga*, In a severe perspective of the Igbo slavery history, this 'we' personality was the rationale behind the event at St. Louis, in America referred to as the *Ebo Landing*(Igbo Landing) where all the Igbo slaves decided to end it all instead of some dying on the way and others succeeding to America for suffer continuation. The belief is that if when all die, they leave the imperialists and go to the spirit land and still form their circle provided they remain free.

⁴¹ Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, et al., "A Critical Review of African Communitarianism," *Madonna University Thought and Action Journal of Philosophy*, 1, no. 1, (2022), 78

⁴² Achebe, Okolo, Mbiti, Menkiti, Gyekye, Imafidon, Ikuenobe, Uzukwu, Dzobo, Egbunu, others, have posited that an individual's existence is owed to the community. Cf. Ugwu, et al, "A Critical Review of African Communitarianism," 69-79. Cf. Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu and Hilary Chimezie Ngwoke, "Against the African Normativists," *Academia Letters Journal* (Article 4055, 2021), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL4055>

This we African personality has been variously interpreted as the “African brotherhood,” “African communalism or community way of life,” that “sense of communion” as expressed in “the gift of imagination” and “the gift of rhythm,” “the totality of the cultural values of black Africa” or “the cultural heritage, the values, and above all, the **spirit** of Negro-African civilization”) ⁴³ which itself has been analytically called “African pride,” “African attitude,” “black or African power,” “black dignity,” “black identity,” “black authenticity” and it “determines the individual, his possibilities and the dignity of his civilization... his social status, rights and duties and his place in the scheme of things.” ⁴⁴ Nkrumah sees it as the “African communalism” or that “attitude towards man” expressed in the “traditional face of African.” For Mboya, it is the “communal approach to life” characterized by “communal spirit” following the fact that the “the purpose is man.” For Edeh, it is that “closeness not closedness,” the life of participation and fulfilment “beyond mere individuality.” For Nze, it is that African ‘Brotherhood/Communalism’ concept that “recognizes the humanity in every individual” and “encourages a certain human attitude.” ⁴⁵ For Egbujie, it is that “African’s principal cultural virtue,” “the virtue of love” which is “to hold to heart a brother... to love him.” ⁴⁶ For Iroegbu, it is the ‘belongingness’ and for Asouzu, it is all about *Ibuanyidanda*, the philosophy of ‘complimentary ontology’, the ‘philosophy of essence’. For Onwunibe it is the ‘egalitarian spirit’ which rewards and encourages community spirit. For Abanuka, it is the African ‘solidarity’ and ‘wholeness’. For Okolo it is that attitude of ‘being-with’ which “is a by-product of culture, rooted as it were in Africa’s extended family system and in the essential religious world-view and tradition of the African himself” ⁴⁷ hence “what is easily said about self in African metaphysics is that its horizon is essentially towards others. It is self-in-relation-to-others, a being-with-others.” ⁴⁸ For Odimegwu, it is the ‘Inter-presencing’, in Mbiti, it portrays the ‘I-we-existence’, and in Okere, it is represented in the ‘we-concept’. Iroegbu would express it as the ‘Relational-self’ concept; and for Opoku, it is pictured in the ‘Togetherness’ emphasis. Malcolm X would express it in his ‘We’ wellness analysis, Agulanna’s ‘Community-individual Wellbeing’ emphasizes it. In Ozumba and Chimakonam, the ‘Njikoka Amaka’ humanism summarises it, just as the Tempelsian Bantu Philosophy, gives it a metaphysical outlook. In Ki-Zerbo, it is the ‘Pan-Africanist’ concept. The Quaison-Sackey’s ‘African Unbound’, the Kanu’s ‘Igwebuike Ontology’, the Ramose ‘Ubuntu’, the Onunwa’s ‘humanism’, the Ugwu’s

⁴³ Senghor cited in “Through African Eyes: Cultures in Change Unit V”, Leon E. Clark (ed.), (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 97

⁴⁴ Chukwudum Barnabas Okolo, *African Social and Political Philosophy: Selected Essays* (Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing Company, 1993), 104

⁴⁵ Chukwudum Barnabas Nze, *Aspects of African Communalism* (Onitsha: Veritas Publishers, 1989), 1

⁴⁶ Innocent I. Egbujie, *The Hermeneutics of the African Traditional Culture* (PhD Thesis at Boston College, 1976), 172

⁴⁷ Chukwudum Barnabas Okolo, *What Is To Be African? Essay on African Identity* (Enugu: Cecta [Nig] Ltd, 1993), 32

⁴⁸ Okolo, *What Is To Be African?*, 5

‘Anthropocentric Maadjvuruism’⁴⁹ capture the implication and nitty-gritty of the ‘we’ concept. Any attempt to best describe the African personality should be and revolve around ‘community’ as a concept.

By this, man is not just literarily ‘being-with’ but ontologically ‘being-with-all-realities-that-exist’. That is, being-in-communion-with the Supreme Being, the intermediaries (divinities, deities, departed-living (ancestors), other spiritual elements), human beings, animals, trees/vegetation and other lifeless objects or entities. The implication of this conception with keen reference to the departed-living is that “the African personality as being-with means also an involvement with spirits particularly dead relatives or ancestors... popularly known as the ‘living-dead’.” Summarizing this position, Okolo writes that ‘the ‘living dead’ and the physically living continuously populate and depopulate each other’s realms. For the former, reincarnation is a necessary gateway for peopling the earthly realm just as death is for the latter, the necessary precondition for swelling up the ranks of the dead’.⁵⁰

Characteristically, this ‘we’ socio-ontological personality cuts across the African worldview— the existential domains of both the visible and invisible realities— the *Elu-Uwa* (the abode of man, vegetation/trees and other lifeless entities/objects), and the *Ala-Mmuo* (the abode of spiritual beings— divinities, departed-living, gods, Supreme Being, etc.). Thus, with the concept ‘communalism,’ the African is existentially defined socially, attitudinally, religiously and ontologically. Stressing this point, Okolo writes that ‘we’ communication designated with ‘being-with’

may well be called African brand of humanism... ‘being-with’ as humanism in African philosophy goes beyond the universe of man (and for the sake of man) to include God, spirits (ancestors inclusive), nature or reality, in its essential existence or dimensions. This sort of humanism has the whole cosmic order or harmony of one creation with the rest as its ultimate goal, not just the concern of man, though a vital one indeed⁵¹

Nevertheless, the identification of the African with the attitude of ‘being-with-all-that-is’, the African’s communality posits him/her in a strategic and moral-burden position where s/he is (1) found at the centre of the ontological activities, (2) the most sacred who pictures the Maker and the facticity of Creation, (3) the creature upon whose existence, the ontological effectiveness *cum* influences of all beings are proved, and finally, (4) the ‘weakest’ among all beings.

From all indications, it could be deduced here that while the concept ‘community’ and its characteristic attitudes which adhere to the principles of communalism, best describe the African ‘we’ personality, the concept ‘society’ and its characteristic attitudes which adhere to the principles of communitarianism do not. Characteristic of communitarianism is personal ownership and fight for right, which is the opposite of the foolishness and impersonal ownership characteristic of communalism. This begins the corruption of communalism leading to communitarianism- a

⁴⁹ Ugwu, “An Igbo Understanding of the Human Being,” 137-43, 52-9

⁵⁰ Chukwudum Barnabas Okolo, “Self as a Problem in African Philosophy,” *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 32, no.4, (December 1992),477-485

⁵¹ Okolo, *What Is To Be African* 16-7

watered brand of communalism. This justifies the lamentation of deviation from this value as the main cause of the African problem. The German-Jew – Jean Jacques Rousseau has opined that civilization which breeds “the first person who, having enclosed a piece of land decided to say ‘this is mine’, and found people who were simple enough to believe him was the real founder of civil society.”⁵² This view goes in no more demur with Joseph Ki-Zerbo’s who believes that evil emerged with the so called ‘civilization’ with its principal tenets – ‘individualism, and privatization’ of the supposed-communal-properties.⁵³

Communitarianism adhering more to the principles of society is a borrowed and modern brand of the old communalism and its community principles. In communalistic community life style of the African pristine era, foolishness and *enebe aghara*(ayara) (feeling, enduring and overlooking for the sake of *nwanne*(relatedness) dominate, unlike in the communitarian society life style version where rationality and its criticality and logicity that leads to consciousness of abstractism which inculcates and replaces the feeling-heart with the thinking-mind), prevail.⁵⁴ It is with a sense of communalism that the justification of scholars like Unamuno,⁵⁵ Roubiczek,⁵⁶ Hume,⁵⁷ among others holding irrationalism and humanism from its emotionalism feature is realizable. It also gives into why Senghor appears to uphold emotion over reasoning as to the discourse on the African personality.⁵⁸ Thus, it is an error in which scholars including Ugwu share for designating the African ‘we’ personality with the concept ‘communitarianism’. This is because, unlike in communalism which all that matter are the individual, the community and the communication, in communitarianism, the individual, the community, the communication and the question of right and freedom of the individual and prescribing limitations to the community-influences on the individual, prevail. Justification to Matolino’s position on the discourse of the African personality of we could have been realizable had he differentiated from this borrowed or influenced sense of social unity interaction of communitarianism from that of the communalism, for indeed, communitarianism as a corrupted brand (or misconceived by Matolino to mean

⁵² Collection of J. J. Rousseau’s Essay (‘Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men, and Social Contract’) in one volume entitled “Du Contract Social”, Published by Union General d’ editions, Paris, 1963, 292.

⁵³ Joseph Ki-Zerbo, *African Personality and the New African Society: Pan-Africanism Reconsidered*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 267-82.

⁵⁴ Ugwu and Asuquo, “The Challenges of African Communitarianism,” 99-100

⁵⁵ Miguel De Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1954), 151, 269, 312

⁵⁶ Paul Roubiczek, *Existentialism: For and Against* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 1

⁵⁷ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969), 415

⁵⁸ Senghor, in his bid to explain what is to be African has impressed that while the African is more inclined to emotion, the Hellenic is more inclined to reason. This position however has been clarified by Senghor himself, Masolo, Oguejiofor, and Ugwu and Asuquo. Cf. Ugwu and Asuquo, “The Challenges of African Communitarianism,” 99-100

communalism as exposed and analyzed here) is a western product, that is a product of new consciousness after the African-Western contact.

The African ‘We’ as ‘Communalism’: A Discussion on the African Personality

Grammatically, ‘we’ is the first person subjective plural pronoun. It expresses a state of being more than one in content– pluralism. In the African perspective, ‘we’ expresses what is to be African. Subjective expressions like ‘I’ is not in the right position to describe the African life, but the ‘we’ does. ‘We’ describes both the individuals living in a community, and the pluralism of community as a concept. In Igbo, ‘we’ reads *Anyi*, implicating the idea of ‘group’, *Igwe* or ‘generality’. To be, is never to be alone; to be is to with, among and within others. 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. Conception is never in singularity to the African, rather it is in plurality. The physical is never conceived without the metaphysical for the physical implicates the idea of metaphysical and vice versa. This permeates African psyche that it applies to his/her daily life, most common of which is even in the mannerism of greeting. 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 dimma/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’. That same consciousness still explains why if one comes into a family, s/he would say *anyi abianu* ‘we have come’ even when it is visibly only s/he who has come. 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. When you eat with others, you eat the best and enjoy the best, for in the 'we' your 'I' becomes more valued, hence the saying that he who eats only his, eats the smallest. 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.

Socially speaking, the spirit of 'we' African personality explains why one obi (home entrance) could lead to plenty houses/families and each family in openness with nature, no fences and electrocuting wires obstruction of entrance from one family to the other via alleyways. This enhances easy access from one to another families, and so it is upon any family member to see for the well-being of the children of these neighbourhood families. An elder at home cares for the child whose mother left for firewood or water fetching from the stream, when s/he cries, any mother at home is obliged to care for, bath and feed him/her, and equally carry him/her, tone some melodious ballad songs while gently and softly robbing her hands on the child's back, or head or the navel or even stretches the hand limbs or foot toes to lure him/her to sleep. At waking up, and seeing still the same familiar face s/he left before falling asleep, s/he feels more secured, safe and fulfilled. Of course when the care entails cautioning by beating the child of another, s/he is beaten mercilessly for correction for the western mentality of 'right and freedom' and 'his/her right management does not concern' is un-African because the African knows that when it(the child) spoils, the consequences are heavier of the community, not restricted to the immediate family. So even existence is laden with morality and sense of obligation on the all especially on the elders whose duty is to ensure the well upbringing of community-children. Culturally speaking, it is the reason behind some cultural practices of *Iza-ezi* (the culture of leading a newly married wife into a family by the family wives to go to brothers-in-law's families to sweep is- so as to acknowledge them as her husbands and for them to see if she could sweep and sweep well). That explains why even both man and woman of a family call a newly married wife into the family, 'our wife'. That explain the conception of a child as 'our child' because *nwa bu nwa Oha* (a child is that of the community, for his/her community engagement is beyond that of family levels). That still answers as to why the eldest in a family lineage is referred to as 'our father' or particularly for women married into the family, *Nna di m* (father of my husband), and any other male from the same family lineage as *nwa di m* (son (relative) of my husband). In this relational chain, any sub-family under the mega family headed by the eldest that kills an animal say goat, cow, etc., brings the *Obi anu* (the heart- thorax region) to the eldest. Any event of festivity or meeting, etc., concerning the mega family is hosted at the immediate family of the eldest. The waste from this slaughtered animal is taken out to the *Onu-atutu* (a particular place at the obi entrance where the invisible members of the family are notified of what is used in the event). Every family account to the eldest for the generations made in the family economic trees, and from time to time, wives of the family cook and bring(serve) to the immediate house of the eldest. During harvest, the biggest size of farm

products especially the yam is given in offering to the eldest to pray for the family progress and more productivity next farming season. Eldership characterizes African life, and ascending it is celebrated in a big way for both the visible and invisible members of the family. All these are ontological merit of the eldest by mere ascending to the status, however, as humans, quality attitude that should identify with such ontological position has to be, else the invisible whom the eldest is nearer to would act on their behalf and that of the still-living family members and for the family image for posterity. Responsibly, the eldest is laden with huge responsibility to care for the family impartially. That explains the relational value and significant of uniform among family members during an event, especially death. Uniforms of such identify the level/closeness of the relationship between the deceased, for instance, and each group wearing a unique uniform in respect and filial solidarity with the deceased. This spirit of 'we' personality explains why *Umu-Ada* (women of the same family/clan/hamlet/village/community) who are of the same kindred/clan/hamlet with a deceased person would be the ones to mourn for him/her. Both *Umu-Ada* and *Umu-Nna* (women and men of the same family/clan/hamlet/village/community) do have meetings from time to time. As it concerns the *Umu-Ada*, those married outside do return to their maiden homes/families for this great meeting. They can equally host it at their husband's families respectively and all the *Umu-Ada* meeting members would be obliged to attend it at the place it is being hosted. That would serve as an opportunity for them to know where their sister is being married to, and how her family is fairing and equally know the level of comfort their sister enjoys at the place she is married to, and know about the place and its culture, probably. In some places, it is hosted monthly, and also hosted in the same day the male counterpart (*Umu-Nna*) host theirs. That of the *Umu-Nna* is not hosted by individuals, but at the general square as the people agreed. Men are not married into another family unlike women, and this is the reason behind the hosting difference.

Because of the nature of the life in the pristine era, an elder from a family can present a piece/plot of land or even an economic tree to another person from another family with whom the family feels comfortable. That explains why today, a family of a particular village is seen possessing a plot of land or an economic tree in the heart of another village. But that is not the only way such could happen. Another way is the practice of inheriting the properties of a family without any survivor, by another most related family. A family can bury its member in another family's plot of land perhaps near to its own house for easy location of the burial site. And later on, the family that owns that plot of land could freely give it out to the family that has buried its member therein. These were ways of expressing this 'we' personality in the African/Igbo yesteryears.

Culturally speaking, it is this community we personality that is behind some cultural festivals like age grade, celebration of the communal deity, masquerading, new yam festival/ritual celebration, that stand as bond holding the centre of the people as relatives and all sees them as obligations to by returning home for them. By this, closeness identifies and acquaintance with socio-cultural customs, traditions and norms prevails. By this closeness, some abomination that dominate in the attitude of the youths of the modern era would be curtailed, sharing in the wisdom of the elders becomes possible. Those who can marry may meet and flow, tourism could be initiated and by this, the community name fames, economy boosts, the people's philosophy and peculiar conceptions sales. During this, family bond is reinstated, families cook together, sharing and a re-union prevails and the family commitment and covenant re-strengthened. In these events,

one pot cook for all, all eat and drink from one place, avoiding the other implies suspicion and negative mind towards not the particular individual one attempts discriminating against, but the whole community. Ontologically, if such a suspicion becomes real, the ontological strength of this community oneness and unity and practice can even strike the person down for that is an anti-attitudinal response to the community-will which is powerful on every individual of the community. In some places even today, it is still customarily obtainable and as a sign of covenant among a people not to see them providing a spoon-like object for scoping and testing of palm-wine in the palm-wine market. It remains a sort of *ogbugba ndu* (covenant) and anyone with negative intention towards another do not usually go scot-free from the ontological effects of such practice. This calls for the place of pride of *Iwu* or *Ome-na-Ala* (traditional constitution/custom/precepts) of the people in ensuring the reality and effectiveness of this ontology for any failure from an individual may cost the whole community a lot to regret in future, while abiding by its principles facilitates good fortune on the people involved.

Philosophically, the African exists in a dualistic form. He thinks and feels together. He thinks with his mind but feels the impact of his thinking both on himself, his environment and the other at once. Abstractism has to be brought down to realism. Thought is not independent of the body, rather they complementarily exist, unlike in Western Philosophy as expressed in Platonism, Kantianism, Cartesianism, etc. In the African conceptual scheme, man is not entirely an abstract self, ego or 'I' who only thinks, he is complementarily also the tangible existing being who feels and lives among others.

During marriage, all the relatives of the lady getting married would be present, and possess their possession on the lady getting married in accordance with what is culturally, traditionally and customarily allotted to the level of their relationship with the family of the marrying lady. In some places, it is the maternal home of the lady that will hand the lady over to the immediate father or the eldest father in the family lineage of the husband-to-be. But this will not prevent the immediate family of the lady doing same again and customarily more official and stamped. It what is expressed during mourning period of a family member where the daughter children from the family of the deceased would observe for a number of days following the social status of the deceased. While an *Ozọ* period takes longer, that of an *Igwe* would be lesser and in order till the last category guided by that same culture. Metaphysically his/her family in totality have come to visit the other hosting family in totality. This implies a recognized method from the seen to the unseen. The consciousness of the 'we' personality explains the value behind the ceremony of kola-nut in Igbo-African where the family relationships are observed on the process.

It is with this traditional personality of the people that some Africans doubt the reality of COVID-19 in Africa, especially Nigeria, because had it been it is real, and you truly what know what the people pass through in their bid to socially exist- be it in the market place, church, events, etc., then you would know that no one would have remained, even though Africans know well that their atmosphere is too harsh and uncondusive for the survival of such world-acclaimed pandemic disease.

Conclusively, one could quickly decipher that the personality we of the community social unity/form of the African could be described as "an involvement-with" or a life of "sense of communion" and 'commitment'. Even when it logical presents singularity, "the I does not

necessarily exclude the Other... in African life, the WE in all its relatedness and harmony among persons and nature is the law of life.” And so, just like Nyerere would say: “We in Africa have no more need of being ‘converted’ to socialism than we have of being taught democracy. Both are rooted in our own past-in the traditional society which produced us.”⁵⁹ Even though an attempt of differentiating socialism and communitarianism from the communalism personality this paper projects, in the African political angle of this personality is the presentation of the avenue that accommodates all for participation in the socio-political decisions of the community.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, talking about communalism is talking about the African pristine era when Africans live in community characterized by emotional foolishness and the question of right is sacrifice for and on the altar (consciousness) of the other, and the African exhibits a life where the reasoning mind operates inseparably from the feeling heart. But talking about communitarianism is talking about the African modern era when Africans live in society characterized by rationality, criticality and logicity with its inhumanity implications on the other and the question of right is held high for personal relevance and individuation against the consciousness of the other, and the African exhibits a life where the reasoning mind operates separable from the feeling heart. Centrally between the two is the emphasis on the community and society which implicate the idea of ‘social-self’, and its importance to the realization and sustenance of the livelihood of every member of the community, just as Agulanna has attempted doing.⁶⁰

But the African is not indifferent to changes of time. A clear feature of communalism is a life in the analogue stage, which is, though, without its own peculiar advantages. In the modern era when life is lived in the society and digital lens, most of communalism qualities cannot survive. The societal life is now in anti-thesis to the communal life of Africans. This is because it is clear that the centre that has always been one and undivided during the western-African pre-contact has been severely divided religiously and in beliefs, ideologically, economically, politically, socially class-identifying, among other aspects of the African lives. When this becomes the case, then to resolve is demands another version of communalism that starts from the recognition of the singularities of the community-members and then forming them as an aggregation of what could imply the social-self. Every sense of individualism must be recognized so as to be all-inclusive in nature. By this, the creeds and ideological of recognizing individual rights and freedom of any member must be recognized and put into consideration under the guidance and principle of the community-welfarism. The implication is that any right and freedom and the fight for these by any community-member that become a threat to the principle of the community-welfarism- be it security wise, economic wise, etc., should be downplayed upon and scribed out from the schemes of value of the people. The community-welfarism concept now becomes the co-ordinating and

⁵⁹ Julius K. Nyerere, *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*, (Dar-es-Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968), 12

⁶⁰ Christopher Agulanna, “Community and Human Well-Being in an African Culture,” *TRAMES*, 14(64/59),3, (2010), 282-3, 85-6, 87-92

central principle that would harness the totalling or forming of the conglomeration of every sense of individualism from any community-member.⁶¹

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