MIGRATION AND BELONGINGNESS AS THE AFRICAN METAPHYSICS OF *TO BE*

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Abstract

Belongingness is the African Metaphysics of *To Be*. Many foreign policies and actions have over the years threatened and continued to endanger the existence of Africans as authentic Africans as well as the African Continent. Besides the abolished slavery and out-modelled neo-slavery as well as other reasons for which ever Africans have been forced to relocate their bemoaned geographical environment to a susceptible better one, Migration has itself raised great many questions on the African Metaphysics of *To Be* and has casts great doubt on the authentic *Africanity* of Africans within and without African continent. Using the method of critical analysis, the researchers find out that migration really questions the much lauded belongingness and much prized togetherness expressed in many African rooted concepts as *Igwebuike*, *Ibuanyidanda*, *Onyeaghananwnneya* and at most, the much esteemed communalistic extended family system that claims to accommodate all. The researchers, however, recommend finding solution to our African problems within African continent and a return to the clarion call of *Africa Unite*.

Keywords: Migration, Belongingness, Africa

Introduction

Belongingness is the African metaphysics of To Be. It is a fundamental quality in understanding being. No being can be understood in terms of its completeness but in its relation to other beings. Every being is defined by a relation to something or with an attribute of engaging in something. This fact of *'beingness',* which is a form of relation, is a form of belonging to, belonging with, and belonging in. Relation therefore, becomes a kind of state by which being realizes itself among others and others within it. This relation spells out a place where being realizes itself, a place of social reality, a kind of integrated universe, in Donne's word: "…A piece of the continent, a part of the main…" This relational form or way of belonging as an integral universe is not a differential one but a fundamental or ontological integration. And for this particular being in itself, it is through this fact of belongingness that it integrates itself in reality (Onebunne 2019 p. 29-30).

This is to say that being belongs and this belongingness is a fundamental condition for a thing to be considered a reality. To this end, being and belongingness are said to be ontological. Reality therefore, is better known

and understood by the concept of belongingness. In other words, reality or being, in its total manifestation, is a process involving belongingness. In this form of belongingness, reality is a given entity that needs continuous existential understanding and development. Without belongingness, there would be no discussion on being. Whatever is part of reality, is belonging to something. To understand being as belongingness, it must be understood in its relation to others. Belongingness however, overshadows these existential facts of operations. This notion of belongingness is clearly reflected in Donne's (1996) poem:

> No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece
> of the continent, a part of the main… any man's death
> diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and
> therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it
> tolls for thee. (p. 92)

Being's identity, therefore is in belongingness. Belongingness identifies being as such. Being's nature is in belonging. Its role is in belonging. Its mode and operations are in belonging. Belongingness, as such, is the ontological value of being. By belongingness being, is related to other beings by relationship of what it is or does. In understanding being as belongingness on the onto-relational level, there should be, as Iroegbu (1995) opines solidarity of belongingness in being and solidarity of being in belongingness, in the manner in which we exist and relate in the reality of being and belongingness:

> Belongingness holds that our existence as human beings,
> as well as our integral participation in the society in which
> we find ourselves, are to be defined by our being given the
> sense and substance of belongingness. (p 374)

Being as belongingness is necessitated while comprehending being as expressing itself, thereby, rolling into belongingness in its general and fundamental character and attribute. Often, the question is, can being be without belongingness? Belongingness is a principle of existence in the sense of being and sharing membership in reality or with a being. The tentacles of belongingness touch virtually every aspect of human life especially as a being in a community setting characterized by communal living, having and sharing.

Being, no doubt, is a foundation of belongingness. Once a thing is, there is no doubt it belongs to a being, group or community. Therefore, belongingness is seen to be deeply rooted in being, in reality, in existence. It is as well

expressed in belonging. Iroegbu (2000) reiterates on this issue when he asserts that

> "…Belongingness is a principle of membership applied to a given political community. It is what moulds a community's cultural, historical and traditional values. Being as whatever is, establishes the ground on which other realities are said to be or properly belong. Therefore, to be, is the Kpim of reality or being itself is Belongingness" (p. 481)

For years now, migration has been a major challenge for the African continent. Young African men and women risk everything, including their lives, to take on the perilous trip across dozens of borders and the treacherous waves of the Mediterranean Sea in search of a better life in the North. Some die along the way, some are turned back and some who finish the journey realize that life may not be easier across the frontier. With few jobs and dim prospects at home, millions of youths and young adults in Africa still choose to migrate, often clandestinely.

Such movements of people pose difficult questions for many governments and for the international community. It particularly puts a very big question mark on the so many African philosophies articulated in our teachings and expressed in words. In this paper, the researcher is of the view that if togetherness is our way of life, communalism our attitude, then, we must go back to our values

Concept of Migration

Migration is the movement of people between regions or countries. It is the process of changing one's place of residence and permanently living in a region or country. According to the Demographic Dictionary of United Nations, "Migration is such an event in which people move from one geographical area to another geographical area". When people leaving their place of residence go to live permanently in another area, then this is called migration. Migration may be permanent or temporary with the intention of returning to the place of origin in future (Wikipedia). There are two types of migration, immigration and emigration. Immigration is the international movement of people into a destination country of which they are not natives or where they do not possess citizenship in order to settle or reside there, especially as permanent residents or naturalized citizens, or to take up employment as a migrant worker or temporarily as a foreign worker (Wikipedia). Emigration is People emigrate for many reasons, include increasing one's chance of employment or improving quality of life (Investopedia).

While immigration involves leaving ones country to another, emigration talks about welcoming people from another country into own country. Immigration, therefore, involve the going out and emigration the coming in of people from places other than natives.

Migration affects the economies, religion, polity, and everything about the countries involved in both positive and negative ways depending on the current state of the country.

Conceptual Understanding of 'To Be'
'Be' is the only verb with eight forms and it expresses existence or possibility. The eight forms of this verb are; am, is, be, being, was, were, are and been. All of these expressed the existence or possibility of something in the past, in the present or in time to come. To be is the infinitive form of the verb be. To be means to exist and being means the existence of a thing. Anything that exists has being. Anything that partakes in being is also a being. (Wikipedia). Belongingness is the African metaphysics of To Be. To be therefore, is to be on, to be with, to belong, to belonging and to be part of a people. The concept of being represents virtually all existing things especially in the African perspective. Being, no doubt, is a foundation of belongingness. Once a thing is, there is no doubt it belongs to a being, group or community. Therefore, belongingness is seen to be deeply rooted in being, in reality, in existence.

Being's identity, therefore is in belongingness. Belongingness identifies being as such. Being's nature is in belonging. Its role is in belonging. Its mode and operations are in belonging. Belongingness, as such, is the ontological value of being. By belongingness, being is related to other beings by relationship of what it is or does.

Implication of Migration on Belongingness
Emigration impacted the African continent socially, politically and economically both positively and negatively. Some of the positive social, economic and political impacts included the introduction of Christianity which brought about more religious mission opportunities. Most of the missionaries introduced education in Africa by establishing mission schools to educate the local people and helped them to learn more about their land and culture. The Europeans defended the Africans against their enemies or gave them weapons to enable them defend themselves whenever they were attacked by their enemies and this made some of the Africans feel safer. The Europeans brought new technology to Africa; they were provided with tools for farming and introduced new crops like maize and manioc from the New World. They built more infrastructures like medical facilities, transport and communication network, schools and established plantations for the growing of cash crops like cocoa, coffee, tea, rubber and cotton.

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Many Africans was able to learn the languages of their colonial masters like English, French and Portuguese which has given them more advantage to be able to communicate in the present globalised world without difficulties. Emigration also made the world aware of Africa's rich culture, its abundance in natural and mineral resources and introducing the countries to trade on the international markets. New goods including household goods were introduced to Africa. More African jobs were created and some of the people learnt new trade making especially the tribal groups that sided with Europeans richer. More stronger and better institutions were established to govern the people which they exist in most of the countries till today.

Some of the negative effects are that the Africans were taken as slaves to the new world and forced to work on the plantations without pay. On the African continent the Europeans seized land from the Africans to establish plantations for the growing of cash crops and forced the people to work on these plantations for a meagre. The African culture was diluted, traditions were taken away and their ways of life were destroyed. The African tradition religion was also destroyed due to the introduction of Christianity, they forced the people to learn their language, taught them how to eat European food and dress like Europeans abandoning their own traditional way of eating habits and dressing and the spread of virulent diseases. Families were torn apart due to partition of Africa which created new boundaries leading to present conflicts and the slave trade which millions of people away from their families and homelands. The Europeans took away most of their resources especially gold, diamonds, ivory and agricultural primary products. This never gave the Africans the opportunity to learn how to use their own resources for development. Lastly the Africans occupied only the inferior positions of the colonial administration and never had a say in the government of their own countries. Those employed by the colonial administration felt proud and more superior to the others and it eventually led to social inequality in the colonies.

Belongingness in African Morality
Belongingness implies that all existing things must in a way belong to a particular order. As far as morality is concerned, it can only be attributed to rational human beings of which other existing things are not part of. It should also be noted that only human options are ethical. On this note, morality has a broad meaning, covering all the services rendered by man which contributes to the building of a community. These services include education, politics, religion, economy and other aspects of the community's culture. The African moral order ensures that human actions are not only pleasant or good to the individual alone but to the entire community. Man's actions are not good or bad based on a selfish personal interpretation but rather they are good or bad based on the way it affects the community so that his belongingness defines

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his entire actions as good to be commended or bad to be condemned. The commendation of good actions by the community is not unconnected with the fact that it attracts good fortunes and blessings to a community. That is why Abanuka (1994) posits:

> Good moral behavior ensures that the land continues to hold human beings, animals, plants and crops generally. Good moral behavior ensures in addition, that community overcomes adversaries in order to be visited by lasting prosperity. On the contrary, failure to maintain good moral behavior leads the community into various types of danger and disequilibrium (p. 27)

Therefore, to avoid any danger to the being of the community, individuals must be willing to exhibit actions which will serve as a "…Model of proper human behavior which brings fulfillment of human aspirations and stability to the community" (Nkruma 1970 p. 79). To be, is to be part of a people such that one learns and sustains the necessary moral values that help to keep the society where he or she belongs intact. Human conduct does not take place in a vacuum, but man deliberates and acts within a given context and custom. Custom on its own can be examined from its collective and individual aspects.

African morality has been seriously threatened by migration. These youths who leave this country comes back with so much moral disorder as far as the moral stance is concerned. The problem which initially was gradually in bites has now attained the level that can best be described as the incurable cancer disease and the tentacles have spread in every part of the continent. Drug abuse, drug trafficking, robbery, social crimes, sexual permissiveness and all forms of sexual aberration are such moral disorder that stirs on the face of this continent and cast a slur on those things that we hold in high esteem. Even in the international community, the name Africa speaks of moral disorder, questioning our belongingness and the African metaphysics of To Be.

The standard of morality in the African Continent is not based on individual standard but on the standard of the community because of our belief in belongingness. What should make you happy should also be welcomed by the community. In our hospitable nature, we welcome people from every part of the world. But, instead of making them conform to our moral standard, we, even, welcome their own. As a result of which things we assess as abominations has become the other of the day. Africans lose their sense of shame and give themselves away to reprobate mind. Bringing us down from where we were to where we are. The whole world looks at us as objects and not human and we are subjected to all manner of penury.

Belongingness in African Social Order

The term Social connotes togetherness, friendliness, sharing and above all belongingness. Human beings are regarded as social beings because they live together, become friendly and share many things in common. In the African cultural world, social actions have an ontological dimension. The social order entails that there should be morality to ensure that human beings live in peace. That is why the way and manner in which a person carries on his social actions is the concern of the community. An individual was not meant to stay alone but rather to live together with others who have been before him and those who are coming after him. It is on this note that we can talk about a society or community and how individuals belong in a society.

In every society, there is that concept of common humanity which, if analyzed ultimately, "…Leads to the relation of person and community and to the individualistic or holistic visions of society" (Dalforo 1992 p. 89). This concept also leads us to the common elements in our culture that constitutes the inner cohesion of a human society, and upon which one can elaborate a moral consensus at every wider level of society. Africans have been able to discover the relationship that exists among people through experience and through their moral behavior. This is confirmed in the statement, "I am because we are, and we are because I am" (Mbiti 1969 p. 214). This implies that both the individual and the entire community complement each other and one cannot do without the other. Thus, they are highly related which gives room for social interaction and harmony.

Our social order is seriously being questioned by migration. Our social relation, social interaction, behavior and value system has been slaughtered on the altar of migration. It questions those things that hold us together. Achebe bemoaned this when he said that the white has put a knife on those things that hold us together and we can no longer reason as one. Our youths comes back to preach individuality and promote the exercise of one's goal's and desires and advocate that interests of the individual should achieve precedence over those of the community. They learn the white man's philosophy and so value independence and self reliance while opposing external interference upon one's own interests by the community. They counter such philosophies as Igwebuike, *Njikokamma*, *Ubuntu* and *Ibianyidanda* and move with the premise that the human individual is of primary importance in lives struggle than the community.

Africans are hospitable in nature; we welcome people from all race, tribe and nation because we believe in belongingness. While trying to incorporate others in our continent, the result becomes bullying, harassment and discrimination. They use our resources to maltreat us. They gave us their

standard and force us to accept it and enforce us to believe it is superior to our own. While we were trying to acculturate; they were reducing our status to nothing and take over our social strata and exalted theirs above ours, forced us to believe it and teach our children same. Today, everything 'Oyibo' seems superior to those of African; even the devil is painted black while Jesus is painted white. We abandoned our values and picked theirs; are brainwashed and we exalt them as such but they never took everything from us. Their languages are our official language but they never learnt ours.

Belongingness in African Religion
Religion which means the belief and worship of a supernatural being (God) and other spiritual beings such as gods, spirits, ancestors, e.t.c., is at the root of African culture and forms the basis of people's life and thought. The term religion holds nuances of connotation and adopts very unusual practical approach in African than in most Western cultures. African traditional religious beliefs are a part of their culture, their customs and everything they do. Thus, it follows individually throughout their lives and puts them in touch with the unseen powers. In the hierarchy of beings, Africans have unanimously placed the Supreme Being (God) at the apex, followed by a whole range of other existing things. The whole life of the African is tied to this belief in God being regarded as the source of their being. In this sense, an African ought to exist as a being that belongs to a supreme being (God), who is also the Creator. He believes that whatever happens, he cannot go unnoticed by the omnipresent eyes of the creator. God being at the apex of the hierarchy of beings oversees and regulates what goes on in the universe. It should also be noted that the supremacy of God which is the basis of African traditional religious beliefs, worship and morality can be obviously seen in the African names of God. God, therefore, is regarded as full actuality and infinite, while other beings are finite and limited.

These days, a lot of atheism abound. Africans are losing the reverence they have for the Almighty. With that we get drunken with vices and destroy our conscience, losing the sense of right and wrong. They no longer recognise his omniscient power and his pervading presence which endows the universe with a sacramental nature. They, therefore, lose the consciousness of God as the foundation of life and because nothing happens without God, they are backward. The reverence that Igbo-Africans have for Ala, for instance, which is the womb of the ancestors is thus jeopardised, we indulge in all manner of abomination which leads unto desolation and humanity suffers.

Belongingness in African Judiciary
As people live together in a society, the tendency for individuals to be hurt and their rights trampled upon is very obvious due to the human nature.

Therefore, for individuals to continue living together in a society peacefully there is the earnest need for the application of justice. Justice in traditional African society was seen as fairness. It should be noted that a practice is deemed fair "When it is in conformity with the principles which those who participate in it could propose or acknowledge before one another" (Wamala 1992 p. 38) This kind of justice is more feasible in areas where the tribes are small in size and where many people know each other. In African traditional society, justice does not follow an elaborate canon of laws, but societal norms. The issue of justice is relevant as a result of the various crimes committed against man and in some cases against God. The issue of crime and punishment in any society is a crucial one. This becomes necessary when it is known that crime poses a serious threat to any society. It endangers the peace and security of any society and her citizens. In order to classify what should constitute crime in any society, a lot of factors have to be put into consideration, especially those which have to do with man's happiness and security. To some communities, crime has economic and political undertones, while to others they have in addition, an ontological base. Punishment also poses similar problems. The problem here is not basically on how to punish (for it is definitely the criminals) but rather on the weight of punishment and what such punishment should aim at.

The essence of the African judicial order is that it helps to sort matters from their root. This is because the understanding of belongingness helps to develop the virtue of patience and the space to perch as in EBUB which fosters brotherhood. Migration affected the African judicial order when the white man enthroned his judiciary above ours. While African judiciary seek for the truth, the Western judiciary seek for evidence. The rules guiding the evidence are based on their culture and not the African culture. The subjected ours to the lowest court available for settling disputes, and non natives bearing witness to a matter concerning two natives. They killed our culture and reduce us to non humans.

Belongingness in African Aesthetics
Each group of people has their own world view or the way they see things. Their views and opinions about reality are based on their respective experiences with the world around them. Individual experiences do not actually count because of its less objective nature. Thus, the African man is mostly meaningful as a member of a group or a community where his whole life is greatly influenced by the community's perspective. According to Okolo (1993), "…The African may well be characterized by perspective feeling, *a homo sentiens* (feeling being) indeed (p. 16)."
The African man belongs to an aesthetic order where the views and belief system of his community or immediate society is fully reflected in their work

of art to be appreciated, it has to be understood in context of its cultural origin and culturally cherished values. You cannot view a piece of art in isolation without reference to its origin. The view that "…Culture speaks through art, and art helps us in understanding a particular culture better, in whatever form it may be," is very appropriate.

The white came and settled among us and we accepted them. We gave them access to our museums and places of worship; they collected our cultural artefacts by convincing us it is idolatrous, to build their museum and ripped us of our cultural heritage. They made our language inferior; any man who speaks their language is intelligent and any who cannot is termed illiterate. English way of dressing is seen as superior to our native way of dressing. In public functions, people are expected to appear English, selling off our identity and wearing another's. In their own country, we are treated as second class citizens; our dressing makes us to be easily identified as minors so we compromise in order to belong. This is a stigma every African suffers in the hands of our masters.

Belongingness in African Politics

The traditional African society experienced different types of political systems which were meant to ensure that the society becomes a safe-haven for everyone. There was no place in Africa where the people did not practice a particular type of government or the other. All existing societies or communities adopted any system they deemed fit or that which will ensure the best welfare for them. In traditional Africa, the relationship between the individual and the community was very significant and men saw themselves first and foremost as individuals in society. Their whole beings were, because society was. Mbiti (1969) summarizes this position with the popular statement as follows: "I am because we are and because we are therefore I am (p. 214)." The individual in Africa was so intertwined in the affairs of society that it was only natural that a way had to be sought to relate an individual to society. It was on this note that politics became feasible.

Democracy has been an African way of administration from time immemorial. Even though many see it as Gerontocracy, every member of the community participates in it. Africans believe in belongingness, so, while the elders make decisions, the youth take care of the security and other roles that are strenuous and the women cares for the home front and reports every emergency to the elders where necessary. Everybody belongs; none is left out. The Whiteman's democracy is different. The idea of voting gives room for corruption and contraposes the choice and voice of the people. This is as a result of emigration which glorifies western culture above their value.

Belongingness in African Economy
The concept of being as belongingness can also be seen in the African economic order. In all its ramifications, being in Africa means belongingness, which is belonging to a group. Africans have always experienced a communal life where the whole is far better than the part or the community more important than the individual. As far as the African traditional economy is concerned land was a very important factor cushioning other available resources which form part of the economic system. It should be noted that agriculture of all categories was part of the economic system. When it comes to land, it was a common property of all the members of the community and every family had a piece of land allotted to it. When this is done, members of the family share from the family land. According to Unah (1976), "…the individualist capitalist attitude of 'everyone for himself and God for us all' is totally un-heared-of in the economic Life of the African (p. 118)." The land was meant for everyone in the community because it is through the land that the living is connected to the dead. Thus to deny a family of a share of the community's land is to deprive such a family of its eternal link to its ancestors. Such public utilities as roads, markets, and community halls were built through the community's effort where every member of the group contributed their own quota. Organised labour or community task-force executed the general programmes of the group. Whoever failed to take part was surcharged in cash or in kind.

Today, the government owns every land and has the right to use it for whatever it wills without due consultation with its owners nor any form of recompense. Such are the teachings of our colonial masters. Our oil wells are owned by non natives because they are patriarchs while the original owners die of hunger and penury. Our resources are tapped without giving due remuneration to those whose properties are used for such. This is against belongingness. Because we are part of the whole; we need not be treated as outcastes.

Conclusion
The colonization of Africa by Europeans, which constituted till today our major migration challenge from which stems all others, had a more dramatic negative impact on the continent than the positive. The Europeans had a remarkable effect on the cultural traditions of African through assimilation. Africans were acculturated in almost every area of their culture. Colonial rulers had every expectation that the countries they ruled should model the cultural traditions of Europeans. They viewed Africans as culturally inferior. As a result, cultural characteristics changed for Africa.

We must go back to our values if we must achieve our desired goals. We must emulate some Asian countries who welcomed the white man, tapped from him without letting go what was rightfully his. While accepting the positive impact, let us throw away their individualism, and enthrone others before ourselves. This is what Africans are known for. We must begin now because "***Tabugboo"***.

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