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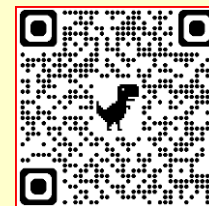
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Evaluating the Ethical and Political Implications of African Communalism vis-à-vis Western Individualism

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ABSTRACT

Freedom, responsibility and rights are topics of concern in traditional and contemporary African social setting. The afore mentioned are due to the nature African conception of a person as communalistic, thereby constricting the rights and responsibilities of the individual to common communal bearing. This liberates both ethical, moral and social impacts from the individual and placing it on the community. A topic of pertinent concern in existential phenomenology is as to what level of understanding could the anthropological nature of man be grasped. This is an attempt to marry human actions to its relative effects and consequences. It also boils down to the problem of ethics and morality, the question of justice and fair treatments, the question of communal and individual responsibilities. That is, to what extent can one justify his or her actions based on community delegation and to what extent can one be held culpable even if the individual is carrying out what is said to be a social delegation. Actions and responsibilities have been a perennial question in philosophy. African communalism on the other hand suggests a communal setting where individuals see themselves as a small unit of a whole. It purveys the necessity of the primacy of the community over individual's interest. It is a sort of brotherly solidarity and communal living that seek to achieve a greater communal goal as against individual's interest. This concept has its own ill bearing where communal good could be sought out for at the expense of an individual's right and culpability is exonerated on the name of communal delegation. Thus, it is based on this that this paper, employs analytical method to explores the political cum ethical implications of African communalism, how it has shaped, developed and downplayed African worldviews and social development. It further places it side-by-side with individualism as a western connotation-taking cognizance of the loopholes thereto the two. It concluded with a standpoint that is communal and individualistic in bearing as a way forward to a better Africa.

KEY WORDS: African Communalism, Western Individualism, Ethics, Politics.

Introduction

Communalism has been of pertinent concern especially as it relates to the contemporary social and political Africa. The concern arises more as the traditional works of African thinkers like Odumegwu, Menkiti, Nyerere, Senghor, Wiredu etc give credence to this fact. The coeval and exclusive implication of this is the various social, moral cum political dictums across Africa such as Ubuntu, Igwebuike, nke a bu nke anyi, ujama etc. this begs the question of the moral and social responsibilities of the individual in shaping his being and his society since right and freedom are constricted to a communal phenomenon.

The western understanding of man on the other hand supposed an individualistic underpinning whereby freedom and choice are allotted to the individual and the responsibilities thereto them. Thus, one is free to act and bear the responsibilities afterwards. The Cartesian cogito ergo sum supposed that it is thinking that one understands one's existence. Thus, one thinks therefore he is. The implication therefore is that beingness is not a communal phenomenon unlike the views of Menkiti; it is personal. Thus, the actions of various individuals determine the extent morals and political development of that community. This work, therefore, examines African communalism, its ethical and political implications and places it parallel to western individualism.

African communalism: An Understanding

Communalism as captured by advanced English Learner's dictionary means giving priority to communal aspirations to individual demands. Communalism is seen as "the fact of living together and sharing possessions and responsibility; a strong sense of belonging to a particular community" (Hornby, 1997, 290). African communalism is therefore African traditional view of the tapestry of the individuals that make up a community as one driven by a common goal. Gyekye in his work "*Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflection on the African experience*" captures communalism as a doctrine about social relations as well as moral attitudes about what sorts of relations should hold between individuals in a society and about the need to take into account the interests of the wider society not only in designing sociopolitical institutions and in evolving behavior patterns for individuals in their response to the needs and welfare of other members of society" (Gyekye, 1997, 149). The metaphysical undertone of this is captured by Menkiti who argues that personhood in African perspective is not perceived at the very beginning of an individual's life but is attained after one is well along with the community. Thus, the older an individual becomes in a given community, the more a person he becomes (Mmenkiti, 1984, 173). Oguejiofor took a social standpoint in that he argues that "Communalism could be understood as the primacy of the community over the individual" (Oguejiofor, 2007, 5).

It is a system of social relations in which the claim of the individual is generally put second, next to the claims of the community, or next to the claims or demands of the collection of individuals. However, according to Olufemi (2016), African communalism is the traditional way rural areas in Africa have worked in the past. In same line of thought, Ikenobe (2006) is of the view that African communalism has to do with set of principles or cultural framework that prioritize the collective role of the group over the individual in the community. Communalism therefore winks the interest and impacts of the individuals aside in determining the state of matters in the community (Ikenobe, 2006). It sees the individual as a part of a whole which is why whatever affects the community affects the

individual. It is based on this that in the traditional Africa an individual can be sacrificed to appease the gods for the greater good of the community (Achebe, 1958).

Senghor (1964) has a more appealing opinion on African communalism. He presents it as a moral way of life which allows members of a given community to cooperate and pull their resources together for the common good. For him, this is because communalists ideals hold an opinion that it is only through others that an individual becomes aware of their responsibilities, existence and privilege towards other members (Senghor 1964). Arguing on the bantu philosophy of Fr. Placid Tempels, Senghor assumes the absence of intentionality in the African mode of thinking. For him, the African man sees himself together with the object of discussion. He wraps his emotion round the object of enquiry, and he does not segregate or move himself away from the object. In like manner, the African man sees himself as together with the community. Thus, the common good of the community has primacy over the right of the individual. This accounts for the great moral and ethical undertone of African worldviews (Senghor 1965, 29).

The above point seems to be unanimous among African scholars on the communal worldview of the precolonial African communities. This is viable in Mbiti's famous dictum "I am because we are and since we are, therefore, I am-Ubuntu (Mbiti, 1970, 141). According to Asouzu, people take it for granted that the community has the right of appropriation over the rights and obligations of the individuals. The community therefore determines who should live and who should not (Asouzu, 2007, 351). Still on its political underpinning, Nyerere asserts that in traditional Africa, the community constitute a point of orientation for almost all human activities and determines human life (Nyerere, 1968, 224). Nyerere in his Ujama presented a social stratification anchored on the principles of equality, freedom and unity. Nyerere sort to establish a plausible society for the people of Tanzania through this principle. It is based on this that he saw socialism as attitude of the mind in which one sees oneself as a member of a whole. This according to him is notwithstanding the level of wealth under one's possession but it is a construction of the mind in which one could offer freely whatever belonging to him for the good of the community. (Nyerere 1962, 162). However, Okoh in his interpretation of Nyerere pointed out that Nyerere aims at establishing a democratic community with the consciousness of the ill of injustice and inequality to establish a more authentic Africa.

Olatunji (2006), in discussing the implications of communalistic social setting, pointed out that in communalism, the individual is seen as subject to the community. This according to him, presupposes that the state of being of the community determines what becomes the lots of the individual members irrespective of their individual values. Communalism is a generally accepted notion among African scholars as a traditional African way of viewing social existence and the place of its individual members. This, nonetheless, is in contrast to the views of J.S. Mbiti (1970) who seem to take a western undertone where he conceives the ideology of communalism in Africa as inconsistent (Mbiti, 1970). Abakare and Okeke (2018) while interpreting Nkrumah's social consciencism pointed out that Nkrumah aims to revive traditional African communalism using Marxist principles which is based on materialistic ontology and dialectics. Nkrumah attempted a differentiation of the traditional African communalism and the modern African experience. However, in the words of Ruch and Anyanwu (1981, p. 325-326), this attempt is an untentional attempt. Ruch argues that Nkrumah mixes up the traditional African system

with a Euro-Christian and Islamic socialist harmony. However, Abakare and Okeke (2018) asserted that Nkrumah acknowledges the complexity of African societies. He rejects the notion of idyllic African community. Nkrumah maintained that feudalism and slavery existed in Africa before the advent of colonialism (Nkrumah, 1974)

However, in a nutshell, African communalism is a traditional approach to personhood and his place in community. The communal theories as seen in the words of Olamide has to do with a *We in I* relationship. A scenario where individuals view themselves in respect to others in the spirit of collectivism, brotherhood and communal spirit (Olamide, 2020). It conveys a spirit of oneness, solidarity and social obligations that swallows individuals' interest in respect to common communal good.

Western Individualism: An Overview

Scholars are of agreeable opinion that western pedagogy and anthropological perceptions presupposes individualism. This is evident in the western perception of man as a small independent unit or substratum which remains when every other thing has been eliminated. The Socratic dictum of "man know thyself" explains the impact of individual's self-discovery in shaping of the outcomes of one's life (Stumpf & Fieser, 2003). By this prologue, Socrates supposes that man is an independent unit whose purpose is actualizable in a free and conscious decision making. This individual man has autonomy and natural rights bound to be protected by the state.

Thus, Descartes sees man as a being whose existence is detectable in thinking. Thus, cogito ergo sum "I think therefore I am" (Lawhead, 2002). This giving denotatively implies that the mindset of an individual determines to a great extent the nature of his being. This is an individual endowed with freedom of choice and responsibilities-to act and to restrict from acting. Plato agrees that man is a rational being who in his attempt to knowing come to the reality of things in their ideal nature. Liberating himself from the shackles of opinion, man extends to doubt and to thinking and in thinking sees the things they truly are. Rationality at this point becomes a focal point where man determines his worldviews in a world imitations and imperfection. However, from Plato's standpoint, man seems to be causally determined by the shadows of the cave until he is liberated by his struggle. Nonetheless, this does not liberate man from making informed decisions and bearing consequences. Plato conceives man as individual of tripartite nature. These natures include reason, appetite and spirit. In appetite man reduces himself to the mere shadows of an unreal world while in reason and spirit, he transcends to a world of form filled with nature of things in their real self. This is achievable through self-liberation (Stumpf and Fieser 2003).

Aristotle rejecting the platonic world of forms argues that things are in their real self in this world of experience. He conceives man as composed of soul that has tripartite nature of nutrition, sensation and rationality. He conceives man as a rational and social agency in that he calls man a political animal. Aristotle was of the view that an ideal society is one where citizens have the autonomy and freedom to participate in governance and civic activities. In a bid to explore the complexity of human nature, Aristotle in *Nichomechean Ethics* pointed out man's intricate inclination to pleasure. He argues that a balance ought to be stroked between excess and necessity. This is achievable through virtuous living (Lawhead, 2002).

Aquinas believed that man is endowed with independent reason and freewill even though he is created in the *imago Dei*. Like Aristotle, Aquinas pointed out that the principle of human individuation is the

composition of matter and form. Matter becomes the potential to self-actualization while form becomes the principle of actualization itself. It is based on this that he argues that though man is tied to the responsibility of the common good, he has the freedom of choice and responsibility. This is the ground of moral responsibilities and rights (Stumpf and Fieser 2003).

As earlier stated, Descartes took the point of individualism to its very extreme point. His idea of individualism spurs from the denial of every possible existence. In so doing, he realizes a thinking thought upon which the denial or doubt emanates from (Stumpf and Fieser 2003). This thinking thought is, however, undeniable. Therefore, for the very fact a certainty of his thinking process he concluded his existence. Thus, I think therefore I am (*cogito ergo sum*). This presupposes man as a rational and intelligent being whose self-fulfilling essence is achievable through a rational retrospective and introspective thoughts. He further distinguished between the thinking self (*res cogitans*) and the object of thinking (*res extensa*) (Cf. Ani 2022). The thinking thing for him is a nonphysical component that interacts with the thinking thing. This was his attempt to reconcile the ambiguity of the relationship between the mind and the body. His idea of individualism is therefore, of self-reliance and self alienation or isolation. He the principles of subjective experiences as the basis of through knowledge.

Heidegger rejected Cartesian isolated individualism and advocated for a more liberal individualism anchored on a being of experience. His principle of *Das Sein* (a being thrown there) points out a being whose existence is alien to itself. Man being thrown in the world without his knowledge, sees a chaotic and hostile environment (Cf. Ani 2022). However, this man has the autonomy and freedom to sort for survival. According to him, nature provides man with all the necessary amenities of experience. It is up to man to dance to the toil of life and sought his survival in a world he knows not what. However, despite man's thrownness into the world, Heidegger advocates for authenticity of life where an individual braces up to the challenges of his environment, makes decisions and the responsibilities for his actions. Inordinate living for him is unworthy of life because man is endowed with the rationality to choose and not to choose. However, he presupposes that the very end of man's purpose is death. Death for him, is the completion of human struggles so the question of moral obligations does not arrive (Ani, 2019).

Nietzsche's principles of the *Urbemensch* (the superman) presents a strong individualistic perception of man. Nietzsche rejected the principles of the traditional moralists and accused them of promoting a hard mentality. He anchors his view of man on the emphasis of individual's self creation and expression. He pointed out rightly that individuals ought to reject external influences and focus on personal creativity. His idea of existential phenomenology lies on the utility of the will power. The will power for him is the determiner of the outcomes of a man's life. Thus, whatever, happens to a man is a result of his action or inaction. For him, the decision not to act is an action taken already. The follow-up, therefore, is the outcome of this decision. Man for him has freedom to choose and to forbear the outcome thereto. For him, tending to exonerate himself from the consequences of his will power is having a bad fate (stumpf and Fieser 2003). His principle of authentic living like Heidegger is anchored on decision and responsibilities. Inability to decide and take responsibilities for him is bad fate.

Summarily, Nietzsche advocates for a life where individuals attain self-actualization through their reliance on the will power. This

principle trashes out the impacts of communal influence. It gives the individual the autonomy to determine the outcome of one's life. It presupposes personal interest to communal interest or whatever, that may mean. Thus, primacy is given to the individual self in consideration of a course of action to be taken.

Arthur Schopenhauer saw human nature as egoistic. He argues that human actions are driven by the desire and appetites to fulfil personal interests and pleasures. He rejected the isolation of man as independent entity and pointed out that human social is an integral setting. Thus, individual actions have effects on others. It is based on this that he advocated for the principle of compassion as a moral imperative to decision making (Lawhead, 2002). This is principle that seeks to overcome individualism and sees oneself at forefront of others condition before embarking on any decision making.

Jean-Paul Sartre rejects a deterministic man in totality and argues that man is totally bound to be free. He rejected the principles of communal moral standards and argues that man has the autonomy to self-actualization through the various choices he makes (Ani, 2022).

William James proposed a pragmatic approach to individualism. He advocated for the importance of subjective experiences in shaping human's understanding of his environment. He asserts that individuals can shape their reality through decisions and choices. He rejects conformity to social norms and argues that individuals are endowed with freedom of choice (Stumpf and Fieser, 2003)

Summarily, western anthropology to a higher extent supposes man as free independent being whose destiny is his freedom and choice. Man in a western perspective is boundless of any communal influence. Thus, primacy is given to the right of the individual. Which is why one's right ends at where another's begins. In their perspective, the community does not determine the outcome of one's life rather one's ability to make inform decisions and bear responsibilities for them.

The Ethical and Political forbearance of communalism; African experience

The contemporary nature of African society begs the question of the credibility of communalism as viable social practice and a modality of social conduct. Ideally, the notion of communalism sounds plausible in that the spirit of oneness leads and the personalistic interest is relegated while primacy is given to the common and greater good of the community. However, the present African nature seem not support the relative assertion.

Nevertheless, from a more positive perspective, communalism supposes conducts of the members of a community are the one of brotherhood in a confraternal love. This is captured by Mbiti as a system of mannerism which underscores that one behaves in such a way that one does not course harm to a member of the community. These harms include killing or stealing of a fellow's good- these actions within a community are considered taboos and abomination. (Mbiti 1970). This is traditional set of principle which guides the conducts of the members of the community. It ensures transparency in management of communal remuneration and aborts any form of injustice irrespective of one class within the community. This system of living ensures social integration and cohesion to a more mutualistic living. However, it restricts the individual's opinion to the general acceptable opinion of the community. This points to the possibility of oppressive scenarios where individuals could be conscripted to succumb to a social norm being that the standard of behavior is being enacted by the community.

Another point worth buttressing is the implication of communalism in the wider society. A society that is community centered would run into the chaos of contrasting codes of conducts as communities tends to differ in their ethical and moral values. The implication would be that actions like stealing, murder, rape would not be questioned provided they are not committed within one's community. Perpetrators of such actions would rather be celebrated as heroes since they were done outside the community. The result of this would be the enigma of bloodbath between communities as each community fights to protect the interest of one's community. Truth therefore becomes a communal and relative norm.

Another notable ethical and moral implication of communalism is the exoneration of individual's responsibilities and assignments of obligations to members of a community. Within a community for instance, people could kill fellow human beings for sacrifices to their deities in the name of an obligations assigned to them by the community. They are exonerated from bearing the responsibilities and consequences of such actions because the action is said to be to the benefit of the greater good of the community. However, an individual has been denied of his natural right to life. This begs the question of justice and equality because certain members of a community could also be casted as less a member than others. Just as the appalling Igbo osu cast which has been a topic of concern even till the contemporary igbo setting.

Communitarianism as a social setting does not only stunted, the development of the larger society but also deny the individual members of various rights to the explorations of individual's essence. It construes self-actualization to the actualization of communal goal. It relegates the utilization of talents and creativity as captured by chimakonam in that he argues that the communitarian Africa does not encourage heroic endeavors in individuals (chimakonam 2015, 68). Highlighting the impact of this Bisong pointed out that numerous norms and rules by a community would inhibit individuals from performing certain actions that self-fulfilling thereby denying them of the right to individual self-discovery (Bisong 2018, 3).

Communalism and politics in the contemporary Africa

The crisis of politics in the precolonial Africa society does not arise much because various communities have laid down procedures acceptable by members of the community as a way of electing their kindred or village leader. Like the traditional igbo, the eldest man in kindred automatically comes the leader and the village councilors were made up of the council of elders of various kindred. Politicking becomes tensed and intricate with the arrival of the western democratic system of governance. This mode of politicking allows for a vaster coverage of leadership that extend beyond individual community. The problem becomes how to marry a society that is communitarian with a system that is vast and universal. This has resulted rather a larger chaotic political practice that is rather tribalistic as evident in Nigerian political system. Thus, communalism calls individuals to a consciousness of the individuals of their various community. This posse's difficulty to citizen's who would wish to express their franchise but due to communal consciousness, the freedom to decide and choose viable political leaders becomes an enigma.

Communalism has a reducing tendency on the individuals of a community this is since it does not allow members of a community to explore how their political choices and participations to a great extend determine the outcome of their living in a society. This why

Achebe in the troubles with Nigeria argues that our problem is a problem of bad leadership orchestrated by a tribalistic politicking. Based on this communal undertone of African perception of personhood, thugs and hoodlums find it easier to play on the emotion of brotherliness and fraternity during political process. They enter offices through this medium and in the end decides to show their true nature. This has been a pertinent problem to the development of Africa. The question becomes how does one break through the bond of community tie to a more universal an social perspective of reality in order to make more informed political decision.

Aside political participations during electoral exercises, communalism in views of issues of national building has been of a greater concern. In a society where preference is given to one's community, the tendency is that a leader of nation would channel greater attention to the development of his community before considering other places. Distribution of offices and allocation of national funds and resources becomes a problem. This is because, offices shall no longer be allocated based on one who has the capacity and qualification but based on fraternal and brotherly concern. Allocation and distribution of funds and common goods would also be based on the primacy of one's community and not based on the need of the nation and the individuals. This begs the question of justice, equality and fairness. A nation that is communalistic in view would likely struggle to a crippling point just as Africa is facing it globally now.

The ideology of a community-based understanding of coexistence presupposes that one's community interest comes before every other. The result of this is election of unqualified leaders, looting, various corruption etc. extensively to judiciary level, justice therefore becomes a communal thing. Being that in a society like Nigeria that practice presidential system of government. The president has the right to appoint his community man to become the chief judge of the federal high court. The question becomes how such a judge would be able to make an informed judgment in a case involving the president or his community man.

The general political dictums like *onye aghana nwanne ya, nke abu nke anyi* etc, bothers on the effect of communalism in the African social setting. It denies the individual the freedom of political participation and the choice making. The implications become a continual political and governmental errors which continues to cripple the development such society. Communalism denies the individual the right to the freedom of choice and gives him a communal obligation which determines his action during political event. Thus, when political issues like looting arises when is to act accordingly provided the action favors one's community person. This is because it is believed that this individual is part of one's community ideally. Thus, whatever, favors his him, favors one too. However, national development is being jeopardize and one's place in the society is conscripted to one's community. Thus, communalism gives one a limited political understanding of facts. This is because even matters of general concerns would be sort after through communal influence.

Contemporary African society

In the context of contemporary African politics, individualism has emerged as a significant ideological force, often challenging the traditional communalistic values that have historically underpinned African societies. While African societies have long emphasized communalism characterized by collective decision-making, shared responsibilities, and a focus on the welfare of the community

individualism, particularly influenced by globalization and Western values, is altering the political landscape across the continent. The convergence of these competing ideologies individualism and communalism presents both opportunities and challenges for political leaders, governance structures, and citizens. Communalism has been central to the political systems of many African societies. Traditional African political structures often involved collective decision-making, where elders, chiefs, or councils of community members played key roles in guiding and making decisions for the community. These systems were based on mutual support, shared resources, and a sense of collective identity (Adebayo, 2016). In the communal context, individuals were primarily viewed as part of a larger whole, and personal success was often linked to the well-being of the group. Communal values also emphasized consensus-building and consultation. African traditional political leaders were expected to lead with the interests of the community at the forefront, promoting the common good over individual desires. Social cohesion, collective responsibility, and the importance of family and kinship networks were fundamental to political engagement in these traditional settings (Moyo, 2017).

In the political context, communalism encouraged inclusivity, where various factions or groups within a society had to collaborate for the betterment of all. This emphasis on shared responsibility created a framework for political stability, as decisions were made through dialogue and negotiation. However, as African nations transitioned to modern states, these traditional communal values began to conflict with the individualistic ideologies introduced by colonialism, globalization, and the rise of neoliberalism.

Ethical and Political Implications of Western Individualism

The ontology of the principles of individualism as captured by Boethius is that man is an individual of rational substance (Boethius 1345, 64). This implies the primacy of the rational nature of man is a determiner of his being. Denotatively, western individualism makes explicit the necessity for responsible living in which an individual ought to be accountable to every action taken irrespective of the circumstances. Just as postulated by Heidegger and supported by Nietzsche and Sartre, man is a responsible being endowed with rationality. Though the advocates of western individualism sort to reject the principles of dogmatic moral principles, the ethical implications of their arguments is that the individual has the right and freedom to decide conscious actions and face the consequences thereto them. Thus, if a man irrespective of his class decides to act against national laws the law also has the right to act against him based on the law of equal proportion. Conscious actions therefore do not exonerate the individual from taking the responsibilities of his actions. However, on a pessimistic angle, individualism tend to drive human freedom and autonomy to an individual rather has boundless freedom to decide the essence of his being which is why the contemporary western society debates on issues very extreme point. This questions the basis of objectivism especially as regards to morality and social norms. The problem of gender, LGBTQs etc. it sees man as isolated individual whose self-fulfillment is attainable through personal development. The implication is a society that is capitalistic in conscience and personal interest prides the day. Just as Karl Marx has it, the capitalist has the right to accrue more wealth to himself even if it means alienating working classes. Thus, fellow man could be used as means to actualization of personal interest.

However, individualism does not limit the potential of any individual member of the society. No man is subject to any norms

neither is man subject to any fellow man. This is because one has the right to break free and accrue one's wealth also through any possible means available to one. This means-whatever it may be, implies that whatever, the outcome becomes, the individual has total responsibility and accountability for his actions. It gives primacy to ethical responsibility and the statutorial recognition of the individual's right. Presents equality and justice on a platter in that no individual is exonerated or under the coverage of whatever influence as a guise to exemption. However, questionable is contextual actions. Is man totally free in choosing his actions? What about actions that are spurred by circumstances, how does the society come about justice when there is an infringement to one's freedom of choosing otherwise. For instance, a man has a gun pointed to his head and asked to kill another man. If such a man decides to kill, was his action totally free? Sartre would rather maintain that he is free to decide otherwise and an attempt to exonerate him is bad fate. John Searle on the other hand would marry freedom and determinism as both inherent nature of man. Thus, the essence of western state as captured by Locke is to protect the rights of the individual members of the society. Thus, any leader who fails to fulfil this end ought to be removed through political voting and the choice of the individual members of the society.

Individualism, therefore, allows members of a society to recognize their freedom and choices as determiners of the welfare of their society. This simply puts inculcates a conscious and intentional awareness of the status of the individual members of the society within a polity. Politicking within the context of the western individualism presents social body made up of individuals of unique rights. Thus, one's right ends where another's begin, and it becomes a pertinent concern of the state to protect these individual's rights. People have right to the ownership of their properties, right to enjoy their natural talents and right to life. Thus, justice and equality become ideal as would infringe on the right of the other. If such occurs, the individual ought to bear the consequences thereto. This brings out the national spirit of objective development. Primacy is given to the objective goal which is the protection of the interest of the individuals that make up the state. It calls to mind the spirit of responsibilities and forbearance on the side of leadership. It also promotes the politics of inclusion and transparency. This is because individuals have rights to decide through electoral voting- who and how their state should be governed. There is absence of tribalistic monopoly or mediocrity in choosing the leadership of the state. This method fosters rapid national development. Though it promotes certain alienation because development is individualistic and such capitalistic tendency is to use members who are less privileged for one's personal interest.

Imprint of individualism in the contemporary African Society

Individualism in contemporary African politics is largely a result of the rapid spread of Western ideals, global capitalism, and increasing political awareness, especially among the younger generation. The process of globalization has had a profound impact on African political systems, introducing values such as personal autonomy, individual rights, and self-determination. These values contrast sharply with the communal ideologies that have historically governed African societies (Chabal, 2017). The increasing importance of individualism is particularly evident in the political behavior of younger generations, who are increasingly advocating for political reform, accountability, and a focus on personal rights. As many African countries embrace democracy, political participation has shifted from collective community action to

individual political activism, with citizens increasingly focusing on individual freedom, personal agency, and the desire for a direct impact on political outcomes (Kalu, 2019).

This shift is especially visible in the rise of political leaders and activists who emphasize personal charisma and individual leadership rather than collective decision-making. In many African countries, political figures are often celebrated for their personal achievements, with individuals such as former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, Kenya's former president Uhuru Kenyatta, and South Africa's Nelson Mandela emerging as symbols of individual political leadership. These figures have helped to redefine African politics by elevating individual accomplishment over collective community efforts.

Globalization has also facilitated the rise of an individualistic political economy, where the focus is increasingly on economic liberalization, market-driven policies, and privatization. These changes have transformed the relationship between politics and the economy, prioritizing individual entrepreneurial success over communal welfare. This shift in economic philosophy has had far-reaching implications for African political systems, altering the political landscape and changing the nature of power relations within these societies (Mamdani, 2018).

Consequences of this Emergency

Erosion of Traditional Political Structures: The rise of individualism has led to the erosion of traditional African political structures, which were once based on communal values. Political systems that once emphasized consultation, consensus-building, and community-driven decision-making are being replaced by more centralized, individualistic leadership styles. This shift has weakened the role of traditional political bodies, such as councils of elders or village assemblies, which were integral in mediating conflicts and ensuring that political decisions reflected the interests of the community (Dahl, 2019). As a result, contemporary African politics is increasingly characterized by the centralization of power in the hands of individual political elites. This trend has led to a more top-down political environment, where leaders make decisions without broad consultation with the community. Such centralization can lead to the marginalization of certain groups within society, as political leaders may prioritize personal interests or the interests of their supporters over the needs of the broader community (Baker, 2017).

Political Fragmentation and Social Division: The increasing prominence of individualism in African politics has also contributed to political fragmentation and social division. As individuals focus on personal rights and freedoms, they may be less inclined to engage in collective efforts to address communal issues. The competition for individual power and recognition can create a fragmented political environment, where the pursuit of personal agendas supersedes the need for unity and collective action (Pélissier, 2018). This fragmentation is particularly evident in election cycles, where political campaigns often focus on individual candidates rather than collective party ideologies. In countries like Nigeria, Kenya, and Zimbabwe, political parties are often divided along ethnic or regional lines, and candidates often focus on their personal appeal rather than building a unified platform for the whole nation. Such division exacerbates existing tensions and makes it harder to address national issues through a cohesive political strategy.

Challenges to Governance and Accountability: Individualism in African politics has also had a significant impact on governance and accountability. In many cases, political leaders who prioritize personal ambitions and individual achievement over communal

welfare are more likely to engage in corrupt practices and abuse of power. The concentration of political power in the hands of a few individuals can result in the erosion of democratic institutions and the weakening of checks and balances (Osei, 2020). In this environment, political accountability becomes difficult, as leaders may feel less compelled to answer to the needs and interests of the wider community. As a result, many African countries have faced challenges in developing transparent, responsive, and accountable governance systems. The emphasis on individual power often leads to a political environment where leaders are more interested in consolidating their personal wealth and political influence than serving the needs of their constituents.

Shift in Political Identity and Nationalism: The rise of individualism has also led to a shift in political identity and nationalism in African countries. Where traditional African political systems often emphasized a shared sense of identity and communal belonging, contemporary politics is increasingly shaped by individual identity and personal achievement. This shift can result in a weakening of national unity, as people identify more with their personal interests, political parties, or ethnic groups rather than with a collective national identity (Schatzberg, 2015). Thus, such a given of identity can hinder efforts to build cohesive, unified nations, especially in post-colonial African countries that are already grappling with ethnic, religious, and regional tensions. Political leaders who focus on their individual charisma or popularity may inadvertently contribute to the weakening of national unity, making it more difficult to address issues such as poverty, inequality, and conflict that require collective action.

In essence the paradigm shift from communalism to individualism in contemporary African politics presents both opportunities and challenges. While individualism has brought about greater political engagement, personal empowerment, and a shift toward democratic ideals, it has also contributed to the erosion of traditional communal political structures, political fragmentation, and challenges to governance and accountability. The balance between individualism and communalism will be crucial in shaping the future of African political systems. Moving forward, African leaders and citizens must find ways to integrate the values of individual autonomy and personal rights with the communal values that have historically provided a foundation for social cohesion and political stability. Achieving this balance will be key to ensuring that African politics remains inclusive, accountable, and capable of addressing the complex challenges facing the continent.

Between African Communalism and Western Individualism

Communalism and individualism two parallel social settings that divergent social coexistence. The former presupposes a setting whereby communal interest supersedes that of the individual's constituents while the latter promulgates a principle that favors the pursuit of self-actuality true personal and self-development. Ideally communalism seem to support a spirit of oneness, unanimity and solidarity while in individualism seem to be self-centered system. However, practically given the two society especially in the contemporary period seem to be of different opinion to the above assertions.

Africa as a nation is blessed with various human and mineral resources but crumbling nature of Africa has been a case of great concern to persons of goodwill. Africa has been in a long term of hardship and under development-orchestrated by political and communal crises of all sorts. This is a hardship pioneered by criminals and hungry thugs who play on the guise of community and towns men to cause communal and ethnic unrest to actualize their

political aims. The contemporary situation facing Africa is one that begs the question of the validity of the principles promulgated by African communalism. Greater percentage of African countries has continued to be dependent on foreign aids despite haven gained independence from the colonial regime. This a question of how communalism can be inculcated in a system that seem alien to the traditional Africa communitarian system. Thus, there is a need to examine the influence of African communalism in democratic Africa.

The communal principles seem not to be favoring the contemporary democratic system of government. Though, ethically and morally, Africa seem to have strong tenacity to various traditional values which they hold up to date. However, very many of the African values are being washed out by global influence. Communal and traditional influence seem to be losing its strong influence. Communalism may be a productive system during the traditional African era, but this seem not to be the case in a contemporary Africa that seem to have embraced westernism. Communalism does not only cripple national development, but it also promotes various tribal crises caused by political bigots who hide under the guise of community patriots to promote such crises. This is why, western individualism seems more functional than communalism. This is because the individual in the state understands their right and all strive towards self-actualization by recognizing the impact of decision making. Freedom of choosing does not only foster national building but also gives the individual the opportunity to make informed decisions. This because the result of such decisions does not only affect the general populace but also the individual who lives in the society.

Thus, Africa continues to cry woes, wallowing under the shadow of democracy while tribal and ethnic favoritism takes preeminence to national good. Africans just as Achebe and other African scholars have it, has continued to allow mediocrity take pride of place while her development is downplayed by political bigots and criminals.

Individualism on the western part has promote not only social development but allows utilization of individual talents to foster the development of the nations. This is evident in the various technological development and scientific discoveries which has turned the world into a global village. Thus, the ability of western education to inculcate autonomy to its individual citizens has enable the production of the various product that sell across the world. This does not only promote standard living among citizens but also make crime dictation easier for the national security agencies. This promotes peaceful and orderly social living.

However, individualism has not been a totally a favorable practice. It comes with its own implications. This is eminent in the various ethical and moral issues facing the western society. the western pessimism and relativism have made it impossible to have objectivity in salient moral issues which include issues like, abortion, the problem of gender, thee right o LGBTQ, euthanasia, suicide etc. this is because if an individual has right to the dispose of one's life, such individual has the right to act on it in whichever form he wishes. Just as Fulton Sheen has it, a nation that has lost sense of moral decadence is tantamount to produce and promulgate a chaotic world. The product of this would be that man would be converted to beast who would go to any extent ot actualize its interest. This would make man alien to a fellow man because he would be on the quest to achieve his goal in whichever means possible. Thus, the global challenge and threat of nuclear wars are products of individual scientific exploration. There is a continual exploration and discovery. This implies that every nation has the

right to protect the interest of the members of such societies even if it means going into wars with fellow nations. Thus, unguided freedom on the side of individuals has not been of complete help to man.

Evaluation

A pertinent concern following the various concerns made bare above is the one of; which way forward? How does Africa that have married the spirit age long communitarianism and disguised democracy, restructure her society in such a way that justice can be faired in within judiciaries across Africa. So, that court rulings do not get challenged or judges accused of corruption. How does Africa establish a society has the interest of the citizens at heart without favoritism and community interest. How does Africa embrace individualism in such a way that the salient moral problems that accompanies does not arise?

Adoption of inclusive polity is possible. Development is a progress activity and not a rapid process that can be achieved in a day. Individualism may have salient problem that accompanies it but the need of restructuring the social setting which Africa finds itself is necessary. To achieve this, first the individual members that make up the African social setting ought to understand the role of freedom of choice, will power and responsibility. President Lincoln in his speech advocated that Americans ask not what America could do for them rather what they could do for America. Individual's contribution to national building is only possible in a situation where members of society were able to utilize their natural talent and gone beyond self -discovery to actualization.

Just as Plato has it, society is member of individuals of different class. National building can only arise when every component of the society carries out their different functions. Provided the policeman understands his responsibility to the state, the doctor understands his responsibilities to the patients, the farmer recognizes his contribution to national good by provision of the various edibles in the market, the schoolteacher recognizes his obligations to the students and political leaders understands the obligations they owe to the state, then Africa can talk of social inclusion.

Africa may have strong affinity to traditional moral conscious issues but that does not make Africa a moral nation. In the recent time there has been a boom in salient crimes across Africa. These crimes include killings of different forms, both political and terrorist groups like Boko Haram. Human trafficking has been on the high side across various African countries. The issues of corruption which includes stealing, looting in various sectors of life across Africa begs the question of the strong moral consciousness of Africa. Trained medical personnel are all on their ways across the shores of Africa in search of greener pastures. This is because there is no standard source of living here in Africa. This is because politics, tribalism and ethnic influence has not allowed Africa to rise beyond this shackle to make informed decisions. Inasmuch as I would not advocate extreme individualism for Africa, I would rather propose socialism that is individualistic in nature as a way to out.

Conclusion

The implications of communalism and individualism as portrayed in this essay largely have merit and demerit values to the social settings where they are practice. They not only shape the outcome of the day-to-day activities of the individuals of that society as seen in this work but also influence their perception of reality. Just like pointed out, Africans with a wider lens, see communal living as holistic and the individual as a unit of a whole while Westernism purveys a

constricted perception of reality to an individual's endeavor thereby elevating the primacy of the individual over a common phenomenon. Within the course of this write-up, I have been able to explore the principles of individualism and communalism in both western and African social setting. This, however, does not rule out elements of individualism in Africa social existence especially within the contemporary African society that is becoming more westernized. This is evident in the views of the various scholars across the two social settings. The challenges and implications of the two principles are eminent in the content of this work. I therefore do not only advocate for a more inclusive society for Africa but one that marries the spirit of liberal socialism and individualism to liberate Africa from the shackle of underdevelopment and the various challenges facing her.

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