



The Question of the African Personality in Chukwudum Barnabas Okolo: A Critical Review

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Review Article

Volume 6 Issue 2

Received Date: May 02, 2023

Published Date: May 17, 2023

DOI: 10.23880/phij-16000300

Abstract

Okolo maintains that the African is identified by his personality which is the attitudinal disposition he designates as 'being-with'. He adopts the term 'being-with' to represent the African 'communality' which is all there is to be truly African. Though maintaining a radical communalistic viewpoint suspending in socio-ontological considerations, Okolo posits that this attitude characteristically defines and symbolically stands for that by which 'an African' is identified. However, Okolo's position inheres some problems that border on one, the question and place of right and freedom of the individual as a community-member in the face of the community-consciousness, two, imposition of the title 'African' on even non-Africans as he opines that even an American, for instance, who imbibes by the principle of 'being-with' is 'an African', among other problems. Nonetheless, this paper defends that there are serious series of challenges/disruptions to this personality of 'being-with' which today hinder a satisfactory realization of its practicability/liveability even among Africans. The expectations from the paper include one, an analysis of Okolo's thoughts, pointing out the loopholes for further academic exercise on African philosophical discourse, two, to reiterate the fact that what is African has substantial potency to sustain Africa, and address African problems hence 'African solutions to African problems', and third and finally, to propose an alternative view to ameliorating the radical communalistic positions in Okolo. The paper shall here also adopt philosophical conceptualization, content and contextual analysis and clarifications to critically review Okolo.

Keywords: Okolo; Personality; African; Person; Being-with; Communality; Community

Introduction

The African person has been conceived differently by different scholars of different races. Significantly, while some of these conceptions are positive, others are negative. Categorically, some of these conceptions could be seen as ontological, social, normativist, communitarian, etc. It is against this backdrop that this paper aims at re-evaluating Okolo's position on the discourse which could be described

as radical communalism that suspends in ontological considerations. Okolo holds the view that what is to be African is communalism, an attitudinal disposition where the visible is in a socio-ontological interrelationship with the invisible; hence to 'be-with' is 'being-with' every being.

Thus, the thesis of this paper is that though the existential disposition of the attitude of 'being-with' truly defines the African, however, this personality has today been

disrupted by many factors that make it appear as though it never identified what is (or has always been) to be African. At this, the question is: how could a people be described as communalistic yet the prevalent attitude is individualism, human-insensitivity and inhumanism? In other words, how truly communalistic and humane is the African personality today?

In addressing these issues, the paper shall adopt the philosophical conceptualization, content and contextual analysis and clarifications to critically evaluate Okolo's communalistic views of the African personality. This paper shall contribute to academics by analysing Okolo and point out the ideological loopholes found in his communalistic personality position of the African, and equally proffer an ameliorating counter stance for his radical communalistic stance.

This paper is structured in sections to include the 'abstract' which contains a brief summary of the content of the paper; the 'introduction' which has a more expanded contents of the abstract; the 'factors that influenced Okolo' which expresses certain motivations that facilitated Okolo's philosophy and conceptualizations; the 'literary and ontological meaning and implication of 'being-with'' which contains an elaborate analysis of all that 'being-with' could mean and imply; the critique section which contains the critique contents of this paper against Okolo; a brief 'conclusion' containing concluding statements; and finally the 'relevant literature' which is the bibliography of all the cited literature.

Factors that Influenced Okolo

For Okolo, indeed, all that could be said about the African personality is summarily community-life-style which he designates with the term 'being-with'. However, there are a number of factors that influenced Okolo taking such position. Firstly, as could be practically seen in Okolo, the employment of the term 'being-with' is as a result of his contact with the works of some European existentialists especially Heidegger. In fact, while making reference to Heidegger in terms of the "total aim or ultimate goal" of the African philosophy vis-à-vis distinction between the 'African man' and the 'European man' and their philosophical mannerism, Okolo employed the term 'African *Dasein*' to connote the idea of African 'being-with' in relation to the African mode-of-being-in-the-world, African existence and existential experiences [1]. Secondly, his studies in overseas at the peak of racism in Europe greatly influenced him. This made him to rethink on who really man is, how a people ought to conceive the 'other people', what sort of relationship should govern one's relationship with 'the other', and by what identity or even personality, could the African be known? Thirdly, he was also humanly

influenced by the 'African predicaments' to include, as facts of history, the trans-Atlantic slavery, Colonialism whose tail end he experienced, the on-going ravaging 'new-colonialism' system instilled in Africa, the South African Apartheid in which he academically/intellectually participated, etc. Fourthly, Okolo equally drew certain influences from some Phenomenologists whose works contain such themes like *empathy, sympathy, emotional contagion/sharing, existential interrelationship, intersubjectivity, group consciousness*, etc which would unavoidably land one to certain discourses like 'we-community', 'with-one-another', 'we-existence', 'I-existence', etc. Obviously, these played out in the pattern of articulation of his ideas, the application of the term 'being-with' and the technicality of analysis and presentation of the ideas.

Nonetheless, these are what we may term 'extrinsic influences'. There are also the 'intrinsic influences' from his African, Igbo cultural background-thinking, language and action which include (and are expressed in) the traditional socio-political, economic and religious structure of his community, pattern of behavioural approach to both personal/private and community/public issues on daily basis which consciously and sub-consciously identify the people, and general cultural display of the people which affects them existentially holistic, and finally the African world-view, etc. By this, it is sustained that Okolo's conceptualization of the African 'being-with' is culture-rooted/driven. In his words, "this being-with 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" [2]. Two significant values underline the cultural influence: the African value on the concept of 'community' and 'humanism' [3]. Okolo knows that the African lives and accomplishes his destiny in the community, and in turn, becomes the product of the community. The African "lives in the community, by the community and for the community. The community determines and influences his life as he determines and influences the life of the community" NZE, et al. [4] and for Gbadegesin, the community determine his destinies [5]. From the humanistic bent, Okolo is conscious of the fact that the African universe is primarily anthropocentric, in that every being ontologically acts towards the influence, welfarism of man who is the most delicate, feeble among them all [6,7]. Thus, it could be concluded that "'being-with' is a fundamental horizon of the African, his mode-of-being-in-the-world to the extent that he may well be culturally defined as a 'being-with'" [2]. The African world-view is an all-encompassing one that no reality is conceived in disjoint; characteristically so religious and anthropocentric, hence from a conceptual scheme, describable as a movement from primarily-anthropocentric to secondarily-theocentric. Several attempts to differentiate between the African and Western world-views have been made by many scholars

[2,8,9]. Deductible from the various attempts is a reiteration that the methodology to doing African philosophy could best be described as 'hylemorphism'. In that, the metaphysical gets manifested in the physical and the physical is an embodiment of the metaphysical, and so, both cannot exist in exclusivity, hence a 'practical-metaphysics' or 'physicalized-spiritualism' [10]. This stands as an explanation as to what method/system exactly the African philosophy could be identified with, as obtainable in the west like the British is empiricism, German is idealism, French is rationalism, etc.

Contextual and Conceptual Meaning of 'Being-With' According to Okolo

In this section we will present a hallmark conceptual scheme of 'being-with' in terms of its social and ontological meanings and implications. It will also give a clear insight into the factors/agents that serve as the bedrock upon which Okolo, though as is real and existentially practical of the African life, nursed the idea and articulation of the African communality designated as 'being-with'. The African thus becomes identifiable by his personality, hence the conceptual and contextual analysis.

The literary or contextual meaning of the term 'being-with' tends towards the 'social aspect'. 'Being' is the gerundial form of the to-infinitive 'to-be'; hence 'being-with' simply means 'to-be(being)-with', 'existing-with', 'living-with', 'staying-with', 'involving-with', 'always-in-communion-with', 'constant-interacting-with'. The gerundial 'being' which inheres an enigmatic philosophical implication, brings out the reality, practicality and contextual-experience of the to-infinitive; hence 'being' would serve better than 'to-be'. However, 'being-with' implies that 'with-ness' explains the African life; and 'within-ness' identifies his existence. By this, the African is he who lives-among-others, who exists-within-a-community, whose life is best enjoyed when in a communal-constant-interaction, in a community and always-in-involvement-with-other-beings. Suffice it to say then that his existence is incomplete outside a community; or that the core ingredient, interestingness of his life is not got outside a community. He does not know how to live and leave alone. Community-living is life; it identifies the reality of existence and is fundamentally what is to be African. This sustains the horizontal axis of relationships among visible beings: man-man, man-lower animals, trees and non-living objects, and as well as the relationships among these lower categories of beings and equally their influences on man. The implication is that the African concept of 'being-with' means that existence is meaningful in a community and life is all about sharing, collectiveness and communal participation in contrary to individualism. Presuppose it to say therefore that the African life/existence becomes meaningful and enjoyable in a 'we-community' and not in an 'I-community'. For Okolo,

whatever characterizes the African has communalistic underpinnings because community-life is all that can be said of the existential personality of the African person. At this juncture, however, the plausible question that should surface is: "Is 'being-with' 'being-with' who or what?" Answering this goes beyond the 'contextual' and the 'social' to the 'conceptual' and the 'ontological' implications (aspect).

The conceptual meaning of 'being-with' which implies its ontological dimension simply sustains that 'being-with' is 'being-with' everything that exists, be it visible or invisible. The characteristic language of this level goes beyond the concept of 'living' which refers to 'beings that have life', to the concept of 'existence' which refers to 'beings that exist some of whom live, i.e, have life'. It thus inheres ontological outlook by the inclusion of non-living but existing beings, the invisible beings which include: the Supreme Being, the 'departed-living', deities/divinities, and other spiritual elements. Stressing this point, he writes that '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 indeed [2].

All the beings categorized under these names can influence and be influenced. This mannerism of influencing is the 'being-with-ness' between them and man and other lower beings. Thus for Okolo, existence is never counted worthy out of these influences for and against each other, among and from all the beings that exist. Okolo's contention of humanism of 'being-with' finds consonance with Senghor's [11], Masolo's [12], Oguejiofor's [13].

From this analysis, it could be concluded that this communality is not only social, i.e, horizontal: man-man (physical) interrelationship, but also ontological, i.e, vertical: man-God (non-physical) interrelationship. This explains why Okolo insists that "'being-with' as characteristic of the African mode-of-being-in-the-world means also openness to nature in positive and sacred relationship" [2]. It is from this ontological conception that the African conceives nature as "sacred and mystifying" and any "damage to nature is a breach of Cosmic harmony and order which attracts penalties from the gods and when venerated, good fortune and blessings, material and spiritual, abound" [2]. Little wonder then Abanuka from this angle conceives the African world as rather 'panentheistic' instead of 'pantheistic' [14,15]. The African thus conceives the universe as an all-inclusive one "in which every body, likewise, everything, is linked up to every other person or thing through a complete

network of spiritual relationships into a kind of mystic body" [16]. Okolo however renders a conclusive voice to this when he asserts that to be African is to possess the attitude of 'being-with' for "the African is not just a human being but essentially a 'being-with', the very basis of his claim to the title, 'African';" hence 'being-with' as an ontological category and as defining culturally the mode-of-being of the African is beyond egoistic and utilitarian needs of self and beyond the community to which self belongs. The relationship in its function is objective in that it is part and parcel of the objective world greater than this or that Community. In its ontological relationships (with other existing realities) self in African metaphysics is attuned... to both the visible and invisible worlds. Relationships constitute self to the extent that the African could well echo *Cognatus Ergo Sum* ("I am related [to others] therefore I exist") to borrow Descartes' known expression, *Cogito Ergo Sum* [2].

'Being-with' as defining the African means an existent that is always with others, or a being that is always-with-others. In other words, 'being-with' implies being always-found-within-a-community-of-others categorized under the visible and the invisible realms. It means the act of 'presencing' (ontological-bodily-presence) of beings. Emphasizing on this, Okolo [2] holds that "in its macro dimension, African self as a 'being-with' is seen in its ontological relations not just of self to self or man to man but self to all reality, material and spiritual; visible and invisible... African self is conceived essentially in terms of social relations, a being-with-others." In fact Okolo's position rhymes with Blyden's that "we, and not I, is the law of African life" Blyden, et al. [17] and Malcolm X's that "when "I" is replaced by "we" even illness becomes wellness." Thus, in 'we', we are *healed*, but in 'I' we are *sick* and thrown to the *trauma of aloneness*. Little wonder Iroegbu, et al. [18] insists that existential worth is measured by the extent of community-life in Africa. This corroborates with Okolo's position that "'social' is the main category for understanding self, as indeed for all reality in African philosophy. It is the only authentic mode for the African to answer the all-important question in African philosophy, 'What or who is an African?'" [19]. In a summary form, Okolo puts it this way:

Our summary view of self in African Philosophy is essentially social. The African is not just a being but a being-with-others. Self, or 'I' as we have seen above, is defined in terms of 'we-existence', just as much as 'we' in 'I-existence', through social interactions: 'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.' Such a philosophy of self is bound to generate all sorts of problems with regard to the status [19].

Generally, Okolo's position as exposed above render credence to the philosophies behind Ozumba's and Chimakonam's concept of 'Njikoka Amaka' in connotation

with 'Integrative Humanism' (togetherness is best, most valuable) [20]; and the concept upon which what could be philosophically Asouzu rests, 'Ibuanyidanda' in connotation with the 'Philosophy of Essence— Complimentarity' [21], Ugwu's 'Socio-Ontologism of Madjvuruism' in the existential dynamism and mystery is expressed [22]. This simply says that your life depends very validly on your fellow man. The fellow with whom you 'be-with' are a measure through which you're worth comes to bear, in your fellow you get fulfilled. It is in this spirit that the Igbo says, *mmadu di m uto* (human being 'sweets' me). 'Sweet' as used here punctuates the vitality and existential worthiness of co-beingness of human beings. The point of emphasis here is human value which re-echoes life-at-the-centre-of-human-relationship in the community.

Criticisms Against Okolo's Notion of 'Being-With'

At this juncture, we will evaluate Okolo's concept of 'being-with' and how Okolo has articulated and posited it as a concept that portrays the attitudinal disposition that characterizes the African.

One, Okolo has always argued that "Relationships constitute self to the extent that the African could well echo *Cognatus Ergo Sum* ('I am related [to others] therefore I exist')" [2]. But in this relationship designated as 'being-with', just like every other African who uphold radical communalistic, normativist and epistemological conceptions of the African person, Okolo posits that in reality, the individual has no existence [23,24]. His position tends to existentially undermine the facticity of the 'subjectivity' and 'individuality' of the 'Is' (singularities) that constitute the community (pluralities). Hear him: "As a matter of fact, individuals only become real in their relationship with others, in a community or a group. It is the community that makes or produces the individuals such that without the community, the individual has no existence" [25]. This expresses the view that the individual becomes real as long as he belongs to a community. It presents a situation where it appears that the reality of an individual is dependent on the community. By this, the right, reality, subjectivity and individuality of a person become subsumed, swallowed in the community/communality consciousness. Okolo even affirms it: "at bottom, the seeming "freedom" which the individual enjoys is ultimately and in reality, a derivative one, dependent on and largely determined by the other, that is to say, the community" [26]. Agreeably, relatedness is quite the manifestation of existence, for one must relate with other 'existents/realities' in one way or the other. However, it becomes problematic when it is left for the community with whom the individual relates, to determine the right and reality of the individual. By this, existence is no

more ontological but by human derivation which is totally conceptually un-African. Thus, instead of Okolo's and Mbiti's dicta, this paper would rather propose: *I am related [to others] because I exist*; or, *I exist, therefore, I am related [to others]*; and *We are because I am, and since I am, therefore we are* respectively. This is because, if there is no 'I', no 'he', no 'she', no 'it' (connoting the whole sense of individuality) who also relates, there will never be a 'we' or 'they' (connoting the whole sense of collectiveness or community); hence the abstract-objective 'we/they-existences/consciousness' depends on the concrete-subjective 'I/he/she/it-existence'. Put differently, the 'I-existence' is the basic, while the 'we-existence' is subordinate to, and dependent on the 'I-existence' [27]. The 'self' is never automated that it should be determined for, by another 'self'. The discourse on the 'self' is highly ontological and so metaphysical that no matter any level of communalism, the 'self' always stands out and individually, following its ontological *cum* metaphysical perspectives. This is a primordial position in Okere, et al. [28].

Two, there is a fact of individual differences even between twins. This, by extension, points to the fact of individualities among community-members, as well as a reference to the concept of *Akara-Aka* which differs even among siblings, hence the Igbo aphorism: *otu/ofu nne n'amu, mana otu/ofu Chi anaghi eke* (one mother may give birth, but no two children has the same destinies) everything being equal [29]. This facticity of difference among the community-members points to the possibility of, and time-to-time disruption of the straight flow of this personality. Hence the needlessness of expressing displeasure in one's attitude by saying: *onwere k' isi eme* – "there is how you behave" (socially not in order, in this context). That should be the concrete reality to show our individuality, even when we are told how to socially uniformly behave, we still find some who do otherwise. It is bound because of our individuality; and with this, our 'being-with' attitude cannot be positive and same till its end, as Okolo makes us to believe, when subjected to a critical logical end. Mbiti, et al. [9] in a place also recognizes this facticity just as Okolo [26] would put it: "Even though individual human beings belong to a class, yet experience shows that they cling to their own individualities as marks of distinct selves which they cannot part with, nor allow to be emerged with others" Insightfully, we should be aware that "to ignore this aspect of man or to treat it inadequately by any philosophic system would certainly constitute a weak spot in that system" just as it has already in the social aspect of Okolo's philosophy.

Three, Okolo sometimes appears confusing and 'too-racial-conscious' following the way he refers to the term 'African' and 'the black man'. Talking about the African problem, the term 'African' is regardless of colour hence he posits that "the problem of the African is himself, his value,

life-priorities,..." [30]. But on emphasizing this problem, he says that "what is of interest to us in this work, what in fact generally draws pathetic criticisms from foreign nationals as well as from black or African intellectuals is the modern African condition, the very life-situation of the present day African" [30]. Going on, he says that "we must say that a close unbiased critical look at the African (black), his status and human condition... is far from being healthy". At this, we may be forced to ask if 'the African (black)' differs from the 'African' (white) or whether ancient African differs from the modern African (or perhaps, if there is, 'ancient African' different from 'black or African intellectuals' and yet different from 'the African' or 'modern African'.

Four, another flaw in Okolo's thesis is the tendency of shielding or harbouring and consequently encouraging weakness in some cunning individual-community-members who may turn liabilities and over burden to the strength and mindedness of the strong. We must also be aware that it has helped those with evil mind to have their ways by using the 'being-with-ness' advantage to perpetuate their mischief on their fellows because with the attitude of being-with, the community-members are too close and open-minded to one another. This simply means that there is this tendencies of some treacherous members of a community (on the context of communalism) to easily hurt a member whom they hold grudges against [31].

Five, Okolo posits that the African is identified by the attitude of 'being-with' hence he says that the "individuals only become real in their relationship with others, in a community or a group. It is the community that makes or produces the individuals such that without the community, the individual has no existence" [25]. But in another place, Okolo [26] turns and identifies man as "intrinsic, not extrinsic; a subject, not wholly an object, an end in itself, not solely means; self-determined, not other-determined." This is a contradiction if man (the African) determines himself instead of being determined by others with whom he is identified as a 'being-with' [31].

Six, the term 'African' is an adjective that qualifies anything that relates to or is of 'Africa' as a sovereign and independent geography or continent. Now, it worries a critical mind how Okolo, in the bid to postulate his thesis that the attitude of 'being-with' identifies who the African is, sells out to, or better still, 'imposes' this title 'African' on anybody regardless of his continent or geography so long the individual possesses the attitude of 'being-with.' In his word, "the African is not just a human being but essentially a 'being-with', the very basis of his claim to the title, "African"" [2]. This position maintained makes his thesis to become an attitude of mind, a universal concept which transcends tribes and geography [2]. For him, the African by descent/birth

can lose this title 'African' through "cultural alienation" and become characteristically non-African while a non-African even by birth/descent can acquire this title 'African' through "the process of socialization or enculturation" [2]. Critically looking into this, it raises certain questions regarding how a non-African by birth can suddenly become an 'African' just by the exhibition of the attitude— being-with— Okolo holds characterizes the African person [31].

Seven, apparently, it is commendable that Okolo comes up with a universal concept, an attitude of mind which gears towards more humanism in interrelationship among existents of which that of humans should be most characterized inter-subjective than inter-objective. However, this being the case, there raises the question of what then is the difference between the African concept of communitarianism expressed as the African being-with and that of the Western existentialists like Heidegger, Buber, Marcel, Merleau-Ponty, etc., or even some others like Whitehead, etc. Okolo nonetheless attempts addressing this. For him, on one hand, the concept of 'being-with' for him is like talking about who the African person really is. He who is African in origin-thinking, speech and action- simply does not know how to and cannot exist without communalistic values and principles-bodily touch of fellows, never segregated, disjointed. But on the other hand, talking about man for Heidegger, for instance, is talking about the *Dasein*, one of whose social and natural inclinations is 'being-with'. His social status as 'being-with' follows the natural condition he finds himself in, as being *thrown* there. So, being a *thrown* there, he is already preconditioned to associate with fellow existents in his bid to give meaning to himself [2]. The identification of man as a social and political being in the Western thought is because of the existential border-lines or natural and existential limitations of man and therefore to cover up, man, as a political and social animal, should live, exploit and use other existents to add essence to his life.

Eight, some objections come from the aspect that though humanistic and communalistic lifestyle characterize the traditional African life, however, today all the phenomena and traditional values and cultural inclinations that facilitated that yesteryears are severely deterred by the wave of globalization and westernization through re-orientation programme, foreign lifestyles like Old People's Homes, and most effectively, religious instrumentalism [32-34]. The consequent effects of this are the replacement of the 'being-with', the 'we-existence' and its rudiments with 'exploitative brotherhood' where conscienceless and 'parasitic brotherhood' dominates. This regard, having lost this 'communalistic values' today, Africans have no 'sincere' uncles, aunties, brothers, sisters and all the extended family member-structure upon which their communalism stands, rather they now have friends who would grow

fatter and eat excessively/surplus at the expense of others [35]. The derail from the traditional originality and socially sincere practicability of this attitude of 'being-with' to the modern days parasitic 'being-with' especially in the fields of politicking and facilitation of good governance in Africa, have been elaborately discussed UGWU [36,37]. Quite acceptable, it is commendable that Okolo truly thinks in Africa, in fact in Igbo, writes in this thinking trajectory which shows clearly in his articulations. But unfortunately, he appears to forget these foreign influences as foreign religious priests abhors meeting with their *umunna na umunne* (generally, 'paternal and maternal' relatives) to discuss about their ancestry and welfarism, in fact all these are curses and yokes that need to be broken and they are devilish and highly anti-Christ, immoral and sure way to doom.

Nine, in some African societies, the season of masquerades, some cultural rituals, practices and socio-cultural institutions ranging from the observations of ostracism, exile, the concept of *Osu* and *Ohu*, among others, impose restrictions on certain people, hence this attitude of 'being-with' being hampered. This very point still points at the issue of enjoying those unalienable right and freedom granted unto man as being a human, like movement, speech (as people do not, as like, raise their voices during some of these periods), etc. It can also motivate radical feminism as, in some places, these some of these observances or activities that are 'right-denial' in nature appear to victimize greatly, a certain gender: women.

Ten, one practical aspect of conditions that will entirely disrupt this personality according to Okolo and which appears he has forgotten is the possible outbreak of diseases like the case of Ebola, Coronavirus (COVID-19), air borne diseases like chicken pox, measles, 'appollo', other diseases like leprosy, etc., and other terrible contagious diseases. At the face of these diseases, formation of the 'we-community' which centrally characterizes the core practice of this personality (being-with) where bodily touch as the rudiment unfortunately becomes highly prohibited. The togetherness that has held Africans so strong and as a community becomes a call-of-disintegration, a call that reminds us to run away from our neighbours. In fact, the *Ikpa* or *Ikoro/Ikorodo/Igodo* (the community wooden gong or drum) used to call all to the village or community square for communality, is today what we now use to remind ourselves of highly disintegration (an anti-being-with) to avoid contraction of these deadly diseases. This has both psychological and emotional negative influences on the being-with-ness of the people. UGWU [37,38].

Eleven, some critically minded individuals may worry and ask if an identity or personality can be disrupted, what becomes the fate (identity/personality) of the people at the

time of disruption/interference for at that very time, they have no definite identity/personality as they have always had? How plausible is it to hold that personality can be and not be from time to time as shown here from these series of instances where possibly this personality- being-with- is disrupted? Can a people's personality be conditional? The response to these questions lies in the fact that what is African is not a one-way conceived phenomenon. The African personality is not only intrinsic, but at the same time, extrinsic, it is ideal that is practicalized. Thus, even in such disruptive condition, while the physical is interrupted, the ideal remains: The disruption of the practicality of this attitude of 'being-with' is only ephemeral and on the periphery, the ideal aspect of it (being-with ontologically-with-the-invisible) remains as long the African lives/exists.

Twelve, from its core social perspective the African personality, according to Okolo, has portrayed Africans as a people who live by 'we' (quantity/multitude) disregarding the essence (quality) of the 'we'. For this, 'we' must be weary of being tagged a people who appreciate 'quantity' instead of 'quality'. The African dictum that *Igwe bu ike* (unified-multitude is strength) quite portrays this where the African is concerned more on the 'self' projecting towards the other and cutting across every possible barrier so as to ensure inclusiveness thereby indirectly proposing that the African is characteristically known as a person whose personality is nothing but appreciating the multitude/quantity minding less the quality.

Thirteen, Okolo has always held that the attitude of 'being-with' emanated from the African sense of 'humanism' as culturally displayed in the African's value to life. In this response, this research has reiterated that the African is a thinking-feeling being, that he is a mind-heart being, that the two are essentially basic factors of the African existence. But utmost care must be taken to ensure each dilutes the activities/inclinations of the other, especially as it concerns heart (emotion/feeling/empathy) overpowering the mind (thinking faculty/ability) so as to counter, to a logical end, accusations from scholars [37].

Conclusion

The concept of 'being-with' for Okolo, is like talking about who the African person really is. The African person, for him is, in other words, nothing but the being that is characteristically known as *communal*. His personality is nothing but communalism which Okolo denotes with the term 'being-with'. Talking about the African person is talking about 'being-with'. He who is African in origin— thinking, speech and action— must be identified by the tenets of communalism. Hence the African identity is the attitude of 'being-with'. He summarizes it this way, "the African is

not just a human being but essentially a 'being-with', the very basis of his claim to the title, 'African'" (1993, 5). This implies that to be identified as 'African' is to be identified as 'being-with', i.e, being characterized by the attitude of 'being-with'-communalism. It is the cultural defining 'mode-of-being of the African'. The term 'African' is synonymous or interchangeable with the term 'being-with'.

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