

Addressing the Problem of Individuality in the new African Metaphysics

Diana-Abasi Ibanga
University of Calabar, Nigeria

Abstract

The new African metaphysics, called Consolationism, does not focus on collectivism like the old metaphysics. It aims at uncovering the driving force behind historical progress. Mood is identified as the driving force. Mood is defined as yearning and yearning as the desire for perfection. Mood is derived from Force, the traditional African notion of being, which defines being as mobility or dynamism. But like concept of force, mood is entangled and entrapped in idealism. Individual human subjectivity is substituted with an objectified spiritual principle, called Eternal Mood existing outside nature, as the driving force of historical processes. The problem with the new metaphysics is that it alienates human creative will in an external spiritual force. Thus, it renders human beings passive and inactive, or simply as puppets of the spiritual forces. Individual human beings are deprived significant roles in history's playbook of meaning-making and constitution of experience. Therefore, this article investigates how the notion of yearning or mood can be reinterpreted to empower the individual human subjective will to create one's existence and realize it in materiality. Human beings rather than spiritual force drive the historical process via their material labour. The work offers a critique of Consolationism.

Keywords: mood, force, consolationism, individuality, subjectivity, yearning, being, freewill, community, consciousness

1. Introduction

It seems best for this analysis to start with a brief distinction between individualism and individuality, to unravel the logical connection between them, since individuality is a central concept in this work. But it is important to first note that the distinction of these notions was not theoretically important until recently. The attempt to distinguish between

individualism and individuality broke out mainly as a response to Western criticism of collectivist systems in Oriental and African societies. These scholars attempted to show that individual liberty was possible in the collectivist systems. They also attempted to show that individualism (represented as Western ideology) is different from individuality (represented as universal human attribute). However, it is unlikely that these two terms are mutually exclusive. For the purpose of this article, it is unnecessary to review the literature on this subject.

Generally speaking, individualism may be defined as a set of beliefs, ideas, and practices that prioritises the subjective autonomy, personal freedom and individual rights of persons in a way that entails equality of liberty and rights for all people. Individuality, on the other hand, refers to the subjective characteristics that make a person unique and different. Those who emphasise this alleged difference argue that “Everybody has individuality, but not everybody participates in a culture of individualism”, which is a statement of the fact. What they mean here is that individualism is a pattern of living whereas individuality is a quality of unique selfhood (Johnson and Johnson 2010). Joy Hendry (2017, 202) puts it a little differently, that individualism connotes self-assertion and individual rights, while individuality is about the opportunity for a person to develop one’s course of interests. The aim is to show individualism as a negative tendency to pursue one’s interests at the expense of other people, while individuality is a forefield to contribute to collective existence. In fact, Hendry sees individualism (defined as self-assertion and expression of individual rights) as a universal anomie.

The former [individualism] I see as having arisen in many societies in response to increasing complexity and anomie, not necessarily as a measure of the sophistication or civilisation of that society, as some would have it, but perhaps better described as a strategy for survival (Hendry 2017, 202).

In other words, individualism is a strategy for surviving in a bad society rather than an ideal. Ada Agada (2015, 189) shares this sentiment, that increasing unfoldment of individualistic tendencies in African society is a sign of failure of society and a strategy for survival in an unjust society.

There is a problem with this view. First, individualism is not necessarily about leading one's life without regard to others' interests as some hold. One can be individualistic while giving others' interests priority over one's own, but one would do so based on one's own free choice. This differs from collectivism that imposes precedence of others' interests over oneself regardless of one's choice. So, individualism is about autonomy and free will rather than selfishness. Second, it is ludicrous to see how some scholars attempt to define individuality without emphasising the autonomy and freedom of the will, upon which individual rights are founded. Individualism is a necessary consequence of individuality. The latter is a recognition of the unique subjective experience that is exclusive to oneself; the former is a conceptual framework that arose because of the latter as a theoretical basis to deepen the latter. This is the logical connection between the two seemingly distinct notions. The differential development of individualistic consciousness is basically a question of self-awareness or self-discovery, which some societies made it more difficult than others. Here, too, individuality is about the uniqueness of the self and its freedom. Individuality is the substructure and at the basic of human reality; individualism is the superstructure and an unfoldment at the level of society. In this sense, individuality translates to individualism and vice versa. This works focuses on the substructure – the basic.

Neither individualism nor individuality is possible in the African understanding of being. Since there is no individuality, claim to freedom of choice outside the narrow alternatives endorsed by the community was considered a vice in the continent. African society was prone to denial of individual freedom, personal autonomy, individual rights, and for a long time much of the continent ran state enterprises to keep faith with its understanding of being as wholeness. Much of the individual rights found in the constitutions of African states are colonial imposition rather than homegrown experiment, and they are still being challenged in some parts of the continent.

The problem of individuality in African philosophy is rooted in its notion of being. Discourse on being is precisely about the questions of 'what is' and 'what it means to be'. Being

is a crucial question of existence. Whether there is one or many, freedom or determinism, subjective or objective reality, mind or matter, physical or spiritual, nothing or something are fundamental problems of being. The various system of religion, code of ethics, and mode of knowing are developed in pursuit of these ontological questions. Ultimately, whether there is an independent human subjectivity, and whether such can be an authentic mode of being, are fundamental questions of existence. The type of political and economic systems a society adopts depend on how it answers these questions. This article addresses this question in the following sections. First, it highlights how the problem of individuality arose in the traditional African metaphysics – whereby the individual was substituted for the community. Second, it shows how the new African metaphysics inherited this problem and reinforced it by further emasculating the individual in terms of subsuming human subjectivities in an objective spirit. Third, I address this problem by restoring the individual human person to its place in the world and explain how its independent existence can be a source of addressing the crisis of existence in Africa.

2. The Old Metaphysics: Being as Force

The concern with the problem of being in African philosophy is traceable to Placid Tempels (1959, 52) who asserted categorically that being is “force”. Force describes the idea of being in Bantu thought of central, eastern and southern Africa (Chimakonam and Ogonnaya 2021, 43). According to Tempels, force is the active principle in matter and ubiquitous in the universe. This principle is a necessary attribute of matter in terms of being inseparable and indistinguishable from it (Tempels 1959, 50-52). In this way, being cannot be objectified as transcendent and cannot be conceived outside matter. Conversely, matter itself is inconceivable without force – because force is the animating property in matter. Force is the essence of matter.

The immediate successor to Tempels was Alexis Kagame. He agreed to everything that Tempels said about the notion of being in Bantu thought. But he went further to categorise being after the following hierarchical order – *Muntu*

representing human intelligence, *Kintu* representing animal, plants and ecosystem, *Hantu* representing space and time, and *Kuntu* representing modality – with human intelligence as the highest manifestation of force (Masolo 1994, 87). He further translated “force” or “being” to indigenous Bantu language to mean “Ntu”. Force or *Ntu* is the principle that binds all the categories of being as the common denominator of all things. *Ntu* is the universal category of being. Subsequent analysis of Bantu thought in central, eastern and southern Africa followed in the footsteps of Tempels and Kagame (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya 2021, 45). In parts of central and west Africa, discourse on being followed the pattern set out by Tempels and Kagame (Ekei 2014, 34). Subsequently, the categories of being became more spread out, refined and hierarchized following from deities as the highest category of being to guiding spirits, ancestors, human beings, animals, plants, and the inanimate (such as minerals, etc.) as the least (Unah 2002, 5-6, 12-13). Yet, the human person occupies a crucial place in the scheme because of its moral agency, which is absent in other categories. All categories of being exhibit consciousness at different rates.

From here it is obvious that the conception of being in traditional African metaphysics is one in which being is viewed as the fundamental reality ubiquitous in the universe. It is the primordial element that is prior to everything else. It is the source of all things and without it nothing could exist. Magobe Ramose (2005, 36) opines that the world is the concrete unfoldment of being. Since it is an unfoldment of being, the universe exists as a unity of being. In this sense, being is wholeness. The authentic mode of expression of being is as a cluster or community (Francis 2016, 66). This is popularly expressed as, “I am because we are” (Mbiti 1969, 109). Individuality is represented as a negation of being. This conception is summarized in this statement, “To be is to be in mutual complementary relationship (*ka so mu adina*) and its negation is to be alone (*ka so mu di*)” (Asouzu 2011, 42). Individuality as a mode of expression is a negation of being. As Arabiah Attoe (2022, 52) argues, “the nature of being, if it must be fully expressed, must involve a relationship with others.” In fact, he argued that individuality is a fundamental

contradiction of the idea of being because the existence of other individuals implies interaction necessarily (70). This is how the problem of individuality arose in African philosophy. The conception of being as wholeness necessarily resulted in the treatment of individuality as vice. Since wholeness expresses the true nature of being, individuality was to be repudiated. African society was modelled to promote wholeness and suppress individuality in all its modalities. Hence, the emphasis of African philosophy was on communalism and even socialism.

The characterisation of being as force came with a lot of challenges because it does not unravel the mechanism by which force transforms itself and matter. The characterisation of force in African philosophy literature is quite amorphous and opaque that one begins to wonder how precisely force embodies, drives, and transforms matter? There is nothing in the book to show how force is able to achieve its feat of unfoldment and transformation in matter. The best explanation African philosophers have given is that force is a spiritual entity (a sort of Kant's noumena) – out of the reach of the senses. Since this is the case, it becomes impossible to pinpoint exactly how force (spirit) achieves its goals. Over the years, African philosophers appear to be satisfied with the status quo until Agada came up with an explanation of how force interacts with matter. But, in doing this, he complicated the problem of individuality – by objectifying being or force as an independent reality, called Eternal Mood, that subsumes all individual subjectivities.

3. Theory of Mood: from Force to Mood

Agada's discourse on theory of force is captured in his philosophy called "Consolationism". In his philosophy, Agada changes the nomenclature from "force" to "mood" (Agada 2020a, 112) – precisely – to enable him achieve his goal of describing the suprasensible activities of force. In transforming force into mood, he was able to change the character of force as a 'passive dynamic element' to a 'active dynamic element'. Rather than being a living element that animates matter as in "force", it becomes the revolutionary element that transforms matter as in "mood". So, in Agada, "force" (spirit) and matter become one

and synonymous (Agada 2015, 71) as against the previous stance in literature that kept force/spirit/mind and matter separated. Spirit is no longer lurking in the activities of matter, but it is now embodied in the external strivings of matter called “yearning”.

Mood, according to Agada, is the “originary intelligence” that is contemporaneous with the universe (Agada 2015, 62). Mood is the enfoldment of mind and matter, of emotion and reason, and of joy and sadness (Agada 2019, 9; 2020a, 116). Mood is the essence of the universe in its totality. It is the preconsciousness intelligence out of which unfolded mind (consciousness) and matter. Agada (2015, 150) opines that “mind and matter are outputs of mood.” He calls matter “solid mood” (Agada 2015, 72). Owing to this characterisation of mood as contemporaneous with the universe, mood is eternal – because the universe itself is the inexhaustible unfoldment of mood. Eternal mood is the yearning of eternity and eternity is the totality of yearning of the universe in all its manifestations and ramifications. Yet, “Eternal Mood is outside nature” while in solidarity with nature (Agada 2015, 96). This objectifies Mood as something independent and objective in contradistinction to objective nature or matter “yet in solidarity with nature” which is a fragment of Mood (Agada 2015, 96). The yearning of being is teleologically guided by the desire for perfection. Attoe (2022, 67) opines that without predetermined purpose yearning of being would be impossible – because yearning is specially directed towards a predetermined end.

Meanwhile, just as there is Eternal Mood (which is the totality of yearning of the universe), there are moods of the fragments of being that constitute the universe (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya 2021, 54). Hence, we have the mood of plant, mood of stone, mood of animal, the human mood, etc. These individualized moods are the reflections of the mood of the universe – which is the Eternal Mood (Agada 2015, 25). The individualized moods are hierarchically arranged from inanimate matter with the human mood as the highest. Mood is becoming, which gives us the idea of motion. Agada (2015, 125) opines that “change is the desire of mood.” In desiring change, mood is propelled in consciousness (or into consciousness) to

attain higher phases of itself – instantiating itself in different forms and modes that Agada calls “Consolation”. Attoe (2022, 55, 67), however, disputes this account of self-directed evolution of mood and rather argues that mood is able to progress from one stage of development to another owing to its series of interaction with other things-in-the-world (actors and factors) out of necessity. Thus, historical progress is an outcome of interaction of the universal mind with matter in diverse forms and is sustained in interaction.

Mood is the substance that drives historical process. As Agada (2015, 96) tells us, “Existence is the operation of the creative impulse of the Eternal Mood as consolation in the world.” Mood is the primordial element that “directs conscious and unconscious behavioural patterns in living and non-living things” (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya 2021, 50). It is the “primordial intelligence ubiquitous in the universe and characterized by yearning” (Agada 2019, 4). The world is the unfolding of mood via yearning. Yet, it is in the human yearning that mood is revealed. As Agada (2015, 25) puts it, “The human mood is a reflection of the mood of the universe.” The human intellect or mind, the human consciousness, is the most advanced stage in the development of mood (Agada 2019, 14; 2020a, 115; 2020b, 148). The yearning of the universe is tied to the human will. Hence, “if humans yearn nature yearns too” (Agada 2015, 70). Human yearning is constituted in the desire for change. Sadness is basic to mood but in yearning the sadness is transformed as joy. Human mood shares in this universal sadness that characterises mood (Agada 2020a, 115). Since mood is characterised by yearning (which is defined as the desire for change), the human mood which is constituted in the universal mood seeks a change of the status quo from the basic sadness to its opposite state, namely, joy. In attempting to change the course of history for himself, he simultaneously does so for the universe as a whole. So, mood is ultimately constituted in the human will. It is humans who seek to change the world to better their lot. When mood rises unto concrete physical existence in matter, it does so through human yearning.

Every material object is a projection (creation) of the human intellect but then the mind was able to transform

matter because the mind itself is emotive. All that the human mind causes to come into concrete existence is due to the response of the human intellect to the primordial instinct, that is, emotion, embedded in the intellect. Agada (2015, 61) maintains that “Emotion [is] the primal energy of that which yearns.” Emotion itself is the yearning of consciousness called mood – an embrace of joy and sadness (Agada 2015, 37; 2018a, 237). Being is mood or moodiness and it is lined with basic pessimism at its roots. On the account of this moodiness, yearning becomes the “essence of existence” (Agada 2015, 10). Mood is yearning (Agada 2015, 76). That is to say, being is yearning. Things exist basically as mood (yearning), that is, as a confluence of joy and sadness. Yearning is the oscillations between joy and sadness, which Agada calls the “dialectic of mood”. Existence is a continuous act of yearning. To be is to yearn. It is in yearning that being realizes itself but without ever attaining perfection (Agada 2019, 5; 2020a, 112). Hence, the yearning continues *ad infinitum* and be every time at the point of consolation. This is so because “the goal of consciousness as it lifts itself from an unconsciousness directed by primitive intelligence is not the attainment of happiness but the fulfilment of consolation” (Agada 2015, 11).

The point here is that being or existence consists in yearning. All beings are yearning beings. The yearning is characterized by the fact that human existence is accentuated by/with pessimism, that is, despair, disappointment, and anxiety. This pessimism is basic because it is rooted in the being of man. But in yearning one finds consolation. Agada (2015, 62) maintains that “the sadness is basic, but the joy is real for that which yearns.” One who does not yearn does not find consolation. As it is rightly observed, “The aspirations of the human mind and human endeavours in general constitute projects aimed at finding meaning in a life where we often encounter meaninglessness” (Agada 2018b). Consolation here refers to that which justifies one’s effort or belief, that which gives hope and meaning to one’s life projects, and that which gives satisfaction for one’s effort – despite despair and disappointment that characterizes all existence.

One has to understand that the yearning of being, here, is centripetal. This is because Agada, just as the African philosophers before him, does not place high premium on individuality. For him, individuality is an affront to being. He argued that “the community is superior to the individual” (Agada 2015, 188). Individuality is the sign of the failure of the community, and it is a path to nihilism (Agada 2015, 189). The community is the outward vector of all the individualities subsumed under it. This does not mean that Agada denies the existence of individuals outright as expressed in some radical views in African philosophy. Rather, he argues that the individual is without meaning in the world except he/she finds it in the community. He argues that it is necessary for the individual to seek an alignment with the other to form a community, where meaning-making would be possible (Agada 2015, 189).

This is a familiar line that most African philosophers share. In the African philosophical tradition, views inspired by the ubuntuists, complementarists, consolationists, conversationalists, and communalists are agreeable that even though being is constitutive of opposite values, such opposite values are in mutually inclusive relationship (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya 2021) – because of their character to yearn for each other. Yearning is the innate character of being (Agada 2015, 24; 2020b, 148). The opposites are symbiotic and complementary because of their subjective implication of each other and their characteristically incomplete nature (Asouzu 2007, 52), which being explores via centripetal yearning (Ibanga and Peppe 2022, 19). This centripetal yearning as an imprinture of incompleteness is what is designated elsewhere as the “nausea of ontological incompleteness”, that is, the deep thrust and upheaval to interlock with the other and realize oneself in the unity of being (Ibanga 2020a, 15-16). This yearning of being also has epistemological dimension in which in the upward thrust for synthesis being attains higher levels of self-consciousness by going beyond its former state of self-knowledge (Ibanga 2022, 50-51, 53-54).

African philosophers, generally, believe that the original state of being is wholeness, which signifies harmony and balance (Ekei 2014, 111; Attoe 2022, 53-54). It was

individualization of being that led to fragmentation and disharmony. Being seeks to restore this original state of being through the individuals' yearning for one another. Being is a process of "constant motion and evolution of being towards harmony and wholeness" or perfection (Attoe 2022, 54). In other words, a state of disunity and strife contradicts the original nature of being, thus, being seek the restoration of this original state by reconciling the other (opposite) to itself. In the process, "the yearning of the opposites allows for momentary instantiation of different phases of being in its inexhaustible ambivalence" (Ibanga and Peppe 2022, 19). This complementary and ambivalent character of being is implicated in its internal and external relations (Asouzu 2007, 52; Ekei 2014, 196). Thus, in the African philosophical tradition, emphasis is placed on centripetal mutuality of values – epitomized in the community.

Leaving it at this point will make it appear as if it is the free individuals who jointly or cooperatively yearn. But Agada is presenting a picture of a rigidly determined human will – which is the outstretching of the notion of force that independently animates and instantiate things. Mood is fully determined from the beginning towards the goal of perfection like Hegel's Absolute Spirit. The Eternal Mood, which Agada (2015) summarily defined as God (79, 93, 113, 117), is the one that yearns through the yearning of being (74, 96, 296) – particularly the human yearning (97, 109, 236). The world is the coming to be of Eternal Mood (Agada 2020b, 148), and the human mind is its most advanced stage of development (Agada 2020a, 115). Human beings are the incarnate of the Eternal Mood, who along with other phenomena in the universe are the fragments of the universal mood (Agada 2015, 236; 2019, 4). In their fragmented existence, they carry the seed of the universal mood in their individualities that remains connected to the Eternal Mood that causes them to yearn for unification with the universal mood of being.

The human being as an embodiment of the Eternal Mood makes him/her part and parcel of the universal mood. The human being possesses mood, a primal element that predates human evolution, which rises to self-consciousness in

human yearning (Agada 2019, 14). Hence, Agada says “if humans yearn nature yearns too” (Agada 2015, 70). Human consciousness is the most advanced development of mood (Agada 2020a, 110). The yearning of individual beings is not their own yearning but the activity of the Eternal Mood – which like the community is the totality of all yearnings. The yearning of individuals is in service of the universal mood epitomized as the community. So, the notion of mood, like force, deprives the human person freedom of the will. The human being is redundant, passive, and incapacitated. One is condemned to a dependant stead where one waits continuously for external spiritual force for consolational intervention in one’s affairs instead of doing something to change one’s situation. This is the wretch situation that the new African metaphysics, Consolationism, puts man by depriving him of his freewill and externalizing it as Eternal Mood.

4. A Reinterpretation of Mood: from Communal to Individualistic Mood

The consolation philosophy, particularly its notions of mood and yearning, is a revolutionary attempt to reinvent African ontology and gnosis in service of human advancement. It points out the futility of human existence while highlighting the possibility of meaning-making in consolation. It tries to give spirit (which is so prominent in African philosophy) a place in a truly philosophical thought by describing its original nature and explaining its workability. But like the old African metaphysics it tries to transcend, consolation philosophy takes human being for granted and ultimately deprive it a place in the world by denying it freewill. Instead, like Hegel’s objective idealism, it externalizes the human will in the objective Eternal Mood called God. This compromises the being of man and weakens his place in the world. Despite this deficiency in the conception of the being of man in relation to being in general, theory of mood remains a leap forward in the discourse of being in African philosophy. However, the task before the post-consolationist African philosophers like me is to revamp the metaphysics and return man to its rightful place as the centre of being. This is the task envisaged in this article.

One must go back to traditional African metaphysics to trace the individuality of mood since it was in the interpretation of the traditional metaphysics that Agada derived his concept of mood (Agada 2020a, 109). The notion of vital force deeply characterises traditional African metaphysics. Most African philosophers accept that force is the foundation of being and being-in-itself; and that it is the defining element that makes being possible (Tempels 1959, 52; Ogugua 2007, 29). This is a vertical-hierarchical structure that defines the relationship of the various aspects of reality/being. Force is recognized as the governing principle of life – the common denominator of all beings, the element that links an individual being to all others, the source of all beings and it is being-in-itself. In this regard, God, spirits, ancestors, human beings, animals, plants and minerals have been identified as manifestation of force (being) in individuated forms (Unah 2002, 5-6, 12-13). This shows that all things have common origin in force. This further implies that all aspects of reality are forces (beings) in specialized forms. However, traditionally, African philosophers have been presenting force as wholeness and implicate wholeness as the only true form through which force express itself. From this interpretation, community emerged as the only authentic model for African experience. Individuality is broadly condemned as the path to anarchy and nihilism, or simply as a Western phenomenon. Sacrificing one's individuality in service of the community is extolled as a virtue. This is the anchor point for Agada's understanding of mood, simply, as a communal yearning, or as the Eternal Spirit looming large in the consensus of the community.

But with the individuation of force into variety of existents, force no longer exists in the form of wholeness, that is, undifferentiated. Although Agada denies the reality of being individuation by insisting that plurality of being is illusionary and not real (Agada 2020a, 115). Individuation of force into diverse forms creates unequal capacities in the individual forms based on the complexity of their expressions. Ikechukwu Ogugua (2007, 30) posits that there are different levels of "complexity and intensity" among beings, which makes all beings not to be on the same level. This is reflected in the Igbo

aphorism: *egbe bere ugo bere nke si ibe ya ebela nku kwaa ya*, let the kite perch let the eagle perch if one says the other should not perch let his wings break. The kite and the eagle have different capacities. These unequal endowments of beings have been given various explanations. On the one hand, Ogugua explains that the differential endowments are due to the differential level (intensity) of participation of beings in the source of being (30). This is expressed in the Ubuntu maxim “I am because we are”, which apportion importance to an individual depending on the level of participation in the community. On the other hand, Munamoto Chemhuru (2016, 43-45) explains that the differential endowments are function-related, that is, one’s level of complexity value-wise is pre-determined in alignment with the function of one’s ontological placement in the scheme of things.

The two explanations are partially correct and incorrect. Both are correct in terms of viewing activeness in society and the value that accrues from one’s activeness as the marker of one’s importance in the scheme of things. African economic philosophers interpret the ‘activeness’ as human labour, which is incorrectly interpret as “communal work” (Nyerere 1968, 108; Dukor 2007, 59; Anyaehie 2007, 350). Conversely, the view of ontological placement as a static phenomenon or framework appears to fossilize beings. This is an incorrect view, and this is due mainly to the fact that the process of individuation of being is viewed from the lenses of predeterminism that renders beings as fixed to their places *a priori*. This is essentially inconsistent with the dynamic ontology found in African thought, which prizes mobility and change as the real character of being.

The underlying current in African philosophy is that ‘to be is to belong and to participate’ in existence. Now, the question is: how does one participate in existence? Pre-consolationist African philosophy argued that one participates in existence through one’s community, in communal work (Ekei 2014, 167). Agada accepted this view of which he redefined as universal mood (Agada 2019, 4). That is, one participates in existence via yearning. He took it further by saying that the human yearning does not belong to the individual (Agada

2020b, 148). Human consciousness is the highest stage of the development of the Eternal Mood, and that consciousness (which is an exclusively human attribute) is the Eternal Mood attaining self-knowledge (Agada 2019, 14). So, like Hegel's Absolute Spirit, Eternal Mood is participating in history through human conscious actions. This is a total denial of human individuality.

Being the objectified Mood, the human person is predetermined to a fixed limit (time and place), an ontological placement, of which he can do nothing to change. In this regard, the human person is not a change-maker or meaning-maker because change and meaning belongs to the category of the eternal. This experience incapacitates the human person since he/she lacks the creative will to change his/her condition. His/her human creative will had been externalized in the form of an object Mood and represented as the consensus of the community. So, the human being cannot participate in the historical process because he/she is passive or, simply, a puppet. Hence, Agada (2019, 7) designates human beings to armchair position merely as "observers of themselves and nature." This is an incorrect view of what 'participation in existence' means in the actual sense.

A correct analysis of the traditional African notion of being reveals that participation in existence is from an individual level. The notion of ontological placement of beings as fixed to the constellation of Force or Mood does not correspond with the mobile ontology in African culture. This is rather a Christian category imported into African philosophy – the view of being in the Book of Genesis whereby the Creator-God fixed the creatures to their predetermined places in the scheme of things. The imposition of Christian category on African ontology was possible because the pioneers who midwived African philosophy – Placid Tempels and Alexis Kagame – were church fathers. Their original idea cascaded down to later generations of African philosophers whose works on African ontology are mostly footnotes to the pioneering works of Tempels and Kagame. Agada also inherited this problem in his conception of being as Mood as he states that "In consolationism, the traditional African notion of vital force

becomes mood” (Agada 2020a, 112). Innocent Asouzu designated this problem as “the Tempelsian Damage” to African philosophy – namely, the imposition of Western (particularly Christian-Aristotelian) categories on African thought – and denounced the idea of objectified being in authentic African thought whether called “force” or “mood” (Asouzu 2007, 182-201).

In the original African thought, it is evident that the individual human subjectivity is not substituted with either the community or an objectified spiritual principle. The community exists as a collective of individuals but not as a substitution of the individuals. The relation between the part and whole, one and many, individual and community has proven to be a hard nut to crack for many African philosophers. Partly, because of the Tempelsian Damage that objectified the community (the whole) as objective being existing independently in opposition to the individual. One can only correctly account for the differential complexity of individuated beings if one views it from an evolutionary perspective. Force is individuated as specialized forms and modes of being, which account for the emergence of individualities or subjectivities. First, force is individuated as minerals (or inanimate matter). At that level it transforms itself through the initial vital force that is inherent in itself and by drawing from the forces of other beings, it becomes more intense and attains some level of complexity thereby ascend the ladder of evolution. This is possible because everything is potentially alive – life-impulse (or force) is implanted in the inanimate that transforms it through eternal yearning into the animate thing (Agada 2015, 80). Then, from mineral to plants to animals to human beings to ancestors to guiding spirits, and finally, to gods. At each level of the force manifestation, there is an intra-level transformation and upwards movement. At the levels of plants and animals, the force transforms from simple to complex sophisticated form before it could finally ascend the ladder to the next level. The complexity and intensity of one’s subjectivity accounts for one’s elevation through the ladder. This is called “ontological progression” of beings (Menkiti 1984, 173). In thrusting upward, it attains higher levels of self-consciousness or self-

knowledge. This process is called “epistemological progression” of beings (Ibanga 2022, 50-51).

This nullifies the idea of “ontological placement of beings”, which fixes individuals to specific place, time, and conditions *a priori*. It reveals that in the African understanding of being forces (beings) are hierarchically placed and ontologically-epistemologically progressive in vertical upward sense. There is unequal valuation of beings in African thought. This unequal placement of beings comes attached with unequal importance of the beings based on their stations in the scheme of things. Ogugua (2007, 32) remarks that one gains more power, strength and place of importance in the scheme of things as one ascends the levels in the hierarchy of being/force. One ascends the hierarchy through hard-work and achievement (Dukor 2007, 59; Anyaehie 2007, 350). This understanding of being ultimately filters into daily lives of the people – social, political, and economic. The idea that the deeper the intensity and complexity of one’s energy (force) the likelihood of one climbing unto the next stage on the ladder of force (being) translates into the individuals intensifying one’s energy (force) at work in order to climb upward the economic ladder of life. In this manner, “The poor through personal achievement could ascend to the rich class and the rich could descend to the poor class easily” (Anyaehie 2007, 351). Hierarchization of being is the source of individuality, class differentiation and historical progress in African thinking (Ikegbu 2006, 97). The hierarchical ontology impels individuals to “work towards acquiring” and enhancing their place in life (Ogugua 2007, 33). The idea of mobility as the essence of being spurs people to struggle and excel in their life endeavours.

From the analysis, one can see that the hierarchical ontology is essentially individualistic, and it is the source of non-equality. This does not obliterate the community. The community is the consortium of interests common to all the individuals within a given space. These common interests are not objectified and made to substitute individual human subjectivities. On the contrary, the individuals continue to test the validity of the universals in relation to their subjectivities. This can lead to the dissolution of the community if the

universals are found to undermine the individual subjectivities. The reality of the community is filtered through the individual subjectivities of its members. This has been the practice throughout African history, where communities abandon or change deities, revolt against authority, leave one community and join another, etc. This is an acknowledgment of the right of an individual to seek a higher station in life, and that where one finds oneself is one's choice. One therefore has the right to decide the level one wants to belong, and once one chooses a higher station one must justify it with work while responding to the corresponding moral obligation attached thereof.

The African hierarchical ontology that recognizes individuality of beings and their differential ontological placements and progression on the ladder of being correlates with the notion of yearning in the new African metaphysics without the toga of idealism. Yearning is the source of human progress and great achievements. Yearning is prior to human existence, but it is the building block of reality in terms of its capacity to energize and determine phenomenon (Agada 2018a, 241). Mood is yearning and is expressed, in Agada's view, as the universal spirit that subsumes all individualities. In contrast, yearning is the expression of our individuality. I am because I yearn. My being is constituted in my yearning. In yearning I become the object of my desire. One who is shut out from yearning is accordingly shut out from finding consolation which consists in the projects one realizes. Agada (2015, 192) posits that it is "consolation [that] confers objective worth on human existence." The objects one acquires (and the creations of one's intellect) are the consolations for one's yearning and the objectification of one's worth in material terms.

Yearning is made manifest at the level of the individual. The Igbo adage states: *uche bu akpa onye obula nya nke ya*, wisdom is like a bag which each person carries one's own. Wisdom, here, is defined as 'philosophical yearning' (Ibanga 2022, 44). It is in one's individuality that mood or yearning is expressed. One cannot have one's mood expressed in proxy, nor can one yearn on the behalf of another. Even God could not yearn for, or on behalf of, the human being. Yearning is derived from one's individual moodiness. God can only yearn with

yearning individual and does not impose one's will on the human person. This is expressed in the Igbo aphorism: *onye kwe chi ya ekwe*, if one wills then his/her God wills. Also, a Yoruba aphorism states: *orisa ti ngbe ole ko si, nitori apa eni ni igbe ni*, there are no gods who support a man in his idleness, a man's greatest support is his own arm. The "arm" is, and symbolizes, the instrumentality of yearning for consolation. Yearning is an expression of one's individuality, that is, self-consciousness. I yearn therefore I am. Yearning is inseparable from being. Consciousness is the experience of the objective by the subjective, and it is always personal (Ibanga 2020b, 159-160). Yearning is the expression of self-consciousness. State of inertia implies that mood is not yet conscious of itself (Agada 2013, 257). Once mood becomes self-conscious, it yearns for joy of being. Experience of joy and sadness is first and foremost an individual experience because of its primordially to human existence. Agada (2018a, 236) asserts that "Joy and sadness are active components of the human phenomenon and dormant components in objective nature."

"To be is to yearn and to yearn is to be mood" (Agada 2020b, 148). Human being is constituted in his yearnings, and it is the constitution of his yearnings. Human yearning is not purely a mental activity rooted in emotion as Agada opines. The yearning of the human person is the concrete acts of work that the person undertakes for himself and society. The consolation that comes to oneself is a product of one's labour. It is through human labour, whether exerted physically or mentally, that the human person can bring himself into existence. Yearning allows man to objectify himself in the object of his work, in the things he creates, and in the things he acquires. It is in the things one brings into existence through the work of one's hand that one's yearning (mood) is objectified. The objects one creates through one's labour represent one's existence in concrete terms. This is how yearning can be interpreted as the process of human self-creation.

The objects we see in society are the product of human yearnings but, importantly, they are the stamp of their individual subjectivities and concrete realization of their mood or existence. In contradistinction to Agada view, these objects

are objectified free acts of the human will – because he talks about self-creating that is not derived from the human freewill rather exertions of external forces beyond human control (Agada 2019, 10). The objects of our yearnings are not external to us as product of external forces. They are the concrete objectification of our individualities and subjectivities in matter or existence. It is human beings that will reality into existence. Every inch of the object we create represent the full embodiment of our self-consciousness viz. the totality of our yearning in relation to it. The reward for our yearning is not to be doled out to us at a later date in a post-dated paradise. We are presently constituted in our yearnings. We either yearn or perish. For, we can only realize our existence if and only if we yearn. This is what it means to say, ‘to be is to yearn.’

5. Conclusion

The notion of yearning clearly aligns with the notion of being in traditional African philosophy but in this article, I go beyond it to assert the individual person, rather than the community, as the carrier of the gene of creation. All concrete reality is a product of the yearning mind of individuals, and forms of consolation for the individuals, who mediated them into existence. One is driven into seeking to transcend pessimistic posture of life, the despair that characterizes society in terms of the yearning that deeply defines one’s being. The yearning for a better society is the emotionality of one’s being. It is also the drive of the individual to seek power and glory. This is a clear departure from the traditional understanding of historical process as a communal force that subsumes the energies of the individual persons while rendering them inactive. In this post-consolationist discourse, instead of the communal force or eternal spirit transforming society, it is the yearning of individuals, politically and economically, to overcome despair and to objectify their effort in their yearnings that lead to social transformation.

Human being is a creature of mood – “the being whose entire life is characterized by sadness and joy” (Agada 2018a, 256) – who at the innermost being is pessimistic but whose “pessimism carries one over into optimism” (Agada 2015, 218).

The sole quest of human beings is to transform pessimism into optimism through their yearning. In yearning we come to life and realize the meaning of our existence. It is the duty every person to draw from the emotionality (or moodiness) of one's being to yearn. This duty cannot be abdicated to the community or God. It is in yearning that one can find social, political and economic consolations to overcome despair. One who does not yearn does not find these consolations; for the consolations are basically products of one's yearning. Agada (2013, 257) points out that "a beginning that is yearning must have an end that is consolation."

In economic terms, yearning can be defined as enterprising, and the one who yearns as an entrepreneur. To yearn, therefore, is critical to the development of the African continent in all its ramifications. If Africa must develop, then it must yearn. Agada (2015, 76) asserts that "the driving force of that which yearns is intellectual love, the desire for creation and replication." The dream to objectify oneself in materiality (i.e., the desire for self-creation and replication) is that which ignites the yearning. This desire and its actualization in the act of yearning is self-development and the aggregate of which accounts for community-wide development. But yearning would be expressed at the levels of individuals; for it is the individual who yearns, that is, seeks fame, happiness, better standard of living, good jobs, just wages, etc. Human yearning in Africa must express itself in the form of political change, social transformation, economic development, minority and women rights movements, human rights activism, futurity concerns, and several other ways that the mood of Africans must be expressed.

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Diana-Abasi Ibanga PhD is a Nigerian philosopher who specializes in African Philosophy, Political Philosophy and Environmental Philosophy. He lectures Philosophy at the University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. He has over 35 publications in both local and international journals as well as presented papers in over 20 conferences around the world. He received a Scholarly Award as the Winner of the 2019 Early Career Sirkku K. Hellsten Memorial Essay on African Governance, Corporate Responsibility and Global Justice, at the 3rd World Congress on African Philosophy held at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in 2019. He is a Fellow of the LUCAS-LAHRI Virtual Visiting Research Fellowship 2022 at the University of Leeds, UK.

Address:

Diana-Abasi Ibanga, PhD

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4068-2520>

Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar, Nigeria.

Leeds Arts and Humanities Research Institute,

University of Leeds, UK

Email: ibanga.letters@gmail.com