

EGBE BERE UGO BERE AND UBUNTU:
EXPANDING THE PHILOSOPHICAL ECONOMICS OF
BELONGINGNESS
AND XENOPHOBIA IN CONTINENTAL AFRICA

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Abstract

EBUB (an acronym for *Egbe Bere Ugo Bere*, which is literally translated: Let the Kite perch, let the Eagle perch, (meaning Live and let live) and *UBUNTU* (I am what I am because of who we are) are concepts of co-existence and human relational interaction in African traditional society and setting. They are, however, conceptual ingredients of belongingness expressed in the act of perching as in *EBUB* and act of relationship as *Ubuntu* expresses. Hence, as Belongingness builds and improves traditional African Unity, Xenophobia simply disintegrates such. Nevertheless, the idea and every expressive facet of xenophobic manifestations are alien to conventional African core value systems expressed in togetherness, extended family-hood and relatedness as professed by some of African philosophical-historical figures. Using the method of philosophical analysis, this paper finds that the fundamental core African value systems of tolerance and brotherhood are bastardized on the altar of globalized intolerance, political chauvinism and inherent racial violence. This paper nevertheless recommends a return to the basic human relationship expressed in proper belongingness as the African Metaphysics of being.

Keywords: *EBUB*, *Ubuntu*, Economics, Belongingness, Xenophobia

Introduction

The critical appreciation of the economics of belongingness and xenophobia is very fundamental to continental Africa not only as a developing continent for the interest of African Union as an umbrella but for scientific advancement and technological prowess. Drawing from different geographical regions: Southern Africa and Western African regions, the conceptual framework of the acronymic EBUB (*Egbe Bere Ugo Bere*) and UBUNTU (an acronymic phrase that means *I am what I am because of who we are*) fundamentally locate their basic meaning of accommodative existential reality in belongingness as the African Metaphysics of *To Be*. It is, therefore, pertinently worrisome that the concept of Xenophobia will ever rear its ugly head in African Continent after these years of our collective experience of the evils of *slavery*, *colonialism* and continued forms of *neo-colonialism* as well as the gruesome experience of apartheid and pursuance of our worth as a people within the African Union in the community of nations.

The continental Africa as the cradle of civilization with much lauded idea of brotherhood is expressed in our greatly valued and practice of extended family system and different forms and expressions of *live and let live* often, popularized in the spirit of *Rastafari* or *Revivalism* and greatly given voice in the reggae lyrics of our brother Bob Marley when he reminded Africans thus: *Africa Unite*.

Africa unite/'Cause we're moving right out of
Babylon/And we're going to our Father's
land/How good and how pleasant it would
be/Before God and man, yeah/To see the
unification of all Africans, yeah.

There are other African *Reggae Muffin* voices echoing the dread slavery-bondage of Africans from Peter Tosh's *African* in the album *Equal Right* thus:

Don't care where you come from
As long as you're a black man, you're an African
No mind your nationality
You have got the identity of an African

There are many great movements formed in the Spirit of Resistance, Rastafari all in a bid to decolonize African and open door for repatriation. In the words of Chevannes (1994), “ all Africans in the diaspora are but in exiles in *Babylon*, destined to be delivered out of captivity by a return to *Zion*, that is Africa, the land of our ancestors, or Ethiopia, the seat of Jah, Ras Tafari himself, Emperor Haile Selassie’s precoronation name” (p.1). In the continental Africa amidst the past experience that warranted this rastafari ideology, xenophobia seems to be wrongly out of place. Equally, few of Lucky Dube’s tracks like *House of Exile*, *Remember Me* and *Back to my Roots* buttressed this point that the continental Africa has had a message of peace beyond reckoning than the inherent spirit of hatred gradually crystallizing in our consciousness. To crown it all, Yellow Man’s hit track *War, War, War*, portrayed it all when he directed thus:

War war war (say) no more war
tell me why the hell onoo fighting for?...
tell you everybody let us all unite ...

Greetings to my people.
Remember Bob Marley did say
one love one heart one destiny
and remember every man have a right
to decide them own destiny.
Love and unity is what the world needs...
war and violence you better reject
Remember we have to live in unity!

Marcus Garvey summarized these potent ideas about African progress in his song thus:

Weeping and wailing and moaning
You've got yourself to blame, I tell you
Do right do right do right do right do
right
Tell you to do right, Woo -oo- oo

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Beg you to do right, Woo -oo- oo

Where is Bagawire, he's nowhere to be
found
He can't be found
First betrayer who gave away Marcus
Garvey
Son of Satan, First prophesy
Catch them, Garvey old
Catch them Garvey, catch them Woo -
oo- oo
Hold them Marcus, hold them Woo -oo-
oo
Marcus Garvey, Marcus Woo -oo- oo

However, Bob Marley nevertheless referred to this in one of his clarion call, *Come Chant down Babylon one more time..* The concept of *belongingness* and UBUNTU are really for the liberation of African from the Babylon of xenophobia.

This cankerworm of xenophobic tendencies equally received the attention of men of letters. Many compelling voices were heard in the literary works of Kwame Nkurumah's *Consciencism* and Julius Nyerere's *Ujamaa's* as well as Leopold Sedar Senghor's *Negritude*, John Samuel Mbiti's *I am*, Henri Maurier's *Relation*, Panteleon Iroegbu's *Belongingness*, Chukwudum B. Okolo's *Being-With*, Mogobe Ramose *Ubuntu* and lately Innocent I. Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* . Recently the spirit and practice of xenophobia, quite alien to African cultural blood of unity and tenacity of purpose, is not only abominably disintegrating us but is making us more barbaric and despondent and dependently savagery. To this end the popular saying of Julius Nyerere comes to mind thus that *We face neither East nor West*, and I add neither North nor South, *we face forward*. The spirit of EBUB-UBUNTU well articulated and expressed in belongingness makes one to look forward beyond the frontiers of African continent and her waters. The significant idea of Belongingness forbids us from looking away than sideways or worst, to look backward.

The unimaginable xenophobic attitude and attacks make one to question what is wrong with Africa and Africans. Nothing actually may be wrong with continental Africa but something is indeed and totally wrong with *Africans* and their current hateful practice of xenophobia in its *minutest* form and thoughts. This is another form of *Afrophobia*. It is now fear and hate for Africans. The post-Apartheid South Africans, after all their gruesome experience in the hands of foreigners have resolutely turned against their own. The post-independent cold war is on fellow Africans, it's now according to Michael Neocosmos: from *Foreign Natives* to *Native Foreigners*. We are becoming strangers and enemies to our very own, ourselves.

The *glories of Africa* for Africans are under siege and supercilious attack. And those grossly involved in these xenophobic tendencies seem to forget so soon the 350 years of trek from the bondage of apartheid to the dawn of recently celebrated *xenophobic* democracy. Nelson Mandela would have been the only authority that would have wished to tell his brothers of South Africa that it is same continental African Blood that runs in us. What an irony of Africans discriminating against Africans.

The glorious splendour of Africa, spanned from the moment Africa as a continent retained the uncommon title of *Cradle of civilization*, visibly eloquent in the ancient wonders of the world: Great Pyramid at Giza, Egypt and the Light House at Alexandria in Egypt; From the time of Nature philosophy inherent in the Primitive traditions of the Semites and the Egyptians, the Sages and the Ionians, the Italians (Pythagoras), the Eleatics (Parmenides), the Sophists and unto the tutelage of Socrates through the Alexandrian Library and his other brother philosophers who having been tutored to philosophize in Africa went back to Athens for their teaching practice till date. The exalted works of the erudite scholars like Ghanaian Anton Wilhelm Amo on human right in the 18th Century in German as well as the solemn poem of David Diop titled, *Africa My Africa* unto the several *Magnus Corpus* of Augustine of Africa and uncountable African Philosophers. Today we can proudly read the succinct works on, *African Philosophy: The Pharaonic Peroid 2780-330BC* and *The Afrikan Origin of Philosophy* by Theophile Obenga; *The African*

Origin of Greek Philosophy: An Exercise in Afrocentricism by Innocent Onyewuenyi; *Greek Philosophy is Stolen Egyptian Philosophy* by George M James. However, it is sadly unfortunate that with all these great efforts and contributions to our African philosophical enterprise and heritage by our own flesh and blood, we will turn against ourselves in the name of hegemony of xenophobic discourse and political practice de-politicization of an urban population.

Proper Understanding of Belongingness

Iroegbu, (1995) defines belongingness as an abstract term, an ontological one that specifies that a thing is, because it belongs, (pg 374). The idea of belongingness is articulated within the idea of African Communalism. According to Umeogu (2007), the typology of Igbo being, *in stricto sensu*, being in African metaphysics, is belongingness. In it, therefore, the nature of Igbo being is such that it connects every other thing and is connected by every other thing. Therefore, “Igbo being means Igbo reality. It means Igbo identity. It means Igbo means space. It means Igbo people”. (p.108). Moreover, belongingness becomes an arrangement of the fundamental structure of the society. With communalist metaphysics, the ‘I’ who is located in the ‘We’ is very fundamental in the understanding of being as belongingness.

Belongingness in its analytic contents is ***be-on, be-ongoing, be-long*** and ***be-longing***. These analytic contents of belongingness reveal the inner significance of being as essentially referential. Onebunne (2012) (Unpublished Thesis) affirms that belongingness, however, is the reality of whatever is in so far as it is, being part of, belonging to reality (*Uwa*). It is simply derived from the basic understanding of reality. It has the character of identification with and within a community especially with regard to African communalism. It is a principle of membership. Therefore, being, in other to actualize itself makes effort to belong; it flows out. It goes on. Belongingness to this extent is a continuum, an ongoing process. It is the synthesis of the reality and experiences of belonging. Being no doubt is the foundation of belongingness. Being expresses itself through belongingness. This being is human being. Belongingness is a

fundamental fact of being. Once a thing is, it belongs to a being, group or community. There are ingredients of belongingness as Knowledge, Hope, Care, and Patience. Equally, solidarity is a definitive property of belongingness.

Our further analysis of belongingness will show its explanations and the implications, and how it is “extensive to individual participation in reality.” This belongingness becomes the basic ground and fundamental commonness that run through every reality. Therefore, it involves continuity, a form of basic unity that underlies reality. This specific understanding embodies several aspects of reality and definitional constructs and understanding of being. Iroegbu (1995) reiterates his basic stands on belongingness when he writes in one of his papers that on the *Political Significance of Belongingness* thus:

Belongingness holds that our existence as human beings, as well as our integral participation in the society in which we find ourselves, are to be defined by our being given sense and substance of belonging. There should be solidarity of belonging and a belonging of solidarity in the way and manner in which we are to live and relate to one another as fellow citizens of the world. This sense of belonging or belongingness has two basic aspects: Being tuned-on...Being “on-going”... Thus if we belong, we are. If we don’t belong, then we are not. Practically, then, if we can participate, we are part of the society. (Unpubl).

The Concept of Xenophobia

Definitions of *xenophobia* include: "deep-rooted fear towards foreigners" (Oxford English Dictionary; OED), and "fear of the unfamiliar" (Webster's). The word comes from the old Greek words ξένος (*xenos*), meaning "strange", "foreigner", and φόβος (*phobos*), meaning "fear". There are some early examples of xenophobic attitudes and expressions in many Western cultures like the Ancient Greek denigration of foreigners as *barbarians*, with this ardent

conviction that the Greeks and their culture were superior to others, and the consequence is that barbarians were naturally meant to be enslaved. Equally, ancient Romans also held notions of superiority over other peoples and the Jews believed that the *Gentiles* are of inferior race with regard to God. Wimmer, (1997), gave a classic definition as "an element of a political struggle about who has the right to be cared for by the state and society: a fight for the collective goods of the modern state". That means, xenophobia arises when people have this wrong sense of feeling that their rights and entitlements from the government in power are being undermined and given to other people. Hence, it is an intense or irrational fear or dislike of strangers, foreigners or people from other countries.

The idea and meaning of xenophobia are horrific to anything African especially for Africans. It's a form of racial intolerance. It's a step towards revival of tribalism and all forms of ethnic bigotry. It's an African disease of dichotomy that makes African simply foreigners in African soil, *the land of our birth*. Xenophobia is a re-enactment of the experiences of yesteryears of atrocious cruelty and *genocidal* enslavement amidst stolen legacies in the name of colonialism.

Philosophical Appreciation of EBUB

EBUB (an acronym for *Egbe Bere Ugo Bere*, which is literally translated: *Let the Kite perch, let the Eagle perch*, meaning *Live and let live*). In traditional Igbo society where this concept of *EBUB* is borrowed, perching becomes the *locus operandi* for the kite and Eagle. Naturally, the Kite and Eagle do not fly nor live together. However, they are permitted to perch together and in this act of perching, we see a kind of relationship of respect and regard, acceptance and accommodation which is possible because they belong to a common world of animals and operate within one human world. Iroegbu (1995b), however sees this fundamental aspect of being in belonging as communality relationship. Belonging orchestra-sized perching, however, became a principle of operation and *modus operandi* and *modus vivendum* for community interaction, for existential relation and interaction. Iroegbu, (1995a) sees belongingness as a character of relation in existence. Hence, for

him, “the synthesis of belongingness expressing community and autonomy expressing individuality is in integrity.”(p.351). This relational activity manifesting in belongingness is real. It affects every action and it is the basis of interaction in any given communal relationship. Thus, H. Maurier refers to it as ‘relation’ and ‘subjectivity’ in community – individuality concept that necessitates a form of being by belonging. This will, however, take us to the popular usage by Iroegbu, (1995a) of an Igbo full expression of the real and ideal synthesis of community – individuality in the old but famous proverb thus: Let the Kite perch, let the Eagle perch, if one says that the other should not perch, let that one’s wings break, (p.351).

We must acknowledge that this proverb is primarily a principle of justice. Nevertheless, Iroegbu’s analysis of this proverb points to the fact that belongingness entails not only *a fact of being* but a fundamental relational activity as well. *Bere* (perching) here connotes being as a way of belonging. Therefore, in African communal ontological existence, the *Egbe* and *Ugo*, represent different individuals and the act of perching that presupposes a *locus* of operation form a relationship that fundamentally starts with belonging as perching: a form of contact with the other; a contact that spells belonging. The concept of contact is a backdrop of a person’s realization of his belonging as a being immersed in one’s community.

Critical Implication of the Concept of *Ubuntu*

Another current concept used by some African authors is *Ubuntu*. It is an attempt at the 21st century to study ontology in the categories of African languages. In Ramose’s attempt the notion of being is articulated around the concept of *Ubuntu*. With the concept of *Ubuntu*, as an African ethnic or humanist philosophy, there is a way of life that is focused on people’s allegiance and community interaction and relation with each other. Of course, *Ubuntu* has its origin in *Bantu* language of Southern Africa. *Ubuntu* literally means: *I am what I am because of who we are*. The concept of *Ubuntu* leaves an impression of relationship that is governed by the idea of

We that makes one to be open and available to others. Thus, a person with *Ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirms others. Such a person does not feel threatened that others are able and good, based from a proper self- assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished, when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed. This is *Ubuntu*, that is, one's self worth as a result of the other's value.

With the philosophy of *Ubuntu* no one can exist in isolation of others. It is a value bound by the great concept of We-We mentality. It speaks of our interconnectedness. It is our relatedness personified. It depicts belongingness. It is seen as the essence of being human since according to *Ubuntu* philosophy, "You can't be human all by yourself." Therefore, you need others to be. You need to belong or related with others and identify with them. It is a form of extension of oneself in a concrete relationship or insubstantial affiliation. It is a philosophy that sustains all within a community based on principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. This idea or understanding of *Ubuntu*, therefore, depicts everything about the content of belongingness. In Malawi as well, this philosophy is called *Umunthu* meaning, "I am because we are". Commenting on this, Thomas Msusa says that, "the African worldview is about living as one family belonging to God."

The Complementarity of *EBUB* and *Ubuntu* in Communalism

Communalism as a theory, therefore, assumes a stunning concern for communal values, for common good or` common weal and for the good of the wider community. Here, the community interest overrides every other interest. For Nze (2007) communalism is "an offshoot or the child of the extended family which is a feature of the living pattern of the Africans, belief in the brotherhood of man" (p.588-589). He maintains indeed that with communalism, everyone is related to everyone by one form of consanguinity or the other. An excursion into human history shows that we are all related in a sort of way. We are all human beings. Egbeke Aja also sees

communalism as the traditional concern for persons and their well-being. However, in line with this understanding, Ogugua (2004) thinks that the African society is communal and stresses on the common relational nature among members. This is against the collective nature of the Western society with emphasis on the autonomy of the members. Stressing this fact in African society, Ogugua (2004) writes that “the solidarity underlying these members which is the effect of the principle of oneness or belongingness to the same roof is what is described as African communalism.”

Furthermore, Iroegbu, P. (1996b), reiterates that there are principles of African communalism as-belongingness, liberty and integrity. To him, belongingness is a principle that allows the association of persons. We must note that this relationship of communality is the basis of oneness or belongingness that defines reality in African experience and ontology. Umeogu (2007) in his article, “Ohazurume: A Philosophic Definition of Communalism as the Typology of Igbo Being”, shows a definitional understanding of being and goes further to assert the language structure or typology of Igbo being in belongingness. According to him:

Oha means community...It means unity.
...*Ohazurume* is the theory of integral community unit, life, being and action. In *Ohazurume* metaphysics of life, being and action, the meaningfulness of the individual and that of the community meet at the place of being. Being is the nature of the Igbo individual and the Igbo community. But the being of the Igbo individual and the Igbo community has the typology of communalism...the typology of Igbo being is belongingness (p. 107).

As everything and every human being are related so they belong to one another. Belongingness connects every other thing and is connected by every other thing. By every other we mean people, we mean places, we mean things. Going further, Umeogu, (2007) gave a liquid meaning of being in African, or properly in Igbo

understanding thus: Igbo being means Igbo reality. It means Igbo identity. It means Igbo space. It means Igbo time. It means Igbo people. To be precise, Igbo being means everything or any place or any person at all Igbo (p. 107-108)

Igbo being by the above conceptual definition shows that Igbo does not only identify a reality but expresses that whatever that is Igbo exists and relates everything to everyone and vice versa, that relating all reality, a kind of essential relationship. Umeogu, B. (2007) however concludes this: In Igbo being, communalism defines being as the reality of both the individual and the groups or community, So much so that the individual cannot claim more reality than the community gives to him, nor can the community claim any reality more than that given by the individuals that make up the community ... (p. 107-108)

The nature of Igbo being is such that it connects every other thing and is connected by every other thing. Igbo being, in effect means Igbo reality, restates Umeogu's Stand. For him, Igbo being means everything and anything at all in Igbo and in the long run expresses the fact that the "Igbo" is, that is, that "what is Igbo" exists. This echoes directly, without reservation Iroegbu's categorical statement that *to be is to belong* from his apt analysis of belongingness. Furthermore, Iroegbu () in his philosophical enterprise reiterates that there are principles of African communalism of which belongingness is one as well as liberty and integrity. To him, belongingness is a principle that allows the association of persons which is promoted, maintained and often so desired in so far as practical benefits are derived from it. This form of association of persons betrays Western ontology.

Belongingness, for Iroegbu, P. (1996b) then becomes an "arrangement of the fundamental structure of society (laws, duties, privileges, positions, jobs, offices, advantages and incumbents of the community) such that it incarnates and manifests the commonness of origin, of history and of general destiny of all the members of the community. Belongingness is *Umunna* concretized (p. 50). Commenting on this, Abanuka, B. (1994) says: "Iroegbu sees

‘Belongingness’ as constituting the most important mode in which being expresses itself. Although he holds that ‘Belongingness is an abstract term, an ontological one that specifies that a thing is, because it belongs’” (p.374). Abanuka articulates the idea of ‘Belongingness’ within the context of the problematic idea of ‘communalism’. To *belong* here means for him to belong to the community after the traditional Igbo model of ‘*umunna*’ which he uses. Thus, for him, ‘there’ is a solidarity of relationships. In Igboland, we live the basic community called the ‘*Umunna*’ (kindred) (p.343 - 349)

In developing this fundamental character of being as belongingness, Iroegbu, P. (1996b) initially defines belongingness as a definitive principle of African communalism. He used belongingness in a technical sense. It is, thus, for him, a principle of membership applied to a given community. By this belongingness implies the basic commonness that makes a community a community, in our context, what makes a given African community as such. Iroegbu shows that communalism makes belongingness an indispensable conceptual starting point for communal existence. According to him, one native expression of belongingness is the term, *Umunna*. In this sense, *Umunna*, a basic community, transcends the nuclear family to mean, by extension, people of common lineage as well as commonness of origin. Belonging, however, is the human need to be an accepted member of a group. Abraham Maslow suggested that the need to belong was a major source of human motivation. And since *no man is an island*, the need to belong to and with one another becomes a basic demand for man’s existence and co-existence.

Some theories in life have also focused on the need to belong as a fundamental psychological motivation. We belong to a group with which we have commonalities. This feeling of belonging is a basic need and a unique term in the dynamics of living and existence. Hence, Iroegbu (1995) asserts that “belongingness makes sure that all belong and none is marginalized, both contributively (duties and

Nnadiabube Journal of Philosophy, Vol.2 (2), 2018 responsibilities) and distributively (sharing of communal cake)”, (p.350).

In this conceptual definition, Iroegbu attempts to define this fundamental aspect of being as regards communality relationship. Belonging, however, became a principle of operation and *modus operandi* and *modus vivendum* for community interaction and for existential relation. He sees belongingness as a character of relation in existence. Hence, for Iroegbu (1995), “...the synthesis of belongingness expressing community and autonomy expressing individuality, is in integrity.” (p.351). This relational activity manifesting in belongingness is real. It affects every action and is the basis of interaction in any given communal relationship. Thus, Henri Maurier refers to it as *relation* and *subjectivity* in community – individuality concept that necessitates a form of being by belonging. This will take us to Iroegbu (1995) popular usage of an Igbo expression of the real ideal synthesis of community – individuality in the old but famous proverb:

Egbe bere, Ugo bere, nke si ibe ya ebela, nku kwaa ya. (Let the Kite perch, let the Eagle perch, if one says that the other should not perch, let that one’s wings break.) (p.351)

We must acknowledge that this proverb is primarily a principle of justice. Nevertheless, Iroegbu’s analysis of this proverb points to the fact of belongingness that entails not only being but a fundamental relational activity as well. *Bere* (perching) here connotes being as a way of belonging. Therefore, in African communal ontological existence, the *Egbe* and *Ugo*, represent different individuals and the act of perching that presupposes a locus of operation form a relationship that fundamentally starts with belonging as perching: a form of contact with the other; a contact that spells belonging. The concept of contact is a backdrop of a person’s realization of his belonging as a being immersed in one’s community. This is summarized in the saying, *I am because we are*. This is a communitarian view that places being on belongingness. However, in African ontology or metaphysics of personality, Menkiti, I.A. ()

argues that it is the community, the locus of perching, which defines the person as a person, not some isolated static quality of rationality, will or memory. Meanwhile, Okolo (1992) once argued against the socio – communal vision of the personality or self as it jeopardizes freedom, autonomy and personal initiative when thus:

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. Little or no room is left for initiative, spontaneity, responsibility, auto-decision, auto-determination, etc, which individuals cherish as individuals and which are the hallmarks of true liberty and autonomy.

Nze, C. has a different view from Okolo, B. submissions. To him, freedom is maintained in African context as freedom-in-community. But, the same Okolo in his latter writing, (1993), gave a communal, rather than an autonomous definition of a person, as a *being-with* as specifically defining African person (his *being-with* simply connotes belongingness, a relation, a sort of being). Meanwhile in Iroegbu's opinion, the African person is not just a being (*Dasein* of Heidegger), but a being in the African world. In that African world, he is never on his own or alone, but is always in relation. He is not a Cartesian *Cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), but *I am related to others, therefore I am*. While he is related directly to, and is being-with God, the gods, the spirits, and with nature, he is in a special way being-with other human beings. The human element of concern (Okolo), communion (Senghor), brotherhood (Nyerere), community spirit (Tom Mboya) is the central focus of being-with.

Relation as an expression of relationship is central in living. The foregoing shows that to be an African person is to be relatively involved with and within the community. This community through belonging defines the person. And Iroegbu (1995) captioned it thus: *Mu na ndi ozo* (I – with others), (p.358). It is noteworthy that Iroegbu's *Uwa* which is all-englobing, in the end, simply reveals and

relates being with all there are; everything that is. It is this fact of relating that *Uwa* does in its all-englobing nature. In this we see Iroegbu going beyond *Uwa* as the all-englobing replacement with belongingness. It is through Iroegbu's progressive and consistent presentation and definition of belongingness that being is present as such as fundamentally belonging.

Application of Belongingness in Xenophobic Society

The Spirit of belongingness is well expressed in *EBUB* and *Ubuntu*. And in line with this no African should be a foreigner in African soil. Motsoko Pheko (2017) rightly opined that, "...in the espoused African spirit of Ubuntu and Pan-Africanism, there is no African who can be a Foreigner in Africa, while non-Africans who live here are not considered as foreigners." It is a contradiction in terms to be an African and a foreigner at the same time.

We believe that the only viable solution to the problem of xenophobia is one involving inclusion and belongingness. The most important good we distribute to each other in society is membership. The right to belong is prior to all other distributive decisions since it is members who make those decisions. Belongingness entails an unwavering commitment to, not simply tolerating and respecting difference but to ensuring that all people are welcomed and feel that they belong in the society. We call this idea the "circle of human concern." Widening the circle of human concern involves "humanizing the other," where negative representations and stereotypes are challenged and rejected. It is a process by which the most marginalized out groups are brought into the centre of our concern.

Belongingness must be more than expressive; it must be institutionalized as well. To counteract xenophobia, we must focus on providing access to resources and critical institutions to disadvantaged groups. At the same time, integration is necessary but not always sufficient. Many groups require more than access; they require special accommodations. Beyond structural safeguards, we

need a vision of society that is inclusive with new identities and narratives that inoculate societies from demagoguery and demonization of the “other” while improving the well-being of everyone. One possible alternative to the “acculturative” strategies of assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalization is “voice” and “dialogue.” Voice can give expression to group-based needs and issues without resorting to segregation or secession.

Conclusion

Finally, belonging is the most important good we distribute in society, as it is prior to and informs all other distributive decisions. We must support the creation of structures of inclusion that recognize and accommodate differences, rather than seek to erase it. We need practices that create voice without denying our deep interrelationship. We cannot deny existential anxieties in the human condition. These anxieties can be moved into directions of fear and anger or toward empathy and collective solidarity. In periods of turbulent, upheaval and instability, the siren call of the demagogue has greater power, but whether a society falls victim to it depends upon the choices.

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