

Okolo's African Being-with and Heidegger's Idea of Mitsein: A Cross-Cultural Dialogue

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Abstract There is a dare need to understand peoples and cultures and resolve unending conflicts for better human relationship among people. To do this, this study seeks to find out whether the ontological being underlying Okolo's African being-with is the same as that underlying Heidegger's being-with (*mitsein*). The question raised is whether Africans share a common humanity with other human beings in the world, and if Heidegger's presumption about the humanity of the African is true? What can the answers to these questions do in leadership and governance especially as the Nigerian election is in its full gear? The major aim of the study is to examine Okolo's notion of African 'being-with' in relation to Heidegger's 'being-with' and highlight the rich ethical and political implications of their concepts through a cross-cultural dialogue and use it to advance a new ethical world order that promotes better living among peoples. The study finds that Africans and Europeans share a common humanity and that the understanding of Okolo and Heidegger's notions of being-with can help not only improve mutual relationship but also leadership growth.

Keywords Humanity, Being-with, Cross-Cultural Philosophy, Okolo, Heidegger

there needs to be communication as well as collaboration between different traditions and cultures especially in today's global situation, given that intercultural interactions and encounters are a fact of human existence whose goal is to extend one's thinking into including other cultures, to not only consider one tradition but as many as possible. Philosophers have written much on this area including Wimmer, Mall and Betancourt [1, 2, 3]. Betancourt even writes that the only way to stop cultures from being absorbed by globalization and becoming something of a world culture (Hegelian philosophy), which is mono-culturally predetermined as the project of an intercultural dialogue while Mall and Wimmer postulate forms of dialogue in which all parties are at the same level without having any other power but the better argument. Thus, when working with different cultures, as this study does, one cannot just insist on one's own methods and ask everyone else to do so as well [4].

From the outset, it should be clear that this study is not dependent on an ideal language because intercultural philosophy should not depend on an ideal language. Thus, in this cross-cultural understanding and study, it is taken into cognizance that different traditions use different languages. As Ma and Brakel [5] observed languages shapes and constrains philosophy, though not completely and as such they deny the idea that there is a universal language by which cross-cultural understanding is possible. Besides, there is no single overarching meta-conceptual scheme. Similarities and differences between the two philosophers under study (Okolo and Heidegger) shall have to depend, therefore, also on the people's experiences

1. Introduction

In contrast to Eurocentrism (a position held by Heidegger) there are those philosophers who believe that

(that is, the experiences of Okolo and his peoples (Africans) and Heidegger and his own people (Germans). Necessary preconditions for interpretation will include seeing the other party as a human being, that all concepts are culture rooted and mutuality principle which incorporates the principle of charity or solidarity. Having created a framework for a cross-cultural understanding of philosophies that developed in relative isolation from one another as is the case with Okolo's African 'being-with' and Heidegger's 'being-with', the next sections shall be centred on the comparative analysis of Okolo's concept of African being-with and Heidegger's concept of being-with (*mitsein*). This shall be followed by the study's advancement of a new world order that recognises other cultures, peoples, races, nationals, ethnicity, and tribe as human beings in the same world as co-existences.

Okolo's African 'Being-with' and Heidegger's Idea of 'Being-with' (*Mitsein*)

Even though Okolo may have read Heidegger's *Being and Time* where 'being-with' (*Mitsein*) is discussed there is no such acknowledgement in Okolo's notion of African 'being-with' as a concept [6]. Generally, 'being-with' gives the idea that the basic feature of being human is the experiencing of oneself as part of a fellowship about which one is bound to care and to exist in solidarity. But, in the wake of African encounter with Europe, African people were described as 'barbaric' basically because of their cultures, religious and social ways of living that included worship of gods such as Amadioha, Shango, Kamalu; the killing of twins and albinos and mode of dressing. This is despicable because, even in Europe there were times when the worship of gods like Zeus, Odin, Thor took centre stage. In the book *The Golden Bough*, Fraser [7] argues how some part of Europe, German people inclusive were referred to as 'barbarians' before they were Christianized. The German community had gods such as Odin, who sacrificed one of his eyes in order to gain wisdom about the world. It was these wandering barbarian Germans, which Richard Wagner displays in some of his operas, that destroyed the more civilized and Western Roman Empire.

Having shown that human living can be shaped by the mode of technology at a time, Okolo's notion of African 'being-with', on the one hand, entails the socio-ontological attitude that defines the African identity and personality [8], and also the fundamental human involvement with fellow human beings and other realities in the universe, both visible and invisible [9]. The village life in the times before encounter with Europe vividly demonstrates this fact. During this period, the survival of the traditional African people, especially in the Igbo land areas where Okolo takes as starting point hugely depended on corroboration among the people. As soon as the circumstances changed the social mode of living also changed. And so, Okolo calls for a return to such traditional living that acknowledges corroboration and welfare of one another. Thus, Okolo is

concerned with the identity and future of the African people.

On the other hand, 'being-with' (*Mitsein*), in Heidegger, is the ontological constitution of the human being, which means that the human being is always-already with others of its kind whenever he does or thinks something; that he lives with others, and, in fact, could not live without them. Thus, 'being-with' is essential to being human [10]. When Heidegger [11] goes further to argue that Being has reached its 'metaphysical end' and the unique place of the German community in the great unfolding of Being thereby discriminating against "other" cultures, including other European cultures and philosophies [12], he was only arguing on the basis of Christian influence, modernity and globalization. Heidegger was reinforcing the German worldview that indicates a time in history when the world reaches its end and renews itself in a catalytic form. A philosophy which Nietzsche [13] captures in his doctrine of 'eternal return' and an ideology which interested Adolph Hitler who sought to return Germany to its first beginning or barbaric lifestyle, which enabled them to defeat the more civilized and Western Roman Empire. Heidegger, like Okolo, is also concerned with the identity and future of the German people.

Obviously, there are not only revealing critical contrasts, but areas of affinity in the common project of understanding Okolo and Heidegger. To begin with, although both philosophers deal with the same issue, the way they arrived at their conceptualizations, that is, their contexts, are different. Okolo, on the one hand, formulates the notion of African 'being-with' primarily from his cultural milieu where the African traditional lifestyle is a core replica of what communitarianism could imply; and secondarily, from an indispensable need to respond to the experience of African predicaments, such as colonization, racism, discrimination, slavery, Trans-Atlantic slave trade, subjugation and imperialism, which not only existentially uprooted and alienated the African from his identifying personality, but also threw him into a foreign social environment where the principles of individualism prevail. Thus, Okolo [14] felt the need to assert and defend the African humanity in the global community, of human beings; and for the world to recognize the people of the continent as having a distinct thought-system and culture that could contribute to development and civilization.

Heidegger, on the other hand, formulates his idea of 'being-with' from a volume of influences: First, from the Pre-Socratics who approached the question of Being in holism by not giving it a critical categorization that leads to a distinction between the essence (ideal) and the existent (material); or who had not yet forgotten the fundamental distinction between Being (*sein*) and beings (*seinde*) [15]. Second, from the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle whose thoughts serve as an integral base for western philosophy and as Heidegger argues, the misinterpretation of Being has its root from their philosophies. Third, from the medieval interpretations of Being where the question, of

the meaning, of Being, is a combination of faith and reason with primacy to revelation (onto-theology). Heidegger argues that such thinking by the Schoolmen, particularly Aquinas, presupposes that the end or answer to the question of Being has already been known before the process or enquiry began. Fourth, from the rationalist, Rene Descartes, who postulates a total independent approach to the question of Being by positing that the thinking self exists alone without the extended entity. That is to say that the human being is separate from its social matrix, a distinction between subject and object, knower and what is known. However, Heidegger [16] appraises Descartes for liberating philosophy from theology and for discovering the human being as subject (*cogito sum*), who questions, that is, as the being that enquires.

The fifth influence on Heidegger comes from the era of 'Enlightenment' following the trend that it is only the European race that can substantially philosophize and that the European race is 'humanity per excellence', which prompted Heidegger to argue that philosophy belongs to the West and can only be done in Greek and German. Sixth, the intellectual articulations of the polygenist and anthropologist, Christoph Meiners where race issue takes a scientific turn in his argument that the European race is by nature the most superior race among the races gave Heidegger some impetus, which surfaced in some of his thinking and writings [17]. In general, some of the articulations of some European scholars precisely, German enlightenment philosophers, placed philosophy on a table of high honour in European continent [18]. This 'honorific' conception that philosophy is the measure of humanity has a lot of self-ego boost on Heidegger which contributed, significantly, to his style of philosophizing and conceptualization of certain ideas. Seventh, the general German lifestyle following the defeat of Germany in the 'First World War' influenced Heidegger, too. The defeat Germans suffered caused a social ethic, which the Nazis tried to sell out to the population between 1920 and 1933. The enormous bitterness and disappointment rejuvenated and sharpened Germany's social life as almost every family in Germany was affected and their ego depleted to a point that they questioned the positive interrelationship, of human beings [19]. They therefore sought to go back to a time in history when they were in total control.

All these are factors that motivated Heidegger into the conceptualization and use of the term *Mitsein* explained as 'being-with'. Heidegger [20] argues that the very Being of the individual involves engagement with the world. In other words, the fundamental character, of the human being, is a condition of being caught up, involved with, or committed to other individuals and things. Heidegger, therefore, seeks to return the question of the meaning of Being to its foremost (originary) meaning before its forgetfulness and to achieve this required a full explication of the entity in whose being, the question of Being is fundamental, the human being. The human being is the entity in whose being; the question of the meaning of Being

is raised, as well as, the being of other entities in the world, including the human being, who enquires [21]. Thus, the human being co-exists with other entities in the world even before theoretical cognition begins.

Aside the issue of different contexts made evident above, there is also the issue of method applied by Okolo and Heidegger. Okolo adopts critical content analysis which enables him to critically assess his cultural worldview, which is based on communitarian principles. Heidegger, on his part, applies hermeneutic phenomenology, that is, interpretation of several texts from history that predates him including Greek literatures written in Greek and Greek literatures written in Latin. These enable Heidegger to assess how the early Greeks like the poet Holderlin and Homer; the pre-Socratics, Anaxagoras, Parmenides and Heraclitus conceived Being, and how Plato and Aristotle translated and interpreted Being. This exercise gives Heidegger the impetus to argue that the question of the meaning of Being has been forgotten and the understanding to pose the question of the meaning of Being anew. By phenomenology, Heidegger [22] brought into bare how the human being experiences Being in the ordinary day-to-day living, particularly, how the Early Greeks experienced Being in its manifestation and how each epoch also appropriates Being.

Despite the differences in context and method Okolo and Heidegger encountered the same issue: the issue of human co-existence. This is because the two philosophers possessed the same humanity. Their varying context underlies how their fundamental basic humanity explains the common philosophical problem that they address. This also goes to show that culture and experiences of one largely condition the thoughts to be developed. Both philosophers were at home in their cultures. Okolo did not apply Heidegger's term-*Mitsein* because such was not his language nor did he have such experience as the Germans. Okolo philosophized in English and Heidegger in German and the structure of sentences in English and other languages are different. In many cases, one tradition or culture lacks the terminology or concepts, or even the syntax to permit problems or concepts of other traditions to be intelligible. Moreover, a language like the German can 'tilt' a discussion in a way that makes the expression of philosophical issues in one culture irrelevant [23]. This also shows that the standard of one culture differs from another and demands practical wisdom for engagement to be meaningful. Besides, Heideggerian terminologies often present puzzles to translators [24].

Aside method and context, these philosophers have individual differences and similarities. For Okolo [25], authentic existence means living in togetherness with others, to feed with one another and to have sympathetic feeling; to be committed to others, responding to other's need and acting for other's good. The self lives authentically, by living in harmony with the community; it is interconnected to everything that exists and is not cut-off. Besides, Okolo [26] gives allowance for the self to take a

stand that is not in tandem with the community when he argues that the self is “unique and unduplicable” and exercises autonomy, freedom, self-decision and personal initiatives. It is my position that it is neither the individual alone, nor the community alone, but, both. This is because every individual exists and defines himself in a given environment and culture. My argument is that specific individuals make up and define the community in the same manner that the collective idea of individuals in community shapes a particular individual's way of life and thought.

But, for Heidegger, authentic existence means finding ways not to live deficiently, indifferently, empathically or leaping-in (domination). For him, the human being is always in collectivity, while maintaining one's self. To be an authentic self, in Heidegger, therefore, is only an existential modification of *das Man* (the socially constituted set of norms), not a detachment [27]. However, in Heidegger, each human being and every entity are only related by referential formations [28]. Even though the human being appraises the standards and structures set by the community to define himself, he is not only related to the objects and entities in his environment by referential formations as argued by Heidegger.

Again, for Okolo, on the one hand, incommensurability is not total. This stems on his argument that the global world is an ever-extending family-hood and that people of other race, ethnicity and nationality can be designated as ‘Africans’ on the basis of possessing the attribute of being-with [29]. Okolo also argues that no one possesses all of reality and that aside Western philosophy there is also African philosophy; that philosophy is universal [30]. On the other hand, the racist ideas of Heidegger made him argue that incommensurability is total. This he does by arguing that philosophy belongs to the West and can only be done in Greek and German [31]. It is my view that cultures cannot be entirely incommensurable in as much as there are philosophical concerns and interests across cultures. Ozolins agrees to this fact by arguing that there must be some language in which cultures can come into contact and be understandable to one another [32]. Thus, Okolo's philosophy is a reply to the hegemonic claim of Heidegger.

Also, both philosophers hold that reason should not be the defining factor of humanity, but existence [33] and this is because existence precedes any human cognition and this is why ‘being-with’ is about involvement. Further, both authors' conceptions do not involve questioning the existence of other entities and the environment. Okolo and Heidegger, therefore, call on the human being to recognize the other human individual as co-existents. Their conceptions on interpersonal human relationships extend to the relations between human beings and the environment. In other words, man is inseparable, from his environment, his world and social matrix because it is these things that make him what he is and what he will become. However, for Okolo, existence should be defined as ‘we’ where the

‘we’ defines and determines the ‘I’. In fact, without the ‘we’ the ‘I’ lacks existence, while for Heidegger, existence should be defined as an ‘I-we’ relationship where the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ are equiprimordial; neither one precedes the other, nor is of greater importance.

Further, both philosophers argue that philosophizing as a special sort, of intellectual activity, is not automatic with man. This is to say that man's initial encounter with the world or environment is not immediate at a philosophical level because man is often readily disposed to follow the traditional wisdom, as well as, the customary vision of the people. This accounts for why Okolo rejects ethno-philosophy as strictly speaking, philosophy; thus, genuine and systematic philosophy is a by-product of critical interrogation of the people's worldviews [34], and why Heidegger argues that the human being is always ‘falling’ thereby losing oneself in the ‘public’ [35]. In Okolo, ‘with’ continues even after death and it does not refer to any particular race or people but all who have this state of mind or disposition. In Heidegger, ‘death’ is an indication of the end of possibilities of ‘with’ for the human being [36].

For Okolo, the human being has an origin as *imago dei* (image of God), who created him and with whom man communicates, as well as, other spiritual entities [37]. ‘Being-with’, in Okolo, is therefore, the cultural defining mode of being of the African; it is an existential disposition that defines who an ‘African’ is, a fundamental and ontological disposition without which one is not an ‘African’. It can be lost and also regained. The African black born in the culture of being-with, could lose it with time through cultural alienation. Thus, ‘being-with’, in Okolo, is the by-product of culture rooted in Africa's extended family system, religious view and tradition of the African [38]. But, in Heidegger, there is no existential or practical reference of the origin of the human being. Further, Heidegger does not consider ‘being-with’ as a cultural concept but a social mode of existence which bestows on the human being the status of being-in-the-world. ‘Being-with’, in Heidegger, is necessitated by the human limitations; human insufficiency hence, the human being is condemned to associate with others in order to add essence to his existence [39]. Thus, ‘being-with’ is an existential understanding that characterizes *Dasein*, it is what *Dasein* is for the most part; a being already and always with others and can never be lost.

Both Okolo and Heidegger, raise issues on consciousness. Consciousness is the core of phenomenology, the lived experience. The consciousness both philosophers project is tied to the loss of qualitative identity. For Okolo, this consciousness comes from the fact that the African has taken it upon himself since after the end of the Second World War to find himself and assert his African identity in the global community of human beings. This consciousness of the African was birthed by the experiences of colonialism, subjugation and alienation [40].

For Heidegger, this consciousness comes from the threefold structure of anxiety, call of conscience and the realization of *Dasein* that only it can face its own death [41]. I further interpret Heidegger's *Das Man* as the Westerner's subjugation and control of the life of the African *Dasein*, an alienation of its true self and identity. Further, Heidegger's call for *Dasein* to take up authentic existence by taking responsibility can be described as Okolo's call on the African being to move away from the Western conception of the African being and to speak for himself. It is also noted that Heidegger during his time called upon the German people to lift their spirits and not to allow the defeat and sufferings as parts of the aftermath of the First World War to define their identity and true self. It was a call for the German populace to resist attempts to stifle their identity. It was also a call to 'locate' human being (the Germans) with respect to the present and not to be conditioned by foreign influences.

Following the above, Okolo and Heideggerian terminologies promote singularity, individuality and uniqueness even in man's relation to the world. What this means is that the individual should not allow himself to be lost in the 'we' or *Das Man* [42]. Also, both philosophies are concerned with enquiry into the truth of things. Both philosophers consider man as the centre of all creatures, physical and non-physical. Hence, their philosophies are deeply entrenched in humanism since they focus on the human being and his problems in society; how he has to act and conduct himself [43]. The basis of 'being-with' is humanity. As humanistic philosophies, their works centre on systematic and effective thinking about the human being and the universe. This they derived from their cultural experiences in so far as they were amenable to rational interpretation.

Again, Okolo and Heidegger speak about the damaging effects of public self or the adverse consequences of not living in accordance to one's own dictates, decisions and true identity. Okolo shows this in his call to the African to assert himself and to abandon the western individualistic way of living, which alienates his true identity of communitarianism. Heidegger, on his part, through the discussion of *Das Man* communicates the necessity for individuals to live according to their true self by living according to their own decisions and not according to the rules of the public or community one belongs to. Hence, for both philosophers, belongingness to particular communities or a community's interpretative schema is not a limitation to an individual's possibilities. This can be regarded as the social-self which alienates one group from another by making the individuals focus on how they are different from one another. Thus, both Okolo and Heidegger argue that over-identification with social-self forces human individuals into alienation and thereby isolating one another from the world-community.

On the whole, it can be agreed that philosophy is human and that without humans who are the carriers of philosophy, that philosophy is non-existent. Therefore, philosophy is

context-bound. On this basis, both philosophers are ethno-centric in their philosophies; each interpreting man from the cultural background and upbringing. Okolo's philosophy is ethnocentric, since his philosophy is a supposition that African philosophy springs from the African experience. Martin Asiegbu corroborates this last stance when he argues that African philosophy is an issue of identity with widespread ramifications one of which is culture. He further argues that the hermeneutic turn of Heidegger and of others gave an impetus to the culture-bound philosophy. In his words:

culture orients a philosopher to specifically designed group and experience, problems, difficulties and presuppositions of a particular people...ever since the hermeneutic turn of Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur, the hermeneutic principle about the context-dependence of all philosophies has come into sharper focus [44].

Asiegbu further argues that African philosophy (Okolo's philosophy inclusive) is a response to the hegemony of Europe or Eurocentrism and that though the Africans fail to acknowledge any commitment for this trend, its ethnocentric commitment defines an attitude of mind, a "passionate adherence to one's cultural heritage".

Indeed, the philosophy of Okolo, is a proclamation of African philosophy, to the world, as Africans, have taken it upon themselves, particularly, since the Second World War, to know themselves. It is a depiction of Africans as possessing humanity, having a culture and philosophy, its own social structures and own mannerisms; that Africa is not some sort of blank page in the history of humanity, and that its values are values that could make an important contribution to the world [45]. Generally, 'being-with' (communitarianism), as many African scholars posit, is a weapon in fighting against global white supremacy and colonialism. These thinkers immerse themselves in defending and responding to the Westerner's denial of 'otherness', humanness and relevance to the African and her structures [46]. Okolo, with his introduction of 'African' to designate 'being-with' goes beyond the traditional African view, by observing that, the extended family-hood system, should transcend the immediate or nuclear family, clan or tribe, and embrace the entire world, a world in solidarity.

Heidegger uses *Mitsein* to show us how to think of being-with-one-another as something integral to our very being. Through his idea of *Mitsein*, he breaks away from isolated subjectivity. Even though he argues a retreat from inauthentic existence to authentic existence through resoluteness and conscience, he does not do away with human coexistence. In fact, *Mitsein* in *Being and Time* is a central project in answering Cartesian threat of solipsism-the metaphysical gap between self and other people [47]. *Dasein's* being-with others differs from the western tradition that precedes and presupposes Cartesian dualism, insofar, as the others, *Dasein* encounter, are not encountered as objects of its perception, but they form part

of *Dasein*'s own Being.

Okolo contends that African 'being-with' disregards colour, geographical location and even blood ties. African being-with is more of a concept than a racial identity. For him then, the possibility is that not all Africans possess this attitude of 'being-with' as the African personality. In relation to the Xenophobic attack in South Africa, which has been cited as a critique against African claim of ontological communitarianism [48], Okolo would argue that the perpetrators, of the act, are not Africans, or those without (lost) the consciousness of the African being-with, or those who possess it but are insincere to their conscience to imbibing by the ethics of the attitude, since the African is a participatory activity of self with and for others for the "with-others" is uppermost. So, 'being-with,' as an attitude of mind is ideally universal to all races hence, any man who is endlessly relational or in communion-with-others, is an African. Okolo conceives African 'being-with' as the humane and socialist attitude of life in Africa, the African's concern for man or an involvement of man for dealing with and for others. It is his African brand of humanism based on the communal sharing for the welfare of a fellow human. To this end, Okolo does not establish the African identity outside of the culture of the people which he argues is the key to understanding and defining the 'African' but succeeds in defending the African humanity against the indirect presumption of Heidegger that the African is either not a human or he is an inferior human being. Heidegger suggests that while Africans (along with plants and animals) have no history (in a technical sense understood in terms of heritage), the event of an airplane carrying Hitler to Mussolini is genuinely part of history [49].

New Ethical World Order

The emergence of conceptualization about "new world order" in the contemporary times has rekindled the need to refocus attention on the broader concern for Africa and its people, on the one hand and the nature and character of their relationship with the global community, on the other hand [50]. To this end, respect of a people's culture and seeking to understand them and their perspectives, from the confines of their culture, will provide the framework for people of diverse culture, different skin colours, nationalities and ethnicities to get on with each other and enhance global effectiveness. Globalization being the intensification of the bringing together of people of diverse human thought [51] offers a steady increase, in interdependence relations, among peoples. On this fact, the place of peoples and "other" cultures in the world-community in contemporary philosophy is a huge and multi-faceted topic. It is therefore the task of post-modernity to think positively about people of diversity in order not to deprive them of their radical humanity [52] in a globalized world. Being-with as advanced by Okolo and Heidegger is a basic human nature involving interpersonal relationships among peoples.

Further, its *corpus* covers both national and international relations among human beings and even relations with environment and everything in it. Hence, the necessary quest for interpersonal relations based on a new ethical world order.

Since the individual realizes himself within the essence of culture this study does not diminish the need for cooperation with others but, that cooperation should not be exploitative. Rather, cooperation should provide mutual benefit to the parties concerned through respect of one another's culture and through seeing the "other" as what he is. The study argues for better human relationships and co-existence in a new world order that respects persons, their culture, aspirations, viewpoints and contributions [53]. This study, therefore, projects culture as a starting point for the achievement of the new ethical world order. Culture in this sense is a unified picture of the universe explained by a system of concepts and inventions, which order the natural and social rhythms and the place of individuals in them [54]. So, attention should be given to a people's culture and how it shapes their thoughts and positions. This is on the fact that the acknowledgement and respect of people's culture is a volatile pathway to ensuring self-reliance. Aristotle supports this view in his argument that "...to be self-sufficing is the end and best [55]." More so, contact among cultures has dramatically increased since the turn of modernity. These contacts have introduced philosophical traditions. Responses to these encounters take different forms such as rejection, incomprehension or active engagement. If global justice is to be achieved then it might only be through acknowledgement of cultural differences and the humanities of the peoples [56].

In campaigning for mutuality and respect for all cultures as having something distinct to offer to the globalizing world, every individual culture must ensure to wipe away her inferiority complex syndrome. This syndrome is evident, for example, in Igbo statements, such as: 'ndi ocha akarika anyi' (white men are greater than us), 'ndi ocha bu mmuo' (white men are spirits), 'bekee wu agbara' (white men are gods) [57]. This inferiority nature must be stamped out because with such belief-system people would not see much worth celebrating in one's culture, in this case, African philosophy and culture. If the Africans do not see the uniqueness in their culture, then, they should not expect the West to see it for them or grant the rest of 'us' (Africa, particularly) the status of humanity and equality [58]. The United Nations secretary general, Antonio Guterres vividly uses the outbreak of the Covid-19 to stress the relevance of better human relationships. He says: "The relationship between the biggest powers has never been as dysfunctional. Covid-19 is showing dramatically, either we join together or we can be defeated." Unfortunately, even after this statement the discussion in the global think-tanks is not about cooperation but, whether the Chinese or the United States will emerge as leaders of the post-Covid-19 world thereby projecting another 'New World Order'. This caused the secretary general of World Health Organization

(WHO) to propose that the better way forward is the coming together of nations. This is because the whole of humanity faces a single enemy in Covid-19 [59]. The Covid-19 hit all cultures and perhaps gave human beings the lessons to redesign how we live and interact with one another.

The aim of philosophers and philosophic systems everywhere is, to rationally, give an account, for the universe, as the human being, experiences it. Every system plays a complementary role, assisting all others, in helping the human being, to know, as much truth, as rationally possible, since no single system contains all the truth about the universe but, advances some truth [60]. It is my position that it is the special character of the relationships among individual human beings that is of central importance for moral philosophy. It is a relationship between one human being and another simply as beings that are in the world together with one another. It is these entities standing in this relation to one another that Okolo argues exist in solidarity and Heidegger argues are “for the sake of others”. Thus, relation to other human beings is one of profound and unilateral dependence; it should be encouraged because, the beings with whom we are primarily dealing are ones defined by their capacity to satisfy needs that we cannot satisfy ourselves. At the same time that we are learning to acknowledge their humanity, we are also learning to accommodate ourselves to the independent rhythms of their lives.

Although Okolo speaks of family-hood based on communitarian *ethos* like other African scholars but, in this dimension, he argues about a contract of solidarity, between all nations and peoples. He employs communitarianism as a tool necessary if we are to realize a rational relationship not only between individuals but, also between groups and peoples. Family-hood in this ontology is universal in which every man is deeply related in a form of universal brotherhood. This community structure goes beyond the level of emphasizing a dignified and distinctive personal identity in theoretical terms to laying concrete in existential terms what it is to be so defined in living experience. The human being as a ‘being-with’ in Okolo’s ontology is a humanism which bears a meaning in terms of economic, political, social and religious policies as it seeks to reconstruct the structure of geocentricism, exploitation, inequality and disharmony to harmony (of being, in a mystical network, of interrelatedness, material and physical) in order to ensure a universal equilibrium. Hence, it is important to acknowledge our differences in the way we look at Being instead of trying to condemn one attitude or the other.

Okolo and Heidegger’s notions of ‘being-with’ can act as underpinnings for strong philosophical ethical foundations for the New World Order that this study advances, since moral philosophy centres on human relations, how and what should guide it. On this fact, one is not given the license to do what one pleases. I argue that the ethical imports of their concepts be explored as it can

open a possibility for truth as partnership, to truth itself of matters, responsibility and trust. Through their concepts human beings can make distinctions of good from what is evil even if depending on others for information can create an opportunity for abuse that would not otherwise exist. Both scholars argue that when we are trying to determine what the case is (true) the outcome of such an inquiry must not be the same for everyone. In this sense, ‘being-with’ commits us in the field of action to an attitude toward “others” that is, in its essentials comparable to that toward our partners in the search for truth. What this means is that human epistemic situations they could be dependent on “others” and this may provide perhaps an essential feature of their way of being with one another [61]. This study calls on human beings to grant recognition and humanity to another human being because to the level individuals deny others’ recognition they also deny themselves the possibility of being recognized.

Significantly, the study draws from Olafson’s illustration about the concern for the well-being, of our families, children, as a perfect example of the unselfishness trust and responsibility inherent in Okolo and Heidegger’s ‘being-with’. It is my view as Okolo also advances that creation of a stable environment will enable a more scientific, stable, productive and creative scholarship in order to see the true essence of the identity, personality, culture and philosophy of peoples. This will fire the African and other people to creatively offer contributions towards a better world (new ethical world order) through its solutions to the many problems facing humanity. I also argue that every policy and discussion about people should capture the interests of the individuals, groups and communities with all their complex social classes and groups, as well as, their different concrete situations [62]. Okolo’s African ‘being-with’ is, therefore, a socio-ontological construct made in order to preserve what he perceives to be good values of the traditional African society. Realizing that the African experience of social-self is further scrutinized into ethnic social-self, Okolo calls for global social-self, which transcends ethnic, national and continental social-selves through recognition of the other individual of another tribe, nationality and race as brother of a global family-hood. By relating Okolo’s notion of African ‘being-with’ with Heidegger’s ‘being-with’ (*Mitsein*), the study found that exclusivism, racism, discrimination and such like are not the best approach to optimal flourishing in a diverse world that is interconnected. For this reason, the study advances a new ethical world order which goes beyond ethnic and national social-selves and that respect and give dignity to peoples of different skin colours, nationalities and ethnicities as members of the same extending global brotherhood.

There are hindrances to better human relationships. These include egocentric domination maintained through the tools of powers of the state such as militarization; superiority of culture, which brings about distancing, oppression and domination, as well as, socio-centric

thinking, which obscures critical thinking. My argument is based on the fact that culture can be manipulated. Essential ingredients of communitarian ethics and the principles that promote human relationships and reduce tension have been mentioned to include: love, respect for human dignity, tolerance, humanity, trust. However, as has been pointed out human beings as much as they are fundamentally social, are also fundamentally anti-social and the ideology of a society at a given time develops one side of these two aspects of the human being. Despite these ethical viewpoints advanced the reality on ground is that there is oppression, inequality, non-respect of human dignity, conflicts and discriminations among human beings. So, there is a need to propose and enforce measures that can curtail the anti-social aspects of the human being while entrenching man's sociality. Below are some practical measures that can enhance human sociality.

1. The Value-System: Okolo argues that the starting point to change is "a dynamic educational philosophy, which gives human beings a new awareness of self, a novel sense of dignity and an altogether new life and value system [63]." This education will free individuals from error, prejudice, false opinions and irrational assumptions. This educational philosophy includes upholding human dignity through labour and not ostentatious lifestyle which largely betrays people's humanity and dignity. For instance, 'native doctors' with their money-making ritual brouhaha only succeed in building sycophants thereby killing the social aspect of the human being. This is because such practices and its ritual ceremonies encourage wrong values such as killing of other human beings or objectification of fellow human beings for the purpose of gaining wealth. This value-system is a movement from the principle of protecting one's families to actually consuming them. Unfortunately, it is these attitudes that individuals and society applaud and those who glorify these attitudes are recognized and rewarded by society thereby killing the values that promote solidarity and responsibility for one another and trustworthiness upon which human relationships thrive. Thus, there is a need to appreciate the existence of hierarchy of values. In other words, there are basic honours and values that do not align with man and his sociality and essential dignity. Good neighbourliness, self-discipline, submission of one's desires and actions to the restraints of orderly social conduct in recognition of the rights and desires of others, desire for the common good which is only achieved in cooperation, are all values that can promote solidarity and human dignity.

2. Activism: It is not enough to propose courageous values. Since courageous values demand courageous individuals, individuals should be adamant enough to actively and peacefully enforce the values that have been mentioned and such like. Less attention should be given to the pains and sufferings that stand on the way of bringing about these courageous values. Besides, adventure is experienced according to the measure of an individual's courage. The people should be, therefore, brave enough to

call for responsibility and accountability as the hallmarks of true leadership. The people should become more activists. Also, individuals need to look at their culture, recognise the good and do them and reward them. Those who wish to be courageous should envisage the situations needed and practice them not only in their minds but also publicly. It was in order to enforce the social aspect of the human being that Christ made the ultimate sacrifice through his death thereby pushing the social aspect of the human being to its maximum.

3. The Reward-System: Both individuals, private and public sectors should invest more into productive agenda and programmes that promote right values. Any individual can think, invent or discover something worthwhile if such has sufficient incentives for his toil. When the society celebrates mediocre and individuals who cannot account for their wealth, it is invariably encouraging the people to emulate such living and values. Today, education in Africa as a whole and Nigeria, particularly, receives little or no recognition as the institutions are in a sorry-state and the graduates sit at home doing nothing. The first-class graduate is left to languish in penury without recognition whereas individuals who brandish their nudity on national televisions are celebrated and rewarded as role models. Such reward system only smothers values that engender development and creative thinking in a society. The study therefore calls for creators and value thinkers to be recognised and rewarded including the scholars and inventors.

4. Revisit and Rewrite History: Europeans were not able to independently enter the West and Central African interior to capture Africans and force them onto ships to the Americas. Instead, European traders generally relied on a network of African rulers and traders to capture and bring enslaved Africans from various coastal and interior regions like Brass-Nembe, the Lagos and Calabar ports, Bonny Island and Elem-Kalabari to slave castles on the West and Central African coast. Many of these traders acquired captives as a result of military and political conflict, but some also pursued slave trading for profit. Thus, there was a pre-existing slave trade system in Africa before encounter with Europe [64]. Based on the foregoing, the study argues that another way a society can grow its social side is by revisiting and rewriting its history. The African needs to accept publicly that African person played a role and in fact were corroborators in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery. The essence of revisiting and rewriting history is to correct and reinforce knowledge at all levels. The African should engage in self-questioning. He should question the white man's history as much as it concerns the African.

5. Leadership Selection System: The leadership selection system should be changed and based on people's capacity, responsibility, welfare and accountability. Today, leadership is synonymous with greed, avarice, affluence and corruption. The reality shows a system where individuals scheme their way to leadership positions at

whatever cost since they are not accountable to their kith and kin. This leadership structure like the warrant chief system could be regarded as outcome of a vagrant search by the colonial masters for a political system that would serve their dictatorial and exploitative model for governance and a destroyer of socio-political equanimity. Such system destroys sociality since these leaders conceive that they must feed off one another in order to grow and acquire wealth. Thus, the current leadership system is only a contemporary extension of the colonial attempt to create kingship institution in Igbo land [65]. If the leadership system is made less attractive through change in values perhaps there will be a change in the new and better direction that promotes better human relationships and the common good.

2. Conclusions

Being-with belongs to the sphere of inter-human relationships where one human being is confronted by another human being. To, therefore, answer the question: 'What is man?' is to understand man, as a being, who participates in a dialogue, in which another human being is encountered [66]. Okolo and Heidegger philosophies were attempts to recognize the contributions of human beings or humanity to the understanding, of all that is in the world. It is shown that philosophies, circumstance and contexts play key roles in philosophizing and human conceptualizations. Philosophy through its critical and objective analysis, gives birth to new thoughts and ideas while old ones develop and mature, thereby ensuring that culture and civilization are promoted [67].

The study indicates that we need to take a critical, historical, phenomenological and hermeneutical look at the notions of African 'being-with' in Okolo and 'being-with' in Heidegger. This is to be done by placing them side by side with the reality of our very existence, as well as, its imports, in our daily actions. If this is done, a brighter understanding will be reached, as this will enable a digestion of the arguments or controversy and reconciliation of disconnects, in the concept, of the human being in Western and African philosophies. On the basis of this relation, the study advanced a new ethical world order that enhances and respects cultures, guides the treatment we give to people of different skin colours, people of another continent, nationalities, ethnicities, every human individual and the dignity we attach to them.

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