

Intercultural Philosophy as Philosophy of National Unity

An African Perspective

UCHENNA AZUBUIKE EZEUGU, NIGERIA MARITIME UNIVERSITY
UMEZURIKE JOHN EZUGWU, NIGERIA MARITIME UNIVERSITY

Abstract

Why is it that 68 years after the Bandung Conference, philosophies of national unity are still contested, and the challenges of ethnicity, tribalism, bigotry, social exclusion, and religious cleansing persist? The situation points to the fact that it is either that these philosophies of national unity have not sufficiently addressed the problem of national unity, or that they lack the capacity to address it. It is possible that, instead of these philosophies of national unity focusing on national integration and inclusiveness, they have promoted disunity and exclusivity. One could argue that each philosophy of national unity is birthed from an exclusivist angle, projecting a particular narrative to serve as philosophy of national unity. It is on this note that we present intercultural philosophy as a philosophy of national unity. Intercultural philosophy, in this sense, goes beyond the Global South's quest for epistemic inclusion, against the Global North's epistemic dominance or hegemony. Africa is multi-ethnic and multi-religious as well as multi-cultural; with this in mind, a potent philosophy of national unity must take into consideration all the above superlative factors. Using philosophical methods of analysis and hermeneutics, we propose intercultural philosophy as philosophy of national unity.

Keywords: Intercultural philosophy; unity; epistemic hegemony and marginalization; recognition

Introduction

The nature of what constitutes a philosophy of national unity raises many questions. These questions logically presuppose the lack of, or the inadequacy of, existing philosophies of national unity. The Bandung Conference of 1955 was the coming together of Asia and African countries to form a united front against their perceived common enemies, or oppressors in global politics. The group of Asian and African countries saw in their unity a way out from Western epistemic, economic, and cultural dominance. It was at a time when Western hegemony had permeated all facets of human existence, and had relegated the Global South to the position of non-actors in global politics. It is important to note that 68 years after the conference, not much has been achieved in the area of unity, especially in Africa. Gassama (2017, p. 129) contends that “the conference was marred by deceit and conceit occasioned by unreflective embrace of the rhetoric of false solidarity and grand visions.” The present chapter will interrogate this challenge with a view to proffering a more potent approach to the challenge of unity, especially in Africa.

The chapter would like to argue that the challenge or problem associated with unity is traceable to human nature. This human nature is what Fukuyama (1992, p. 146) called the “struggle for recognition”. It suffices to say that whatever form of unity has eluded Africa or Asia in relation to this discourse stems from this human nature. Historically, Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Hegel, and Nietzsche among other philosophers have all talked about human nature, though using different language (Fukuyama, 1992, p. 162; Zuckert, 1988). Francis Fukuyama expanded and popularized the idea, borrowing from Hegel and Kojeve. For him, there are two powerful forces at work in human history. He calls one “the logic of modern science” and the other “the struggle for recognition” (Fukuyama, 1992). This chapter is more concerned with the latter than the former. “The struggle for recognition” in Fukuyama’s view is the very “motor of history”. It is that human nature that is responsible for all known conflicts in human history. Plato calls it “thymos” or “spiritedness”, For Machiavelli, it is “desire for glory”, Hobbes dubs it “pride or Vainglory” (Fukuyama, 1992, p. 162; Zuckert, 1988). All of these terms refer to that dimension of man, his humanity, which feels the need to place value on oneself above others. It is the political part of the human personality because it is what drives men and humanity to want to elevate themselves over others. The Global North and Global South dichotomy is traceable to this human nature; the desire for recognition. Western epistemic, economic and cultural hegemony is also referable to this very human nature. History has always shown that it is innate in human beings to dominate fellow human beings, once one is in the position to do

so. It is obvious that the Bandung Conference ended up replacing Western imperialism with indigenous dictators and tyrants. At the geopolitical level, there are suspicions that countries that were part of the Bandung Conference (especially China) currently impose economic imperialism on others.

Balasubramanyam (2015, pp. 17-18), writing on China and India's economic relations in Africa, states that there is a growing concern over the sincerity of China's and India's economic relations in Africa. In his view, part of the argument is that China and India use Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as an instrument of control over the government of host countries. Historically, there has never been a time in which the world has achieved unity in its real sense. Even the United Nations cannot be said to be truly united in all intent and purpose. Ramon Grosfoguel (2007, p. 214), writing on the historical divide between the Global North and Global South, thus states:

We [people of the 'Global South'] went from the sixteenth-century characterization of 'people without writing' to the eighteenth and nineteenth-century characterization of 'people without history' to the twentieth-century characterization of 'people without development' and more recently, to the early twenty-first century of 'people without democracy'.

Struggle for Recognition

The struggle for recognition is inborn in humanity and it operates at both an individual and at the geopolitical level. For U. A. Ezeogu (2021, p. 55), colonialism, neo-colonialism, Eurocentrism, and Western epistemic hegemony are all products of the struggle for recognition that seems to characterize human nature. The focus has always been centered on conquest, domination, and exploitation. It appears that while efforts among Third World countries for liberation were underway, there was also a covert intention by some of these countries (especially the Peoples' Republic of China) to replace Western domination with their own.

One can infer a case of substitution in the Bandung project, though there are positives associated with the 1955 Conference. At the base of all this internal or geopolitical maneuvering is the concept or idea of a struggle for recognition, which has also been the springboard for all forms of agitations; intellectual, economic, political, or cultural. These have been the baseline of disunity both at national and international levels. The idea of the struggle for recognition is the view that states that there is an innate tendency in man to place himself above his fellow.

From such a perspective, this chapter attempts to posit intercultural philosophy as philosophy of national unity. Intercultural philosophy is philosophy that promotes multicultural understanding and creates room for satisfactory inter-relational experience, and to a great extent controls this aspect of humanity called the struggle for recognition. Our context of intercultural philosophy coincides with Chimakonam's (2015, p. 36) conversation with Bruce Janz. Here, intercultural philosophy is conceived as a framework in which various philosophical traditions can converge to relate to each other without any one taking the posture of superiority. It is the mutual interaction of equals, moving from their various places to space. This addresses the problem posed by "the struggle for recognition" as whatever form of recognition that comes because of intercultural interaction becomes a product of mutual understanding and not an imposition on the other.

This chapter first considers unity as the spirit of the Bandung Conference. Secondly, it establishes how 'the struggle for recognition', which is part of human nature, has constituted a major challenge to this unity. It further analyses critically some selected Pan-Africanists' efforts at propounding philosophies of national unity, with the view of showing the gap created by human nature's quest for recognition. Additionally, it explores the concept of intercultural philosophy, and how it fittingly addresses the problem associated with the struggle for recognition. In conclusion, the chapter projects intercultural philosophy as the philosophy of national unity.

Unity as the Spirit of the Bandung Conference

Hermeneutically, it is our position that 'unity' is and should be seen as the spirit of Bandung. The Communiqué of the Bandung Conference was built on the premise of cooperation among multiple civilizations and religions. For Eslava et al. (2017, p. 6), the 'Spirit of Bandung' was a phrase made popular by Roeslan Abdulgani, Secretary General of the conference and it was a reawakening slogan that symbolizes unity among Third World countries. The agenda of the conference was not just about asserting independence against Western imperialism. It was also about how to face an uncertain future occasioned by independence (Fakhri & Reynolds, 2017; Eslava et al., 2017). Richard Wright (1956, p. 10) saw the Bandung Conference as the meeting of the despised, the insulted, the hurt, and the marginalized people of the world. It was a case of class, racial, and religious consciousness on the global stage.

What had these nations in common? Wright argued that they had nothing in common, except for their past relationship to the Western world. The conference was perceived to be a kind of judgment against the Western world. Eslava et al. (2017, p. 18) suggested that the Bandung Conference brought together different nationalist projects and class interests in order to create a widespread condemnation of the indignity of imperialism and cultural chauvinism. It laid the groundwork for a larger “Third World” as a political entity, which included some countries of Europe and all the Latin America.

Deducing from the fear and challenges associated with facing an uncertain future, it was imperative on the part of these countries to come together in order to chart a common course. It suffices to say that the unity of the countries of the Global South, from Asia and Africa, constituted the main essence of the Bandung Conference. It is the position of this chapter that ‘unity’ of purpose (economically, politically, and culturally) was the main focus of the 1955 Bandung Conference. To substantiate this claim the first point of contact will be to consider the “Final Communiqué of the Asian-African Conference” otherwise known as the Bandung Conference of 1955.

From the final communiqué, the conference was poised to consider problems that are of common interest and concern to countries of Asia and Africa. These problems were condensed into three major ones: economy, culture, and politics. This was against the background that countries of the Global North were far ahead of countries from the Global South in these three areas. They felt that the only way their voices could be heard, at a geopolitical level, was by creating a synergy amongst themselves and by presenting one united front. Considering the similarity of their problems, and their inability to challenge Western imperialists individually, they saw in unity the only way that their voiceless voice could be heard and taken seriously.

Appadorai (1955), in stating events that led to the Bandung Conference, pointed out that, prior to the conference, Asians had already started to register their displeasure and critical sentiments over the operation of world affairs. For him, there was a call for Asians to take their rightful place in the consideration of world problems. What triggered this position among the Asian countries, according to Appadorai, was the fact that when “European people think of peace, they think of it only in terms of Europe” (1955, p. 1). To the Asians, he pointed out, in the imagination of European thinkers the world seemed to be confined to the areas inhabited by European races. No consideration was given to the people of other races. Such a high level of Eurocentrism or hegemony was not faced by Asians alone; Africans were also confronted by the same problem. With the level of European

advancement, logically it was near impossible for individual countries of Asia or Africa to challenge them in any aspect of human endeavor. The Bandung Conference was to form synergy among Asian and African countries, in order to challenge the *status quo* of Western dominance. It aimed at forming a united front capable of challenging Western hegemony. The conference laid the foundation of what later became the “Third World” project.

One can foresee from the conference the potential of ‘united’ Third World countries. To what extent was this project achieved? We argue that, though the Third World project was good and seemed achievable, the inability of the conference to address the problem of what Fukuyama (1992, p. 146) called the “struggle for recognition” constituted a major flaw which later frustrated the project. Gassama (2017, p. 129) posited that the leaders at the conference had also inherited one of the most powerful weapons of human domination and destruction from their former colonial masters. In his assessment, Bandung became a stage to consolidate another round of unprincipled, good old-fashioned struggle for power and domination justified with a high rhetoric of cultivated deceit.

Gassama (2017, p. 131) states that there was deceit and conceit at the Bandung Conference. For him, a major deceit and conceit associated with the conference was to be found in the catastrophic politics that later defined much of the Third World countries. Among the possibly powerful nations of the Third World that had adequate resources to make a substantial difference, it became obvious that it was in their interest to have the sort of leadership that challenged what the Bandung Conference propagates. One can infer a case of having another interest outside the main purpose of the Bandung Conference. While unity is their point of convergence, ‘the struggle for recognition’ which is part of human nature, led to the disintegration of the conference goals. Gassama reacting to this kind of situation, thus states: “Rule by terror and mass murder and an unwillingness to give up power at any cost were among the signal lessons engraved in the political cultures nurtured by the Bandung host and participants, almost without exception” (2017, p. 133).

It was a clear case of these leaders trying to eliminate Western imperialism, in order to introduce their own dictatorial leadership. At the geopolitical level it has become a case of survival of the fittest as some participants at the conference are being accused of economic imperialism. This chapter concentrates on driving home its argument that the solution to the problem of disunity, occasioned by ‘the struggle for recognition’, is found in intercultural philosophy. This argument is based on the limitations that seem to exist in some philosophies of national unity. Let us consider some philosophies of national unity in Africa and those termed Pan-Africanist leaders and their conception of national unity.

Pan-Africanist Leaders on the Concept of National Unity

There are no known established philosophies of unity in Africa, but attempts at building a Pan-Africanist ideal of unity on the continent were made by a few of the independence-era leaders. While the Bandung Conference sought to create synergy among Asian and African countries in order to withstand their common enemy, Western imperialism, the focus of Pan-Africanism as a movement was also to create unity among all the nations of Africa, aiming at withstanding their common challenges. After the Bandung Conference, African leaders considered their peculiarities and tried to assert the need for African unity. It is important to note that the Bandung Conference, to a large extent, influenced the coming together of independent African countries charting a new course for Africa. For instance, in the First Conference of Independent African States in Accra, 15-22 April 1958, the Conference Declaration affirms its support to the Declaration of the Asian-African Conference held at Bandung. The first part of the Declaration puts it thus:

We, the African states assembled here in Accra, in this our first conference conscious of our responsibility to humanity and especially to the people of Africa, and desiring to assert our African personality on the side of peace, hereby proclaim and solemnly reaffirm our unswerving loyalty to the Charter of the United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Declaration of the Asian-African Conference held at Bandung.

On this note, it is important to admit that while the Bandung Conference was at the level of Asia-Africa unity, the Conference of Independent African States was focused on African unity. This Conference of Independent African States was, basically, an offshoot of Pan-Africanism. One cannot discuss unity in Africa without reference to Pan-Africanism. The Pan-Africanism Movement sought to build African unity. Here we will consider some selected Pan-African leaders and their notions about African unity: J. K. Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, K. Kaunda, and Sekou Toure. These African leaders saw the need for and the potentials of a united Africa, especially in the face of their common enemies.

Julius K. Nyerere (1965) argued that Africa as a continent was weak in relation to the outside world. It became even weaker when countries of Africa operated independently of each other. His quest for African unity was based on the view that Africa stands a better chance, at geopolitics, when united together than when they operate as independent states. According to him, in unity lies the safety, the integrity, and the development of the continent. Nyerere maintains that before any

progress can be made towards unity, we must recognize that “it has to come by agreement and agreement between equals” (1965, p. 327). Nyerere’s position is particularly striking in that it points to the very foundation of meaningful unity. By implication, for the unity to be successful, it must be a negotiated or possibly consensual unity, and none of the negotiating units should be seen as superior or inferior to others at the negotiating table.

It is important to note that the major concern of Nyerere is how to prevent outside powers from exploiting Africa, given the different needs and aspirations of its different countries. He then advocated for a United Nations of Africa, in which each member state would retain its sovereignty, while co-operating with the other members to secure common action with them. For him all members would be bound by certain freely acceptable principles, one of which is the principle of collective responsibility (Nyerere, 1965, p. 328). In the same vein, in his ‘East African Federation’ Nyerere indicated the imperialist ‘divide and rule’ as another source of concern in the quest for African development. The ‘divide and rule method’ basically aims at ensuring that Africans are more conscious of their differences than their similarities. He stated that

Whenever we have asked for our rights to govern ourselves, it has been the imperialist who has told us that we are not ready because we still have tribal, religious, communal and other differences. At the same time it has been the imperialist who has encouraged these divisions, in order to continue to rule a weak and divided people (Nyerere, 1969, p. 337).

Again, in his “Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism”, Nyerere saw Ujamaa as the basis of African unity. He argues that in *Ujamaa*, which means family-hood or kinship, the system represents what could be seen as an African socialist system. He contends that socialism, just like democracy, is an attitude of the mind needed to guarantee that people care for each other. African unity was, for him, the only way Africa could wrestle with Western imperialism. The challenge is that, after many decades of African political independence, not much has been achieved in the area of unity. Instead, ethnic leaning, tribalism, sectionalism, and various forms of social and political conflicts have become the order of the day.

Nyerere (1969, p. 327) was right when he posited that, before any progress can be made towards the unity of Africa, Africans must recognize that it has to come by agreement and agreement between equals. Agreement in this context is not the same as a liberal social contract; the focus of this agreement is on how independent nations of Africa can form a synergy for united African states. This position

addresses only one dimension of the problem. It does not take into consideration the tendency in man to dominate his fellow man. The existence of the Organization of African Unity, which has become the African Union, proves that mutual agreement and coming together is possible. Conversely, the undue influence on and workings of the European Union and China behind the African Union questions if there was actually a mutual agreement by the people of the continent. However, the question of whether it has solved the problem of unity in Africa remained unanswered. There are many more problems associated with unity in Africa today than there were during the pre-independence era. Nyerere failed to include discourse on how human nature can contribute to unity or disunity. He probably did not recognize human nature's tendency to assert itself and seek what Fukuyama called the 'struggle for recognition' (1992, p. 146). In his idea of African unity, he failed to acknowledge this very important perspective. The Biafra question in Nigeria can illustrate the matter further. To this day, the indigenous people of Biafra still feel that they are being marginalized in Nigeria, hence they clamor for a country of their own. There is an ongoing perception that some people are 'born to rule' in Nigeria, while others are 'born to be ruled'. The struggle for recognition spurs the 'born to rule' to dominate others, and the same struggle for recognition has also made the 'born to be ruled' refuse to be dominated. The result has led to numerous and unending conflicts and social unrest in Nigeria.

The next Pan-Africanist leader to be considered is Kwame Nkrumah (1963). Nkrumah's argument was anchored on the fact that no individual African country could compete favorably with the West independently. He also thought that there was a high possibility of an unwelcome rivalry and unhealthy competition among the nations of Africa if they operated independently. Based on these premises, he argued for a united Africa. For Nkrumah, despite the fact that Africa lacks what could be seen as necessary ingredients for unity – a common race, culture, and language – there still exists a sense of oneness in that we are Africans (1963, p. 341). The very essence of African unity for him is that Africa needs the strength of its combined numbers and resources to protect itself from the danger of returning to colonialism in a disguised form. Nkrumah's position, unlike Nyerere's, focused mainly on 'why' there should be unity among African countries. However, his approach failed to specify how this unity could be achieved and how it can be managed, considering the differences in race, culture, and language.

Another Pan-African leader who had a vision of an African unity is Kenneth Kaunda (1966). Kaunda was of the view that closer links between nations must be voluntarily entered. His idea was that African countries' unity must not be achieved through the use of force, but rather through the power of persuasion, as

well as preaching of the gospel of unity (1966, p. 348). For him, since Africa is not homogeneous, to achieve unity less emphasis should be made in sharpening a people's consciousness of being a nation (1966, p. 348). "For the more successful the consciousness of people as separate nations, the less likely they are to accept being submerged into new found identity in a wider union" (348).

Kaunda listed about five factors which are likely going to push Africa towards unity. The factors are: the realities of international and continental politics, the existence of a common enemy, the charter for African unity, the richness and diversity of viewpoints on the continent, and finally, the idea that Africa is a young continent (1966, p. 348-349). The first, 'the reality of international or continental politics'. In his view, the dimension or the shape which international politics was taken was such that, no country will want to live in isolation, especially the new independent countries of Africa. The second is 'the existence of a common enemy in Western Imperialists'. The newly found independent countries of Africa understood the exploitative nature of their former colonial masters, and their unwillingness to grant them total freedom. Kaunda hoped that such an understanding would help them in forming synergy amongst them against any future exploitative move. The third is the 'Charter for African Unity'. He gathered the Charter would testify to the fact that individual African nations were ready to place themselves under obligation for some larger good. He argues that the realization of the Addis Ababa Charter was an indication of the possibility of a united Africa. The fourth, 'the richness and diversity of viewpoint on the African continent paradoxically is a powerful aid to unity'. Here, Kaunda posits that, since no one independent state was utterly dominant in the continent, and almost every country had contributed to the common policy, this participatory membership would enhance policy acceptability (1966, p. 349). Lastly is the idea that Africa is a young continent, in a sense implying that Africa is a continent full of young people. The majority group among African populations is the youth. For him, it would be easier to imbue them with the spirit of African unity. Kaunda's fourth factor seems to be very close to the idea of intercultural philosophy, which this chapter is trying to project, though he did not articulate it as such. There was no properly articulated philosophical framework for the achievement of African unity by Kaunda, Nyerere and Nkrumah inclusive. Again, the fact that, after so many decades of projecting his view, Africa is currently more in need of unity than ever, shows the ineffectiveness of his view on African unity.

Next, we turn to Sekou Toure's conception of African unity. Toure pointed out four principles under which unity can be achieved in Africa: the first is equality of all nations, large or small; second, fraternal solidarity in their relationships; third,

the common use of certain resources; and, finally, the respect for the character and institutions of each state (1975, p. 352). He opined that unity cannot be achieved around one man or one nation. His principles were necessary conditions for the attainment of unity. How he arrived at these principles is not clear. There were no historical or scientific proofs as to the workability of his principles.

There are litanies of Pan-Africanist writings on African unity, which cannot all be explored in this chapter. The focus of this section is to show the limitations associated with Pan-Africanist views on African unity, to assert that these limitations are the very reasons why unity has eluded Africa over the years, and finally to propose intercultural philosophy as the philosophy of national unity.

The Struggle for Recognition as the Problem of Unity

The major obstacle to global unity, continental unity, or national unity is traceable to this component of human nature already identified as ‘the struggle for recognition’. Here, we will establish how this concept is a major challenge to unity. Unity is built from the local level up, or from individual level to the larger society; the idea of global unity becomes a chimera when it does not follow this process. The idea of ‘the struggle for recognition’ for Fukuyama (1992, p. 146) is the view that “man was from the start, a social being, his own sense of self-worth and identity is intimately connected with the value that other people place on him.” This man wants not only to be recognized by other men, but to be recognized *as* a man (p. 147). This chapter sees ‘the struggle for recognition’ as the tendency in man to dominate his fellow or to resist such domination. The struggle for recognition is the political part of the human personality because it is what drives men to want to arrogate themselves over others. Fukuyama borrowed this idea from Hegel and Alexandre Kojève’s interpretation of Hegel. Fukuyama’s usage of the term was mainly to prove that liberal democracy is the end of historical ideological revolution because within liberal democracy the struggle for recognition, which is what mainly triggers ideological revolution, is properly addressed (1992, p. xi).

The struggle for recognition, we would like to assert, operates both in the individual human person and at the national level. It is the springboard to all forms of geopolitical maneuvering: economic competition among nations of the world, arm races, the development of nuclear weapons and the like. At the individual level, one may accept that the struggle for recognition has been reasonably tamed, especially within liberal democracy, as there are positive ways to express this desire or struggle; such as sports and other competitions. Fukuyama’s conviction is that

the struggle for recognition, which is the motor that drives human history, is fully satisfied in liberal democracy, hence the end of ideological evolution (1992, p. xi). When we take a cursory glance at the historical past and present, it suffices to say that the struggle for recognition remains a divisive force in geopolitics. It appears that it can only be addressed using intercultural philosophy. The concept of intercultural philosophy can be seen as the philosophical view that promotes the integration of various philosophical traditions without the marginalization or domination of any of the traditions.

Fukuyama (1992) affirms that the struggle for recognition provides us with insight into the nature of international politics. The focus of his argument is to establish a coherent and directional history for mankind that will eventually lead the greater part of humanity to liberal democracy. Almost all the countries of the Global North are liberal democracies, but the existence of various forms of domination or marginalization by these liberal democracies at the geopolitical level has shown that liberal democracy is not the answer to 'the struggle for recognition'. When we consider their ideas vis a vis imperialism (in the past) and neocolonialism (in the present), one thing remains constant: their willful intention to dominate others politically, economically, and culturally.

There is even a clear competitive struggle among these elite countries. The American and Russian or America and Chinese relationships are clear evidence of this competitive struggle. There is obviously no difference between modern liberal democracies and imperialism or neocolonialism in terms of their essence. It is only a matter of linguistic exchange as their major essence has always been to exploit and marginalize. Elsewhere U. A. Ezeogu (2022, p. 42) proposed cultural diplomacy as a dimension of geopolitics. For him, cultural diplomacy is an instrument of competitive struggle by elitist countries to assert their interest on the rest of the world. It is a diplomatic or subtle way of projecting one's culture onto others. He further argued that, through the instrumentality of cultural diplomacy, the Euro-American world has impressed their culture so much into the psyche of the average African that Africans are now rejecting most things that are indigenous to them and have become agents of promotion for Western values and culture (2022, p. 43). The argument subsists when we consider Africa in the light of the following: religion, dress code, language, movies, food, marriage, consumption, systems of learning, and so on.

The question is, who are those engaged in the politics of cultural diplomacy, or what is known as 'soft power' politics? A critical exploration of this question will unveil the activities of 'the struggle for recognition' among liberal democracies. Ruch Doshi (2020, p. 1) prepared a statement, presented before the U.S. Senate

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transport; Subcommittee on Security, which further exposes this competitive struggle for domination. Attempting to advise U.S. on how to retain their position as the global technology leader, Doshi argues that the challenge posed by China is serious because China is a serious competitor. By implication, China is pursuing a robust state-backed effort to displace the United States from global technology leadership. In his view, “Beijing believes that the competition over technology is about more than whose companies will dominate particular markets. It is also about which country will be best positioned to lead the world” (2020, p. 2).

The question of power assertion points to the place of the struggle for recognition in international politics. One can validly infer that the struggle for recognition, under whatever guise, is major challenge to unity. Furthermore, Tsega Etefa (2019, p. 1) was right when he observed that the major challenges facing many developing countries, especially in Africa, have been ethnic-based liberation struggles, fighting exclusion and chronic marginalization. He suggested that many states in the region of Africa were formed based on colonial manipulation (Etefa, 2019, p. 1). Colonial masters created a sad situation in Africa, where political power was given to a favored group to the exclusion of the rest, to remain in control of leadership and power. This state of affairs has led to mistrust among ethnic groups in the same nation. According to Etefa, “socioeconomic and political marginalization, continued neglect, lack of security, ineffective administration, and poor state-citizen relationships are the main problems in many African ethnic conflicts” (2019, 6).

Meredith (2011, p. 493), writing on the Rwandan Genocide, argued that the cause of the genocide was not traceable to ethnic antagonism, rather to fanatical elite engagement in a modern struggle for power and wealth through the instrumentality of ethnic antagonism. Ethnic and religious antagonisms are just instruments in the elite’s power struggle. Meredith (2011), Aapengnuo (2010), and Elbadaw and Sambanis (2000) all corroborated that tribalism or ethnic hatred has never been the root cause of conflict in Africa, rather the lack of access to power and resources occasioned by marginalization and exclusion are the main causes. In other words, the economic and the political domination of other ethnic groups in Africa is the main cause of conflicts in Africa. If we analyze further, it boils down to ‘the struggle for recognition’ on both sides. Hence if unity is to be achieved, whether at the global, continental or national level, the divisive nature of this human nature must be taken into consideration. It is on this note that we would like to present intercultural philosophy as a panacea to the problem of unity both at national and international levels.

Addressing the Problem of Unity through Intercultural Philosophy

We have been able to establish the lack or non-existence of a philosophy of unity in Africa. The challenge is that even Pan-African leaders, many decades ago, saw the need for unity in Africa, hence their various calls for it. This research seeks to propose intercultural philosophy as an adequate framework to deal with the problem of unity in Africa. The meaning and idea of what constitutes intercultural philosophy is multifaceted. There are as many views of intercultural philosophy as there are intercultural philosophers. The focus of this chapter is to explore and contextualize a specific idea of intercultural philosophy and further propose how it can address the problem of unity in Africa. Ma and Brakel argue that the “phrase ‘intercultural philosophy’ represents every kind of philosophical practice that involves the interpretation of conceptual schemes of one or more traditions, in terms of the conceptual schemes of another tradition” (2016, p. 178).

R. A. Mall posits that intercultural philosophy “is first and foremost the name of a philosophical attitude, a philosophical conviction that no one’s philosophy is the philosophy for the whole of mankind” (2000, p. xii). He further conceives intercultural philosophy as the antidote to the universalistic prejudice that ‘absolutizes’ one particular worldview to the entire world (2000, p. 45). There is a plethora of definitions of ‘intercultural philosophy’; our focus will be to establish the context in which we use the term. From there, we shall argue how intercultural philosophy, within our context, can address the problem of human nature responsible for the domination of others. This will help us establish our position that intercultural philosophy is the philosophy of national unity. However, intercultural philosophy within our context is an all-inclusive philosophical approach that creates room for healthy interaction among various philosophical traditions, without any form of hegemonic tendency. Our idea of intercultural philosophy goes beyond cultural mix at the continental level, where one may talk of Western, African, and Oriental traditions. Within Africa as a continent, though there are certain forms of cultural similarities among its people, it is important to note that cultural variations are abound. Hence, the idea of intercultural philosophy this chapter projects could be said to include what one may term ‘intra-cultural’ philosophy. The focus of this chapter is African unity; in Africa there are a lot of cultural variations. These cultural variations are fundamental in nature to each cultural group. As we advocate for epistemic and cultural inclusion at the global level, there is need for it to trickle down to the continent and nations of Africa as this will, to a large extent, guarantee unity in Africa.

Our notion of intercultural philosophy in this chapter is derived from Raul Fernet-Betancourt, who is considered to be one of the leading figures in the liberation philosophy of Latin America, and intercultural philosophy (2021). In his view, philosophy stems from the experience that the 'tender relationship', supposed to encompass all beings in the historical world, has been broken (2021, p. 5). This has led to various forms of divisiveness. He argues that when the power of unification disappears from people's lives the need for philosophy arises. Intercultural philosophy for him offers healing to humanity in all its diversity. His intercultural philosophy does not include political or legal dimensions, rather, it primarily focused on cultural relationships. Fernet-Betancourt's view of intercultural philosophy is derived from his idea of a 'broken relationship' (2021, p. 5). We can infer that his idea of intercultural philosophy does not take a competitive posture, but a healing posture (2021, p. 6). Intercultural philosophy in this sense tries to understand and accommodate the other. This kind of approach negates the domineering aspect of human nature (the struggle for recognition) which has been accused of being the root cause of all kinds of conflicts in human history. This is more explainable within Martin Buber's 'I-thou' relation as opposed to 'I-it' relation (1937, p. vi). Buber's 'I and thou' relation explains how man's attitude to other people should be. His attitude to other people is a relationship between persons without any diminishment of the other person, while his attitude to things is just a relationship to an object (1937, p. vii). It is logical to infer that conflicts occur when the 'I-thou' relation turns into an 'I-it' relation.

More so then, Wiredu argues, the prospect of a more peaceful coexistence among different peoples of the world can only be achieved through intercultural philosophy (1998, p. 147). His position is that intercultural philosophy can be of great service to humankind's pursuit of a more peaceful coexistence. In the same vein, Fernet-Betancourt argues that to improve human coexistence has little or nothing to do with designing better theories or models; rather, it lies in trying to improve concrete relationships in direct encounters (2021, pp. 6-7). Human coexistence whether good or bad represents a situation of cultural encounter, and intercultural philosophy, a contemporary theory, develops of recognition on a fairer basis within cultural and religious diversity. This idea of recognizing the other as different makes a great contribution towards solving the problems associated with plural coexistence.

Conclusion

The idea of intercultural philosophy is seen at the continental level or at the level of the Global North-Global South dichotomy. Beyond this understanding of intercultural philosophy, the idea can also be used at a much smaller or larger scale; within a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural society. It is important for us to note that, though Africans could be said to have common ancestry and significant cultural similarities, there are still in existence some strong cultural differences. These cultural differences are not necessarily bad because of the mere fact that they are different; rather the challenge lies in one trying to place itself above the other. While there are calls on the global stage for intercultural philosophy, this paper argues on the need for intercultural philosophy or 'intra-cultural' philosophy in Africa. This kind of intercultural philosophy will increase cognizance of Africa's cultural plurality; this will create a healthy ground for cultural integration and interaction without allowing any culture to dominate others. Such guaranteed equity and fairness will help to enhance unity in Africa.

It is this kind of intercultural space that will address the problem associated with domineering human nature: 'the struggle for recognition'. This will create room for better accommodation of various cultures among Africans and will eliminate mutual suspicion, to a large extent, which is the breeding ground for disunity. It is not enough to argue for intercultural philosophy at the intercontinental level, it is also very important to ensure that the same process trickles down within the continent and at national level. Any attempt to marginalize or silence the cultural voice of a people within the continental or national arrangement will always be met with stiff opposition and resistance, as shown through history. No country or people will want to suffer the fate of cultural and epistemic marginalization more than once. Logically, if the essences of the Asian-African Conference and The Conference of Independent States of Africa were to ensure unity among Asian and African countries and among African countries respectively, it is obvious that the only type of unity that can work is inclusive unity. It will be unreasonable for any country to support such a movement if its voice is still not going to be heard within the emerging new system. The only way to ensure unity and the sustainability of the unity is through intercultural philosophy.

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