



International Journal of African Studies

Publisher's Home Page: <https://www.svedbergopen.com/>



Research Paper

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The Universality-Particularity Debate Concerning Democracy Question in Africa: A Philosophical Reflection

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Article Info

Volume 4, Issue 1, June 2024

Received : 18 February 2024

Accepted : 11 May 2024

Published : 05 June 2024

doi: [10.51483/IJAFRS.4.1.2024.41-53](https://doi.org/10.51483/IJAFRS.4.1.2024.41-53)

Abstract

The objective of this paper consists in undertaking a philosophical inflection on a specific, particular but peculiar dimension of the problem and question of the existence, experience and experiment of democracy in Africa. Essentially, this peculiar problem concerning democracy has been tagged and termed “The Universality-Particularity Debate on Democracy in Africa”. For decades, the democracy question appears to have translated itself into a problem, predicament, nightmare and a peculiar sense of dilemma. In the first instance, the paper discovers that this debate derives its import from the field of philosophy which means that a philosophical reflection is what is required and needed to do adequate justice concerning its comprehension as well as a generous and general application to the realities that titivate and permeate Africa in relation to the democratic experience. Furthermore, the paper discovers that there is a sense and essence of positive profitability in the several seasoned sessions in which debate has occurred. The paper concludes that, in sure terms, even if an unwavering wave of commitment and intentional insistence has been exercised by proponent of these differing orientations, yet, the reflective attitude adopted with respect to the debate provides a clear indication that it is important to address, adore and admire, for proper use and unquestioned utility, the impeccability of a people locality without transgressing the sense and essence of global virtues that are openly, obviously and observably necessitated by condition and character that are contextually driven and consciously relevant.

Keywords: *Universality, Particularity, Debate, Question, Dilemma, Philosophy, Africa*

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1. Introduction

From every sense of purposeful sincerity, perceptual seriousness and prioritized significance, the African philosophy project is deeply and determinedly embedded, deliberately encoded and decisively ensconced in specific tasks that are not only legion, living, lofty, loud, loquacious but, also, indeed, lingering, laudable and legendary. In this light, the nature of this project, within the setting and statement of post-coloniality, is deemed as legitimate. It is to this end that the same project, the African philosophy project, has been defined, conceived, depicted, construed and constructed in ways that are pertinent to the soul of that project by various scholars. For some, that project is post-colonial soul-searching (Wiredu, 2004). For some others, the project is an attempt at decolonizing methodologies that are western in nature (Smith, 2021). Some others, still, conceive this project as a radically responsive and reactive project (Idowu, 2006).

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While some, still, clearly and concretely hold this project as a way of decolonizing the African socio-political, economic and cultural context and milieu.

While not necessarily contradicting those revered opinions and respectable, respectful and realistically recognizable judgments and positions on the African philosophy project, I could wish to describe that project as an attempt at projecting what may be described as alternativistic in nature. African philosophy is the desire to deliberate, in the decisive sense, on why there has to be alternative philosophy to the kind of philosophy that Africa is exposed and used to all along; that philosophy that is Eurocentric in nature, substance, spirit, soul, mindset, memory, moment and mainstay. If, indeed, the African philosophy project is an alternative project, it follows that it has annexed to itself kernels of controversial issues that befit a deliberate sense of discourse and discussion for which it can be actuated and animated, for which it can be defined and determinedly and decisively decoded, for which it can be known and epistemologically, metaphysically, ontologically, logically and culturally identified with.

Bello (2004) identified some of these methodological controversies and problems that African philosophy seems to be enraptured in and which have the potency and capacity to enervate the substance, soul and spirit of the significant statement of the subject matters it has allocated and allotted to itself for peculiar but popular and prioritized implementation. This is a differentiated and demarcated position from that of Makinde (2007), who openly observed and commented that the controversy over the possibility of African philosophy is deceased and a demised one. Reflectively, it shows that there are pre and post African philosophy controversies with its own tunes and toast of significance in as much as it is true that philosophy, in terms of general character, composition, color and contour can never be bereft of controversies. This paper is an attempt to pick one of those controversial angles to African philosophy as an alternative project to the point that such controversies can be discussed pertinently, from the philosophical angle, by way of critical reflection, interrogation and evaluation. Thus, the major objective of this paper is to approach, from the philosophical dimension, the universality-particularity debate over the question of democracy in Africa. The paper argues that a thorough understanding of this debate shows that there is more to the question of democracy in Africa more than what Politicians and political leaders could conceive and have actually conceived that is important for a philosophical approach, philosophical dimension ought to be adopted concerning democracy in Africa; that what is actually important for Africa can be actually localized and internalized.

1.1. The Democratic Order: The Theatre of Beauty or The Beauty of Tyranny?

The democratic order is considered the most special, significant and serious of all forms of rule and governance in existing modern contemporary and even in ancient political society. This is premised on the salient fact that it takes the concept and idea of rule and governance in political from the sublime aspect of political activities, interactions, interplay and exchanges. Specifically, the democratic order is considered special in status, significant in soul and spirit and most serious in statement in as much as it is people-centered, people-oriented and people-centric. In fact, the democratic order is the joy and excitement of ordinary people when it comes to governing a given political society. It is in this sense that democracy, defined etymologically as ‘rule of the people’ – *demo*, that is, people and *cratia*, that is, rule, is popularly and most acceptably regarded as the best form and system of government. The joy it exudes in the people is excellent and heavenly, the excitement it displays is exceptional and divine and the happiness concerning this style of governance is extraordinarily exponential all in the name of the realistic fact that the governance is defined as belonging to the people and people themselves belonging to the sense and essence of true governance. It is in this sense and essence that the beauty of the democratic order is determinedly and decisively said to consist and reside. This is because the ordinary people are involved and are stakeholders in the decision of those who are to govern them. This is why the democratic order is classified, exceptionally, as *the theatre of beauty*.

Apart from this seminal character that a democratic order exudes, it is equally believed that the democratic order is the theatre of beauty because it admits, allows, acknowledges and accommodates certain, specified and other distinguished characteristics and principles that are loftily and laudably ingrained in, integral and intestinal to the sense and essence of a true democratic order. Such nobles, notable and noteworthy principles are periodic elections, equality before the law, universal suffrage and franchise, the promotion and pursuit of the principle of constitutionalism, individual right, liberty and freedom, the rule of law, the separation of powers, the independence of the judiciary, the rejection of tyrannical, dictatorial and authoritarian tendencies, the freedom of the press and such other principles in classical philosophy and political theory which are considered as constituting the soul and spirit of every democratic order outside which no system can be regarded as true democracy.

However, despite this concrete and cogent convincing character of the democratic order, there are other scholars who could be held to believe that the democratic order seems to possess a disturbing sense of paradox which is why

rather than call the democratic the theatre of beauty, some of these scholars (Diamond, 1990; Onah, 2003) actually state and constate that, in the face of these paradoxes, rather than tag democracy as the theatre of beauty, it could not be wrong nor incorrect to tag the democratic order as evincing and exhibiting nothing but the beauty of tyranny. The tyranny in question consist in the reality that the democratic order seems to extol and exalt the value and virtue of numbers to the exclusion of every other idea and ideal that may be said to constitute, inherently, its sense and essence. The appeal, the allowance and the acceptability of numbers can be conceived and construed as truly exhibiting and exuding what may be truly tyrannical in nature when the say of the majority takes over everything to the exclusion of the voice of the minority this is the beauty of tyranny so defined. The merit of mere numbers is what is meant by the beauty of tyranny that is, the tyranny of the majority where what matters is the number that is score and acquired and not Neccessarily the merit and virtues encoded in ethics and the sanity embroiled in acceptable moral standards and ideals enshrined in societal and cultural believes which are central and crucial to the survival of such societies. Thus, the beauty of tyranny may be argued to mean the beauty of what is pragmatic on every occasion when and where numbers is appealed to and applied to the point of sacredness and sanctity which means that what works is numbers and numbers is what works.

In Africa democratic struggle, what matters to moneybags, class politicians, business tycoons and controllers of finances is how to score and secure the merit of numbers to the exclusion of whether such candidates are the best capable hands with capacity to lead to the promised land, with capacity, dexterity and the wherewithal to turn things around for the common good. So, the beauty of tyranny is the beauty of numbers, the beauty of the majority, where numbers is deified and reified to the point, platform and purpose of divinity.

Plato, Aristotle, and some other thinkers armed with the mind, manners and moment of modernity and the contextual comprehension of contemporary connotations, conceptions and concerns, have, in their separate senses and the weighty, worthy and wealthy ways of unwavering wisdom, argued that there is much of intellectual and theoretical suspicion that the democratic order does not only appear paradoxical but is still not to be trusted as the best form of government because it allows, in a very subtle form, the propagation, proclamation and perpetuation of mediocrity, demagogues, mountebanks, charlatanism, superficiality and the superfluity of silliness and stupidity paraded in the panorama of mere appeal to numbers. Indeed, those who argue against the merit of the democratic order do so on account of the fact that it appeal to the weight of numbers it's a mere appeal to the merit of quantity rather than quality; the appeal is an unconvincing conviction that dwells more on the mob character in justification of decency and decorum rather than the decency and decorum that is gained and gathered through a value oriented and virtuous observance of what is ethical and quality driven. To this end, the democratic order is argued, sometimes, to be illusory hallucinatory and a relapse into feats, faces and phases of experiences in society that are phantasmagoric in nature and nurture without a positive conclusive result. In their opinions, democracy and the democratic order does not seem to give birth to intelligent, skillful and dexterous leaders with capacity and charisma that are second to none.

However, the oddity in the democratic order, it is claimed, consists in the fact that even if and where the appeal to numbers has its own merit nevertheless, that merit of number is a questionable one because it is not meritorious to meet the standard, template and platform of the truly ideal where a philosopher king or those with tact and technique are needed. But, this realistic expectation concerning the democratic order is doused, dented, damaged and devastated through the recourse, resort and relapse into the appealing arms and the beckoning band of numbers which is a present troubling reality in some African countries of which Nigeria is a serious, special and significant example. Although the appeal to numbers is not and never the only appealing character and charm that the democratic order parades and project in marketing its beauty and aesthetic, yet, the worry and the winning possibility and problem encoded in the democratic order consist in the derogating and relegating profile and pedigree that the weight of numbers and mere quantity does conjure, command and convey.

On the whole, the democratic order seem to be double faced and phased: on the one hand, in its most elementary and preliminary form, its appeal, *ab initio*, from its inception, conception, emergence and emanation is the recourse to quantity which is the beauty of tyranny which is the tyranny of the majority and, on the other hand, when consolidated, is the appeal allowance acknowledgement and accommodation revered principles alluded to earlier which have come to define its identity and the respectable recognition and respectful reckoning accorded to democracy as the best form of government without sounding modest. But, the most standing, serious and significant question is why the democratic experience and experiment in Africa is a struggling one.

1.2. The Nature of Democratic Struggle in Africa: A Simplified but Sampled Hermeneutics

The following conceptual and theoretical interpretation have been suggested by scholars in the bid to analyze and articulate the nature of democratic struggles in Africa. In a simple but sampled form, the underlisted represent and reflect the heart and substance of the debate and concerns over the nature of democratic struggles in Africa:

1. Ethnicity, ethnicism and ethnic pluralism (Diamond, 1988; Nnoli, 1989).
2. The nature of African states or the nature of states in Africa (Ake, 1985; Ekekwe, 1985).
3. The nature of class [the political class] in Africa (Nolutshungu, 1990; Idowu, 1995).
4. The problem of and issues surrounding citizenship (Ekeh, 1974, 1978; Taiwo, 1996; Idowu, 2004).
5. Violence, crisis and conflicts of epic proportions. (Ekeh, 1974; Oquaye, 1995; Idowu, 1999; Albert, 2005)
6. Problem of corruption, economic mismanagement and sabotage (Adewumi, 2012).
7. The complex and complicated multilingual, multi-ethnic and multicultural textures, structures and networks (Sunberg, 1999; Toure, 1999)
8. Religious and tribal plurality, sensitivity, volatility and intolerance (Haynes, 1994; Falola, 1998; Idowu, 2008).
9. The paradoxical nature, impact and effect of democracy. This side to the problem of democracy was substantially sustained, sanctioned and argued by Larry Diamond (Diamond, 1990).
10. Colonialism and the importation of a strange, alien and foreign jurisprudence, legal ideology and system.
11. The problem of vote buying and money politics [economization and commercialization of votes and voting rights].
12. The nature of political parties, the problem of political leadership and political followership (Mama, 2001; Oyinkan, 2003).
13. The absence of strong political education and the abysmally low level of political culture.
14. Recent and current debates concerning the controversy and contest over the universality-particularity [culturality] paradigm. This interpretation concerning the crisis and struggle over democracy in Africa, in the present dispensation, is believed to revolve around this controversy and debate. In actual fact, this debate constitutes one of the democracy questions in Africa. This present attempt is consciously devoted to a clear cut, concrete and comprehensive approach, from the philosophical point of view, over this debate.

2. The Democracy Question In Africa: Internally Induced Or Externally Advanced?

It is not a strange phenomenon and exercise if the attempt to install democracy in African countries has raised several questions that requires the provision of adequate answers. It could be that the answers that have been provided are either insufficient or have raised further questions and controversies which have tended to enervate the strength needed to sustain the possibility, soul and spirit of democracy in Africa. Nevertheless, those questions are pertinent and they deserve attention. Precisely, the interest in this work is focused on the universality-particularity debate over democracy in Africa. But, then, what are these questions?

2.1. Why Democracy in and for Africa?

Is democracy, as the paradigm of government in Africa, a choice or an imposition? If it is a choice, who made the choice for Africa and why? Although several answers have been provided, the question remains not totally unraveled. The choice has been said to be made for Africa and supported by Africa by some (Cheeseman, 2019) while some see it not as a choice but an African tradition/lifestyle (Wiredu, 1995). However, if it was a choice, why the choice of democracy when there are alternatives? Why the transition to democracy at first? Is it the case that previously practiced political programs and projects failed or they were inadequate? If the choice was made for Africa, can it be said to be a form of imposition or can Africa's support in favor of democracy against their traditional/precolonial political system be justified? If yes, what could be the aim for such decision? On the other hand, if the practice of democracy in Africa is held to be part of African lifestyle even before the colonial era, why is it the case that its practice and experience have not been a smooth one?

2.2. How Relevant is Democracy in Africa?

Is democracy the only style of governance that can aid or improve the well-being and welfare of the people in Africa? Is democracy truly founded on the principle and doctrine of welfarism in and for Africa? Actually, is it the case that democracy alone increases the welfare of the people where and when Africa is concerned? These and more are questions that stands at the center of the debate on the relevance of democracy in Africa. As a matter of fact, it is important to ask whether democracy is itself a welfarist system of government or that its emphatic attention and importance comes from a different direction other than welfarist agenda. In any case, what is important to investigate is why is democracy thought to be needed in Africa?

2.3. Does Democracy Necessarily Mean Western Democracy?

Question of this sort poses the problem of what should be the standard for measuring how well a democratic rule is being practiced. Does it have to be in a particular style? Can any society have its own contracted ways of practicing democracy? How well can democracy be institutionalized? Is democracy strictly western? Can there be a non-western definition for democracy? What actually, distinguishes a non-western from a western style of democracy? What could they have in common? According to Omotola (2009), this type of question must have arisen because of some inherent flaws of western democracy, most especially a general sense in which some societies want less individualism, more traditional social values, economic equality or more consensual and participatory polities. But, it remains unclear how such desires can account for a distinctive non-western pattern for democracy just like the case of Africa.

2.4. How Democratic is the Democracy in Africa?

There have been several claims about how flawed democracy has been in Africa. There are several comments like, is this even a democratic rule? According to Mtimkulu (2015), it is evident that in Africa the nature of elections raises alarm whenever they take place, there is authoritarian traits in leaders, opposition parties complaint of election manipulation, there are cases of harassment and rule of law is being ignored, yet, Africa claim to operate in a democratic era. The question, then, is what, despite all these obvious traces of bad experiences, guarantees the democratic reality in Africa states?

In the light of these questions, the attention of this paper is shifted to a careful, critical and cautious reflective effort on the universality-particularity debate concerning the prospect of the democratic order in Africa by focusing on the perennial, pertinent but perplexing issues that are impressively and interestingly ingrained, intestinal and integral to and within the debate. In what follows, the rich and resourceful history of the debate comes to mind and a significant and serious attempt will be made to share the sense and substance of the debate.

3. The Universality-Particularity Debate: Perspectives From Philosophy

The universality-particularity debate in philosophy depicts the discourse on the problem of universals and particulars. It can also be referred to as the problem of one over many, often identified as a problem about the ontological status of properties. According to Alyssa Ney (2014), the problem of universals and particulars seeks to answer questions about the form in which abstract entities exist. Do they exist as universals: entities that are repeatable, capable of being instantiated at multiple locations at once, or, as particulars: entities that may not be instantiated in multiple forms. Universal, as put by Loux (2006), is a form of metaphysical explanation of what it is for things to share a feature, attribute, quality or type. The idea is that, from the similarities between groups of things, we may hold that they have a common property which is “universal”. Particular, on the other hand, is an entity which is numerically one (Ney, 2014), the properties possessed by objects in this sense are particularly distinct to each object.

The problem of universals and particulars in mainstream philosophy posits two dominant theories, realism and nominalism. Realism is the claim that all entities can be divided into two categories; particulars and universals. Nominalism, on the other hand, is the view that only particulars exist. While the realists hold that all particulars are instances of universals, the nominalist contend that universals are only disguised ways of talking about concrete particulars. There are different classes of realism as well as nominalism, they include, extreme realism, moderate realism, predicate nominalism, resemblance nominalism, class nominalism etc. Philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas are notable realists while Ockham, Carnap and Quine are known for nominalism (Ney, 2014).

3.1. Eurocentric Traditions on the Universality-Particularity Debate

Discourse on the problem of universals and particulars in the western thought ranges from the period of the ancient Greek philosophers to the contemporary ages.

3.2. Perspectives from the Ancient Greek Philosophers

The universality-particularity debate in the western tradition can be dated back to the works of Plato (428 BC-348 BC) and Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC). Both of them believe in the existence of universals and particulars but they conceive them in different ways. Plato’s idea of universals is found in his theory of form, where he argues that all material objects have its corresponding form(s) which is not embodied in the object itself but separate from it. On his part, Aristotle argued that universals are not separate nor separated from particular object but are mere commonalities shown and shared by objects. Universals or Forms are inherent in matter or particular object.

3.3. Perspectives from the Medieval Philosophers

According to Rin Sirkel (2010), the traditional problem of universals and particulars was raised again, some six centuries after Aristotle, by Porphyry and transmitted to middle-ages by Boethius as question of whether general (universals) and specie (particulars) are real or they reside in bare thought. Aquinas and Odo are some of those who argue that general and specie do exist in reality, indicating that particulars do participate in them. But, the likes of Roscellinus of Compigne and Ockham see their view as being too abstract. They suggested nominalism, contending that particulars do exist in nature but general do not and that many philosophical works done by universals can be done just as well without them.

3.4. Perspectives from Modern Philosophers

Although the problem of universals and particulars seems to be implicit in the early modern period, it can be said that almost every modern philosopher has something to say about universals or more precisely about how universals can be known as it affects their primary philosophical concerns (Bella and Schmaltz, 2017). Thomas Hobbes espouses a version of nominalism intending to exclude properties from his idea of existence (Callaghan, 2001) and John Locke, in his account, holds that universals are neither a particular idea nor of particular idea, they are mere meaning, a group of characters shared by particulars of the same sort (Aaron, 1933).

3.5. Perspectives from Contemporary Philosophers

The universality, particularity debate is still ongoing among contemporary philosophers. According to Oliver Alex (1996), in the context of contemporary debates, the problem of universals and particulars is standardly described as that of providing an account of certain familiar facts of resemblance. Quine (1947) also raised the problem of universals and particulars as question of whether there are abstract entities, which he argues, do not exist. To him, to claim that universals exist as similarities in particular things is misleading because they are not what make particular things but they are only true of particular things where they apply. Rudolf Carnap, Keith Campbell, David Armstrong, amidst more, are participants in this debate.

3.6. Non-Eurocentric Traditions on the Universality-Particularity Debate

The non- Eurocentric tradition on the universality-particularity debate, specifically in Africa philosophy heritage, can be identified as a reaction to the question of how to define African identity which, according to Owolabi (1999), has dominated the enterprise of African philosophy since its commencement in written form. This also accounts for the shift of focus from the study of identity of attributes and relationship between realities and material objects as seen in the Eurocentric tradition on the debate to the study of identities and peculiarities of man in relation to his environment.

3.7. African Philosophy and the universality-particularity debate

According to Famakinwa (2021), the initial challenges about African philosophy were conceptual (on definition) and ontological (on existence). Questions like, “what is African philosophy? Does African philosophy exist or not?” were raised. These questions generated a lot of debates among African and non-African scholars. One of the discourse generated on account of these debates is whether there are peculiar African cultures which deeply reflect an identity that is strictly African.

The quest also confronts the issue of what in actual fact constitute the nature of African philosophy especially in relation and in the light of matters concerning methodological problems. This quest for African definition of identity presents two dominant orientations: the universalist and the particularist (culturalist). Owolabi (1999) claims that the emphasis of the particularist orientation is that there are peculiarities of identities and cultural orientations that are strictly African but which have been neglected and largely underrepresented while the universalist orientation denies all sorts of cultural relativism and holds that though certain aspects of social cultures are different, human cultures still share certain fundamental traits that welcome cross cultural comparison and interaction (1999). According to Owolabi (1999), Abraham (1996), Mbiti (1996), Sodipe (1975) are particularists, since they contend that every philosophies is particularly a cultural philosophy which is inapplicable to other cultures while Bodurin (1985), Houndtondji (1983), Appiah (1992) are universalists because of their insistence on cultural universalism; philosophy to them is a universal method, different from all cultural philosophies.

4. The Universality-Particularity Debate on Democracy in General

The problem of universals and particulars cut across nearly every spheres of philosophy and every human realities. A proof of this reflect prominently in the debate within political theory and philosophy especially on issues relating to

democracy. Among pertinent questions which arouse and incubate a philosophical discourse on democracy are: Is democracy a universal value? Is it applicable cross culturally, Or, is it culturally relative? This can be said to be a reaction to some limitations confronting the experimentation of liberal democratic system in some non-western societies. Scholars' contributions to this discourse ranges from the universalist orientation and the particularist orientation.

4.1. Francis Fukuyama on Democracy

Fukuyama (1992) posits a universalist view on democracy. He presents liberal democracy as a system of government practicable and desirable in any human society. Fukuyama argues that the end point of mankind's ideological evolution is the universalization of western liberal democracy which is the final form of human development. Therefore, for Fukuyama, liberal democracy is the end of history, the only universal and coherent political system that every society should aspire towards. However, it could be argued against Fukuyama's position that liberal democracy cannot be the end of history because we are still not yet at the end of human intelligence which presupposes the possibility of more developments. Another form of government, as a matter of fact, a new conception of democracy which suit other cultural jurisdictions or environments, adequately, as opposed to liberal democracy, is conceivable besides, the epistemological apparatus on which Fukuyama's prophetic claim concerning western liberal democracy constituting the end of history is open to serious questioning given the fact that the western world represent only a partial account of global history and experience. To insist on this claim on perception concerning western liberal democracy is to endorse nothing but the often critically condemnable doctrine and philosophy of Eurocentric reason. Indeed, Eurocentric season constitute one of the many challenges against the stability and sustenance of democracy in Africa.

4.2. Amartya Sen on Democracy

For Sen (1999), democracy is a universal value. He believes this is as a result of the recognition of the fact that it is wrong to question if a country is deemed fit for democracy because countries only have to become fit through democracy, which takes place in the twentieth-century. Amartya Sen argues that democracy is a universal value because it is becoming accepted across the world as the most legitimate form of government even though it's not yet universally practiced nor uniformly adopted. Amartya Sen also posits that democracy is a universal value because there are good reasons for people anywhere to see democracy as valuable despite being open to objections. A critical look into Sen's arguments reveals that his idea revolves around liberal /western democracy as the universal value, indeed, it is spreading across all continents. However, the question is, what intrinsically makes this form of government a universal value? Is it universally valuable because it is becoming accepted across the world or it is becoming accepted across the world because it is a universal value? As a matter of fact, the expansion of liberal democracy can be explained in another way other than it being a universal value. Western colonialism and imperialism, arguably, tell a lot about its circulation and acceptance.

4.3. David Beetham on Democracy

Beetham (2009) argues for the universality and diversity of democracy. Beetham presents three main arguments for his contention. For Beetham, Democracy is universal because the justification for its core principles which are, principle of public control of government either directly or indirectly, and the principle of political equality; having equal access to the public control of policies and resources, is tenable and universally applicable in all human societies because all men are rational agents with reflective choices. Beetham also argue that the universality of democracy can be consistent with the diversities in human ways of living in a way that does not entail uniformity. However, the diversity must be consistent with the core principles of democracy. Beetham maintains that democracy is a universal value because, as a form of government, it is best equipped in the management of the differences within any society when it is true of its core principles. Although Beetham's arguments appear to be well articulated and plausible, nevertheless, not all will agree with his conception of democracy. The minimalist will have no problem with it because it emphasizes political rights and equality, limited to the process of election, but, the maximalist will not, since it excludes the normative aspect of democracy.

4.4. Some other Arguments on the Universality-Particularity Debate on Democracy in General

In reaction to the universalist arguments in support of democracy as a universal value, scholars like Parekh (1992), Karsten (2007) amongst others, with particularist orientation have presented a contrary opinion in answering the question of whether or not democracy is a universal value. According to Karsten (2007), democracy as universal value should not be conflated with liberal democracy. If democracy is to be acceptable in a particular society, it must reflect the values of the culture where it arises, it must evolve out of the struggle to develop cultural values in a democratic way. For him, any attempt to impose, export or adapt another form of democracy outside ones cultural output is denying the

universal significance of democracy. However, one may want to ask Karsten, what could possibly be the standard for building and identifying particular democracies, since his postulation presupposes the existence of some? Bhikhu (1992) also rejects the compatibility of the western style of democracy to non-western societies. According to Parekh, to say liberal democracy is a universal value which other societies should aspire for already presupposes that the democracy in question is a historical moment of the western society, specifically, the post-seventeenth century individualist society. Arguing for its universality, to Parekh, is denying the westerners of their historical experiences.

5. The Universalists' Arguments on the Question of Democracy in Africa

With respect to the two orientations on democracy, and, the practice of democracy in Africa, several arguments have been presented by scholars. The universalists maintain that democracy is a universal value, valuable in every society irrespective of their social and historical peculiarities, therefore any dysfunction as in African states for example, would not be attributed to the nature of democracy but rather to individuals, African cultures and traditions or some other factors (Kasanda, 2007).

5.1. Sophie Jane on Democracy in Africa

Sophie Jane (2002) argues that the problem of underdevelopment in African states is not because of the adoption of liberal democracy. According to Jane, liberal democracy has the inherent potentiality of providing development in Africa but it has been failing because many African states are too quick in struggling to consolidate their democracies and are also impatient in achieving the development level and pace of the west. Jane claims that the problem of democracy occurs because democracy in most African states is still in its infancy with poor conditions unlike the older democracies of the west which is with developed conditions and economic prosperity.

5.2. Jack Cilliers on Democracy in Africa

For Jack Cilliers (2005), the outgrown crises of liberal democracy in Africa only promote the view that it is easier to get rid of a dictator than to establish a functioning democracy. To Cilliers, democracy steadily contributes to good governance, development and growth in a society but these outcomes are undermined in African states by some factors which are products of inherent flaws in African socio-political structures and characteristics of African societies. The factors which he identifies include, abuse of power, leadership ineptitude, weak economic bases and structural weakness inherited by many African states upon political independence. These factors, to Cilliers, are the causes of democratic failure in Africa not the adoption of liberal democracy.

5.3. George Nyongesa on Democracy in Africa

In George Nyongesa's view, democracy is a universal value but it does not work unless it is worked upon. To Nyongesa, democracy works only when it's been initiated by citizens. Democratic prospects such as good governance, development and security, according to him are only attainable if the citizens are actively engaged in the political participation and as a result prevent irresponsible leadership. Therefore, for George, the failure of democracy in Africa isn't meant to be attributed to its adoption of liberal democracy. He suggests that the way out of the mess is not to recreation democracy for Africa but that Africans take on new attitudes that will enhance democracy (2019).

6. The Particularists' Arguments on the Question of Democracy in Africa

To the particularists, the adoption of liberal democracy with a universalistic approach in Africa is like an attempt to transplant practice that is western in nature and character in and for Africa, therefore, democracy as being currently practiced in Africa can neither solve the bulk of crises attacking the continent nor be sustainable in it (Kasanda, 2007). They all agree that democracy should be adapted to suit African culture, presenting different arguments why liberal democracy should be jettisoned and African indigenous democratic cultures should be reinstated.

6.1. Kwasi Wiredu on Democracy in Africa

Wiredu (1996) characterizes the system of government in Africa as majoritarian democracy, a multi-party system where the majority forms the government while the minority becomes the opposition because their votes are overridden by the votes of the majority. According to Wiredu, the fact that some ethnic groups or political parties perpetually find themselves in this position of the minority violates their rights and serves as a major cause of political instability in Africa. In lieu of the multi-party system, Wiredu suggests a non-party and consensual democracy, one where parties are not on basis of power and there is consideration of all opinions before decisions are made upon consensus. This, to Wiredu, will replicate African indigenous democratic cultures and will be for mutual tolerance and promotion of unity in polity because everyone would be allowed to contribute with lessen emphasis on popular votes.

6.2. Wamba dia Wamba on Democracy in Africa

Wamba asserts that there is a difference between democracy for Africa and democracy in Africa. To this end, Wamba opines that since the beginning of democratization in Africa, Africans have lived to welcome and accept what western democracies have articulated for them on democracy. Wamba believes Africa cannot be democratized by imposing the western democratic system on African states but rather by considering the process as a process of emancipation, self-determination and protecting and providing for the people. Wamba is also of the view that, multi-party system of government is unsuitable for (Wamba, 1990).

6.3. Marie Eboh and Claude Ake on Democracy in Africa

Eboh (1990;1993) in his arguments against the universalistic conception of liberal democracy concedes that liberal democracy cannot be sustainable in Africa because it does not reflect African political cultures. Marie Eboh insists that just like philosophy, democracy is culturally relative, therefore societies should be able to develop their democracies base on their different social and political approaches to diversities. This according to him, will give room to different conceptions of democracy. Marie Eboh further insinuate that the solution to the system of governance in Africa revolves around confronting socio-political and economic issues by giving democracy in Africa an African style. Following the same line of thoughts, Ake (1993) posits that individualism, which he identifies as one of the precepts of western democracy, is in conflict with existing African realities because Africans unlike the westerners interact on a communal basis. According to him, Since Africans' and the Westerners' socio-cultural realities differ, democracy in Africa have to be recreated to fit African cultural context and realities.

7. Implications, Consequences and Relevance of the Debate on the Present-day Democracy in Africa

Inferences from Efe and Vincent (2019) description of current African states polity make it clear that Africa has one of the most elaborate systems for protecting and promoting democracy as inspired by western liberal democracy yet democracy in Africa keeps facing series of challenges. Instances from their reports include the electoral system in Africa, although regular elections are held in most of the 54 countries, only 19 are generally considered to be democratic while the others are involved in electoral autocracies with limited civil rights, accountability and rule of law. Also, even though for most parts of the period since 1990, debates on development in Africa have been on the idea that good governance and democracy would lead to more societies that are prosperous and despite continued support for democracy as the most preferable political regime in many African countries, yet, slow progress not only in socio-economic but also in human development coupled with high corruption rate have been persistent in Africa (2019). It is therefore arguable that the democratic state in most African nations exemplify forces that are inimical to the prospect of democracy in Africa as identified in the section above.

From the universalist thinking that liberal democracy is the final form of government, there is the implication that Africa cannot but adopt and adapt with liberal democracy and its values for the prospect of democracy in Africa because historically, it has proven to be valuable, desirable and imperative for addressing challenges on social and economic development. The particularists' argument, on the other hand, carry the implication that the presentation of liberal democracy as the political saviour to rescue Africa from her plights and challenges is like a neo-colonial agenda and cannot work since liberal democracy is not one-size-fits-all. However, reflections on the arguments presented by both orientation reveal sets of weaknesses and strengths that are concomitant with each of these orientations. Furthermore, the essence of these reflections is tailored towards the pursuit of an African theory of democracy to provide answers to the democracy question in Africa.

8. Inviting Philosophical Issues and Comment Concerning the Universality-Particularity Debate

From the foregoing articulated analysis attempted so far, it is not preposterous imagination to submit that inviting and interesting philosophical issues are discernable in the universality-particularity debate concerning the democracy question as it applies and appertains to the African context and milieu. It is believed that the relevance and respectable recognition assigned to these issues makes the discussion on the debate a very far reaching, rich, robust and resourceful contributions to scholarship on African socio-political theory and philosophy. In the first instance, the debate raises and reifies some methodological concerns, controversies and contributions to initial, previous and past epistemologies within the cognitive consciousness, critical awareness and a cerebral funfair and facility that had ever been celebrated about and concerning Africa. Bello's (2004) seminal contribution and discussions of some methodological controversies in contemporary African philosophy clearly recognize this debate as one of the most respectful discussion on Africa in the light of contemporary thinking concerning Africa. To this end, one could surmise, suggest and submit that the

debate was nothing but philosophy in action, operation and progress. Indeed, the debate had and still has its foundation in the temperament that philosophy shares affinity and association with. This is judged from the evidential exemplification of the skills of human reasoning and the decorous dexterity in the share of ideas concerning democracy. As a contribution from the discipline of politics, political theory and political philosophy, the debate was a significant pointer to the direction to follow and fall for if the towards democratic utopia is to be attained and achieved. As a matter of fact, the debate was and still is a salutary celebration of the ingenious intellectual life that scholars within and outside Africa are prone to display. The thoroughness of the debate is a laudable testimony concerning what is of critical concern to Africa.

More importantly is the fact that this debate raises implicit and explicit cultural and anthropological issues that have their foundation in and that are integral to the complex, complicated and controversial subject matter of identity. Indeed, while the debate, in Eurocentric tradition, had no notable connection with the identity of persons, in the larger and critical senses, the debate, in the Africa, has a settled and searching controversies and confrontations with what the identity of African person was, is and could ever be. For example, it could be asked what the identity of the African is? While is there a crisis of identity in Africa? Why is the crisis of governance in Africa connected to the crisis of identity? Can culture, governance an identity issues be separated in Africa? Is there a limit to progress when African identity is brought up for discussion and respectfully related to any other area of human endeavor? How critical is colonialism to the crisis of identity and governance in Africa? Is there or isn't there supposed to be any significant sense of distinction and separation between pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial identities in and about Africa? Is democracy in and for Africa supposed to share a connection with the fact, figure, frame, and form of identity? Is there failure of identity in Africa? If so, what has failure of identity got to do with failure of democracy in and for Africa? This and many more questions of anthropological and cultural import are gainfully germane and saliently strike as serious substance and content of the debate. In addition, the debate strikes at the salience and significance of the concept of 'people' or 'persons'. In other words, if democracy is to make sense, it is sensible and sensitive not just in the light of their needs, welfare and wellbeing but, also, in the light of their effective participation and being well represented. In another sense, the debate showcase democracy as a cultural practice, pursuit and phenomenon. Indeed, Idowu (2011) is agreed with John Dewey (1982) that democracy is not just a political system of government but, in equal terms, is a way of life worthy and weighty, sufficiently, to be followed and adopted as a paradigm for the organization of society. Fukuyama's adorable accolades assigned through the democratic order is deeply philosophical and impressively ideological beyond description. Assigning value and virtue to democracy runs against the popular rejection and refutation raised by both Plato and Aristotle against democracy. Thus, this adorable accolade pave way for the eulogisation democratic agenda. Giving this eulogy of democracy, the debate in an endorsement of the need for re-orientation, re-organization and restructuring of the democratic agenda practiced in and for Africa.

In another light, the debate represent a demystification of proponent and advocate concerning the view that democracy is illusionary. The intense content and impressive substance of the debate is a rejection of the illusionary and hallucinatory criticisms raised against democracy by Father Onah (2003). In the same vein, the debate raise a mutual judgment and sentence against the defeatist democratic agenda often paraded and portrayed concerning Africa. By this, the debate represented the ideological and intellectual rejection of the dead end representation of democracy in Africa. Giving the contour of the debate, a good and positive spotlight is in the process, placed on Africa and the need for a re-engineered experience with democracy. Going by the intellectual fervor and form that the debate bears, it means that a sense of significance is placed on the idea of who rules and what rules. In other words, it means that there is an equal sense of significance with respect to the need for a people-oriented, people-centered and people-centric form of governance in Africa. Interpretively, therefore, the utility of pragmatism in governance stands unquestioned.

While certain aspect of the debate can be classified as laudable, yet, it could be submitted, though cautiously, that there were some avoidances that may be interpreted, considered and classified as perceive in nature, action and reaction. In the first instance, the historicity and originality of democracy was giving a mute recognition and reckoning in the debate. In second sense, equally avoided in the passive sense is the choice of the democratic pattern apart from liberal democracy; is it representative (Hirst, 1990; Chidam' modzi, 2003), consensual (Wiredu, 1995, 1996; Olanipekun, 2020) majoritarian (Bello, 2004) or which type actually? Does liberal democracy encompass all other types of democratic pattern? In the sense, the liberating tendency and temperament implicit in the debate ought to be lauded but the missing point is what sort of instrument does Africa need to liberate her from the quagmire of problems enervating her experience and experiment with democracy? Is democracy a liberating tool itself or does it require a separate tool for its own liberation? Is democracy the problem for Africa or is Africa a problem for democracy itself? Is democracy a means to an end for Africa or an end in itself for Africa? These are salient issues emanating from the universality-particularity debate concern the democracy question in Africa.

Indeed, a thorough understanding and better comprehension poses an invitation stimulus for the necessity of the transition democracy in Africa from the realm mere theory to the realm the respectable merit of practice. Progressive democracy is always practical and does not stay at the mere level of ideology, philosophy and theory alone. Even if it is true that the debate engendered endemic senses and doses of controversies, nevertheless, the debate was an expressive exemplification and intensive, interesting, impressive and intentional ideologisation of controversies at its most profitable, useful and positive dimensions, directions and depth. Of memorable, meritorious and monumental mention is the fact that the debate as afforded the opportunity of providing multi-vocal and multi-perspective, but not monolithic answers to the democracy question in and for Africa. The advantage in this is the significance signal and the serious symbolic statement it conveyed that the era of docility belongs to the past.

On the whole, the debate represented a significant validating voice with respect to human nature as a non-suppressible non-depressible and as a non-conquerable entity. For example, the debate gave a clue and endorsement of the dynamism encoded in human nature whether in Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric senses. Again, it endorsed the reactive and responsive dimension of human nature and intellectual activity. Moreover, the intellectual prowess of the proponent of both orientations is unambiguously, unquestionably and undoubtedly underscored. As a matter of fact, the intellectual brightness and brilliance displayed by scholars within and outside Africa could be acknowledged showing that intellectualism is not the whole prerogative, the spirited property nor a cultural commodity marketed, brewed, birthed and owned only and exclusively by Eurocentric scholars. In actual fact, the debate shows that intellectualism is neither Eurocentric nor Afrocentric; the debate could be seen and ought to be viewed as a marketization, commercialization and circulation of the specificity and particularity of ideas in motion, in action and operation. The idea in question is the democratic ideal and order.

Lastly, the most inviting of philosophical issue that this debate has gainfully generated and continues to gather much intellectual momentum is the significant lesson it raises, concludes and submits in connection with the developing and dynamic nature of the African philosophy project both as a reactive and alternative project. Indeed, it actually shows that African politics, philosophy, sociology and cultural life is an active, aspiring but a deeply engaging and enduring one whose substance and strength contains series of special, solid and significance sections, session and staminal beyond the silhouetted stupor and stigma of the segregation of Eurocentric evaluations.

9. Conclusion

In concluding, it could be said without any sense of the loss of meaning that the universality-particularity debate concerning the democracy question in Africa is a borrowed problem from the realm and region of philosophy. So, whether it is within the context of mainstream western philosophy or the corridor of discourses in African social and political philosophy, the debate is key and has brought a bit of life and light and a beckon of hope to unrattling and unraveling hordes of controversies on the question of democracy in Africa. Surely, even if an unwavering wave of commitment and intentional insistence has been exercised by proponent of these differing orientations, yet, the reflective attitude adopted with respect to the debate provides a clear indication that it is important to address, adore and admire, for proper use and unquestioned utility, the impeccability of a peoples locality without transgressing the sense and essence of global virtues that are openly, obviously and observably necessitated by condition and character that are contextually driven and consciously relevant. Indeed, the university-particularity debate ought to be seen as a basis for driving the consciousness and content of African democracy without perceiving the exchange as a disease that has come to murder, kill and conquer the spirit, soul and substance of democracy in twenty-first century Africa.

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Cite this article as: Idowu William (2024). The Universality-Particularity Debate Concerning Democracy Question in Africa: A Philosophical Reflection. *International Journal of African Studies*, 4(1), 41-53. doi: 10.51483/IJAFRS.4.1.2024.41-53.