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Leibniz's Monadology, African Communalism, and the Quest for Social Order in Africa

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Abstract. This paper examines Leibniz's monadology and the problems it poses for social order in Africa. Leibniz describes monads as self-sufficient, self-contained, perfect, independent, and individualistic entities. The monads, in Leibniz's words, are windowless. As such, there is no relationship or communication among them. Consequently, a lack of cordial relationships, communication, unity, and cooperation in contemporary societies is responsible for many of the problems and disorders that ravage many African societies, especially Nigeria. Various issues, including terrorism, kidnapping, corruption, rape, and ritual killings, plague many societies across the continent. The main source of these problems stems from the monads' perspective on society. These acts are perpetuated by narcissistic and egocentric individuals who fail to recognise the necessity for coexistence and cooperation, thus creating a socially disordered and disorganised environment that undermines humans' hopes, aspirations, and desires to lead a good, meaningful, and fulfilled life. Consequently, a disordered society, characterised by violence, conflict, and similar challenges, results in underdevelopment, injustice, intolerance, and crises, among other issues. Social disorder thrives in a society that trivialises interrelationships, intersubjectivity, collectivity, solidarity, mutuality, cooperation, and inclusiveness among its people. The study, therefore, contends that the continuation of monadic existence among Africans amounts to an inevitable social disorder. The paper concludes by emphasising the necessity to embrace the communalistic values and virtues of traditional African society, where the self and the other are fused ontologically, epistemically, socially, and morally, to foster social order and development in Africa.

Keywords: self-sufficient, intersubjectivity, conflict, social disorder

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Монадология Лейбница, африканский коммунизм и стремление к социальному порядку в Африке

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Аннотация. Работа посвящена монадологии Лейбница и проблемам, которые она ставит перед социальным порядком в Африке. Лейбниц описывает монады как самодостаточные, замкнутые в себе, совершенные, независимые и индивидуалистические образования. Монады, по словам Лейбница, не имеют окон. Как таковые, между ними нет никаких отношений или коммуникации. Следовательно, отсутствие теплых отношений, коммуникации, единства и сотрудничества в современных обществах является причиной многих проблем и беспорядков, которые разрушают многие африканские общества, особенно Нигерию. Различные проблемы, включая терроризм, похищение людей, коррупцию, изнасилования и ритуальные убийства, преследуют многие общества по всему континенту. Основной источник этих проблем кроется в том, как монады смотрят на общество. Эти действия совершаются нарциссическими и эгоцентричными личностями, которые не в состоянии осознать необходимость сосуществования и сотрудничества, создавая, таким образом, социально неупорядоченную среду, которая подрывает надежды, стремления и желания людей вести хорошую, значимую и полноценную жизнь. Следовательно, неупорядоченное общество, характеризующееся насилием, конфликтами и подобными проблемами, приводит, помимо прочего, к слабому развитию, несправедливости, нетерпимости и кризисам. Социальный беспорядок процветает в обществе, которое сводит на нет взаимоотношения, интересубъективность, коллективность, солидарность, взаимовыручку, сотрудничество и инклюзивность среди своих граждан. Таким образом, в исследовании утверждается, что продолжение монадического существования среди африканцев равносильно неизбежному социальному беспорядку. В заключение подчеркивается необходимость принятия коммуналистских ценностей и добродетелей традиционного африканского общества, где «Я» и «Другой» слиты воедино онтологически, эпистемологически, социально и морально, для укрепления общественного порядка и развития в Африке.

Ключевые слова: самодостаточность, интересубъективность, конфликт, социальное расстройство

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Introduction

Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz developed the concept of monadology. Leibniz uses the concept of monadology to explain everything that exists in the universe. As such, his theory of monadology has been used to explain the nature of perception (epistemology), reality (metaphysics), and the mind-body relationship (philosophy of mind). Leibniz’s theory of monadology was influenced by the readings and studies of notable scholars, particularly Baruch Spinoza. His monadology theory has been a response to different philosophical and traditional theories. For instance, the theory of monadology questions René Descartes’s “theory of interactionism” and Baruch Spinoza’s theory of “double aspect,” which is grounded in “monism.” This, however, underscores the significance of Leibniz’s monadology in philosophy and its influence on social institutions and order.

Leibniz describes the monads as self-sufficient, self-contained, perfect, closed, independent, and individualistic entities. The monads, in Leibniz’s words, are windowless, such that it is practically impossible for one monad to interact and communicate with another monad. Monads, for Leibniz, are the true atoms of nature, the elements out of which everything is made, including humans and animals [1. P. 1]. If this argument is accepted, it implies that human communication, interaction, and solidarity are not necessary for achieving social order, since there is no cross-relationship or communication among monads. However, we find this line of argument mistaken and untrue because it fails to reflect the beliefs and practices of traditional African societies. Traditional African societies place emphasis on intersubjectivity and interrelatedness as a *sine qua non* for promoting social order. It is important, however, that we examine Leibniz’s monadology and its implications for social order in Africa, particularly in Nigeria.

This paper is therefore divided into three sections. The first section will examine the full range of discourse surrounding Leibniz’s monadology. This paper shall underscore the meaning and nature of monadology and explain how it accounts for the nature of things in existence. The second section will examine the discourse on monadologism and the problem it poses for social order in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. Here, the implications of Leibniz’s monadology on society will be highlighted and identified. The third section examines the values and virtues

of African traditional practices, grounded in communalism, as a panacea for resolving social disorder in Africa. The paper concludes that Africans, with particular reference to the Yoruba culture in Nigeria, find Leibniz's monads alien and impractical in African society, where human relationships, solidarity, and complementarity define one's being and personality, influence constructive and rational decision-making, and ensure peaceful coexistence and social order. Hence, Africans need to imbibe the virtues and values of communalism embedded in traditional African society to address the crises ravaging the continent and, as such, promote social order.

The Metaphysical Interpretations of Leibniz's Monadology

Leibniz's theory of monadology was one of the prominent and popular thoughts attributed to the works and philosophical ideas of Leibniz. This idea was developed in his book *The Monadology*, published in 1714. It is important to note that Leibniz's monadology is a metaphysical theory grounded in the core nature of metaphysics as the study of being qua being. As such, with the theory of monadology, Leibniz responded to many controversial and contested issues arising from different philosophical thoughts and postulations. This, however, calls for an explicit analysis of the concept of monadology.

Leibniz, in his book entitled *The Monadology*, opines that “the monad is a simple substance. By calling it ‘simple,’ I mean that it has no parts, though it can be a part of something composite” [1. P. 1]. From the direct quotation from Leibniz's book, two implications follow immediately. First, a monad is a substance that supports the existence of substance as argued by Descartes and Spinoza, they conceived the idea of substance differently. This will be explained shortly. The second implication is that a monad is not a complex substance and is without parts and extensions. These two implications will be clearly explained.

The first implication identified above draws us into the question of substance. Substance, for Descartes, is the independent existence of entities. According to Descartes, these independent entities are the mind, the body, and God. For him, none of these entities depends on any other for its existence; however, he maintains that an interaction relationship exists among them. This is adumbrated into Descartes's theory of “interactionism” [2. P. 17]. For Descartes, the mind is a thinking, non-extended, and non-spatial substance. On the other hand, the body is a non-thinking substance, extended and spatio-temporal. Descartes, therefore, is regarded as a dualist for postulating the independent existence of two substances. However, Descartes's theory of interactionism faces the problem of how to account for the interaction between the substances of extension and thought. This problem, according to Gilbert Ryle, is called “the ghost in the machine” [3]. On the contrary, Spinoza argues that Substance is monistic rather than dualistic. In other words, substance is not two or many, it is only one. Needless to say, the substance, according to Spinoza, is God, which can be seen from two sides — either from the extension or the substance thought. Spinoza termed this theory “the double aspect

theory” [4]. That is, the mind and body (thought and extension) are two aspects of a single substance. Leibniz was dissatisfied with Spinoza’s conception of substance because it blurred the distinctions among God, humans, nature, and the amalgamation of intellect and will, each of which Leibniz wanted to keep separate [4. P. 231].

What is Leibniz’s view of substance? Unlike Spinoza, Leibniz construes substance as being infinitely created by God. This means that substance is not one but many. It implies that Leibniz subscribes to a “pluralistic conception of substance.” These infinitely created substances Leibniz called “monads.” This, however, led us to the second implication, which says that a monad is a simple substance that enters into compounds without parts or extension. Consequently, since there are compounds of monads, it follows that there are simple substances, since it is the simple substances that form the compounds of monads. Therefore, compound monads are the aggregate of simple substances. The implication that could be drawn from the assertion that monads have no parts and are not extended is that they are indivisible and have no form. This is because a monad with parts is necessarily physical, visible, and extended. However, for Leibniz, it is immaterial and, consequently, has no part, no form, no shape, no size, no quantity, and is not extended. Monads are, therefore, for Leibniz, the true atoms of nature, the elements out of which everything is made [1. P. 1]. Subsequently, like Descartes, Leibniz also subscribed to the superiority of the mind over and above matter. However, Leibniz conceived of matter differently from Descartes, who contended that matter was an extended substance that was not divisible into something more primary. On the contrary, Leibniz observes that the bodies or things we see with our senses are divisible into smaller parts, although he consistently maintained that matter is not the primary ingredient of things [4. P. 242].

Monads, for Leibniz, are created by God and, as such, cannot be destroyed by any natural means. Rather than destroy it, it can only be annihilated all at once. No dissolution of these elements, Leibniz said, needs to be feared, and there is no conceivable way in which a simple substance can be destroyed by natural means [5. P. 4].

It is important to reiterate here that substances, for Descartes, have a causal relationship at a place he called the pineal gland. Thus, identifying the point of interaction becomes a problem for Descartes’ interactionist theory. However, for Leibniz, a substance, or monad, exists independently of the others. Not only do they have independent existences, but there is also no causal relationship between them, as maintained by Descartes. The monads do not perceive one another, and they cannot be caused by any creature outside of themselves. This means that, from within and outside the monad, a causal effect cannot take place. This is because Leibniz’s monads are windowless.

According to Leibniz, the monads are essentially different from one another. That is, they are qualitatively distinguishable from one another. The monads without qualities are unreal. Thus, since it is impossible to conceive of the monads

as unreal, it necessarily follows that they have qualities since they are real. Since monads are distinguishable from one another, it follows that they are unique and distinct. Monads exist independently, are self-sufficient and self-contained, are perfect, and are ends in themselves. The perfection of the monads is called *entelechy*. As such, no two monads are alike. This brings us to Leibniz's "Principle of the Identity of the Indiscernible." This principle has been controversial among scholars. Accordingly, Leibniz opines that only God can know all about monads to compare them. Leibniz expresses this better in his words:

"If monads all had the same qualities, they would be indistinguishable from one another (given that they don't differ in any quantitative way, e.g., in size). That would make all composite things ·such as portions of matter· indistinguishable from one another, also because whatever is the case about a composite thing has to come from its simple ingredients. Even if every portion of matter were exactly like every other, there might still be variety in the material world through differences in patterns of distribution of portions of matter in space... That shows that some monads must be qualitatively unlike some others; but now I go further. Indeed, every monad must be qualitatively unlike every other. That is because in Nature no two things are perfectly alike; between any two things a difference can be found that is internal — i.e., based on what each is like in its nature ·rather than merely on how they relate to other things, e.g., where they are in space" [1. P. 2].

The monads also undergo change. Nevertheless, Leibniz maintained a different concept of change consistent with his theory of monads. For him, monads can change, but the changes occur within, not via an influence or outside cause. This is premised on the argument that everything in the universe constitutes monads; as such, there are no material properties to cause the monads to change. This aligns with the argument that monads are self-sufficient and do not require external force. Moreover, since the primacy of matter is relegated, their changes must be the changes of mental states. In Leibniz's words, he argues that:

"It doesn't make sense to suppose that a monad might be altered or rearranged internally by any other created thing. Within a monad there's nothing to re-arrange, and there is no conceivable internal motion in it that could be started, steered, sped up, or slowed down, as can happen in a composite thing that has parts that can change about one another... it follows that natural changes in a monad — ones that don't come from divine intervention — come from an internal force, since no external causes could ever influence its interior... every natural change happens by degrees, gradually, meaning that something changes while something else stays the same. So, although there are no parts in a simple substance, there must be a plurality of states and relationships" [1. P. 2].

The above quotation further shows that, besides the internal force from which the monads can change, the monads can also undergo divine changes, which are changes from God. Besides, the monads mirror everything in the universe. The changes in a monad, of course, led to the theory of perception. Moreover, some perceptions are clearer and distinct than others. Nevertheless, Leibniz observes that

perception must be distinguished from consciousness and apperception. Consciousness is the ability to apperceive one's perception. Perception, Antony Kenny remarks, is an internal state that is a representation of other items in the universe. This inner state will change as the environment changes, not because of the environmental change, but because of the internal drive, or 'appetition' that has been programmed into them by God [6. P. 233]. Appetition is the activity of the internal principle that produces change or passage from one perception to another [5. P. 3]. The life of a monad is, therefore, a series of perceptions. The immediate question that comes to mind is, when I perceive a tree, is the perception of the tree not the cause of my perception? Put differently, does perception not involve causation? Leibniz's response to this question is that there is no causal relationship between the perceiver and the object perceived. This is because what seems to be a causal relation is just a program designed by God that follows the same order, just like a clock keeps the same time without causal relations. Consequently, what we have among the monads is a harmonious relationship and not a causal relationship. This led to Leibniz's theory of "pre-established harmony." However, unlike Descartes, who denied animals a soul, Leibniz opines that both humans and animals undergo the process of perception. This is reflected in Leibniz's assertion that "nature has given heightened perceptions to animals, from the care she has taken to provide them with organs, which collect numerous rays of light or numerous undulations of the air, in order, by uniting them, to make them have greater effect" [5. P. 4]. Nevertheless, what distinguishes humans from animals, Leibniz contends, is the knowledge of eternal, necessary truth, abstraction, and reflexive act. This Leibniz calls "rational soul or mind." Antony Kenny explains this further:

"The difference between living and non-living bodies is this. Organic bodies are not mere aggregates of monads: they have a single dominant monad that gives them an individual substantial unity. The dominant monad in a human being is the human soul. All monads have perception and appetite, but the dominant monad in a human being has a more vivid mental life and a more imperious appetite. It has not just perception, but 'apperception,' which is self-consciousness, reflexive knowledge of the internal states that constitute perception" [6. P. 234].

Perceptions are therefore sought in simple substances. This borders on the view that perceptions are unexplainable from a mechanistic perspective since material objects have parts, shapes, and sizes. Meanwhile, as earlier noted, monads are simple substances without parts, shapes, or sizes, which makes them immaterial automata.

It is noteworthy that Leibniz's monadology also has a great influence from Aristotle's teleological reasoning. This presupposes that every action or event has a purpose. By implication, monads were created by God with a purpose. This is because God cannot create something without a purpose. This is what Leibniz calls the "principle of sufficient reason." This principle is predicated on the view that every state of a simple substance is naturally a consequence of its preceding state in such a way that its present is interconnected with its future [5. P. 350]. Arguably,

every event can be explained by referring to a prior cause, but the prior cause must itself be explained by a still earlier cause, *ad infinitum* [4. P. 244]. Leibniz opines that there are two kinds of truth — the truth of reason and the truth of fact. The truth of reason is simple ideas, truth, and analysis, which are necessary. The fact is that contingents and their opposites are possible because they are not necessary. As such, the sufficient reason for the ordinary things we experience in the world of fact lies, therefore, in a Being outside the series of obvious causes — in a Being whose very nature or essence is a sufficient reason for its existence, requiring no prior cause, and this being is God [4. P. 244].

From the foregoing, Leibniz has propounded the theory of monads to address the lacuna left by previous philosophical theories. From his theory of monads, several distinct subset theories have emerged, including the principles of indiscernibility, sufficient reason, pre-established harmony, and God's existence, among others. However, his theory has been criticised on different grounds. One argument against his theory is that he failed to explicitly explain how the monads interact without external causation. Also, if the monads are the constituents of things in the universe, that is, they underline everything that is in the universe, then how do we know about them if they do not exist in space and time? That is immaterial and spiritual. Put otherwise, how does immateriality account for the existence of material? Bertrand Russell argues that Leibniz is guilty of a special inconsistency in combining subject-predicate logic with pluralism, for the proposition “there are many monads” is not of the subject-predicate form [7. P. 595]. This paper shares Russell's view because the subject-predicate logic is too parochial and exclusive. Besides, it does not provide a comprehensive, holistic analysis of what exists. Meanwhile, his theory of monads has great implications for human existence and the concept of social order.

Monadologism and the Problem of Social Order in Africa

Leibniz's monadology, as stated above, is windowless, such that nothing comes in or out of it. This implies that the monads have an independent existence and do not need any force or energy from anywhere except that which comes from within. This view of the monads has significant implications for human existence and challenges social order. This is because the monads undermined and neglected the essence of relationships and interactions that maintained order in a society. In fact, for Leibniz, monads do not share the same properties because no two monads are alike. This prompts some intriguing questions that are worth examining: Can humans exist independently of others in society? Can we have a socially ordered society if everybody has an independent existence within it? What are the implications of monads for social order in our society? To start with, it is imperative to conceptualise the meaning of social order.

Social order is a fundamental concept in sociology that raises questions about humans and their environment. The concept of social order is not only studied in sociology but is also an intriguing concept in political philosophy. According to

Nicki Lisa Cole, social order refers to how the various components of society — social structures and institutions, social relations, social interactions and behaviour, and cultural features such as norms, beliefs, and values — work together to maintain the status quo [8]. Mathias Jarikre refers to “social order” as a particular set or system of linked social structures, institutions, relations, customs, values, and practices that conserve, maintain, and enforce certain patterns of relating and behaving [9. P. 222]. Similarly, social order is the absence of chaos, conflict, and disorder, and a society in which individuals have accepted and agreed to a common set of norms, values, laws, and rules. Simply put, social order is a state of harmonious relationships among individuals and groups living in a society [10. P. 190].

The concept of social order is traceable to Thomas Hobbes’s “social contract,” in which individuals in a brutish society agreed to surrender their rights to a ruler to maintain law and order. In Hobbes’s view, society in a state of nature is composed of disorderliness, chaos, conflict, anarchy, and the war of man against man — *bellum omnium contra omnes*. Hobbes maintains that to restore and maintain social order, peace, and justice, every man must be ready to submit his rights to a one-man government with absolute power to suppress lawlessness and disorder. Hobbes calls this one man with absolute power “the Leviathan” [11]. However, Hobbes’s view of attaining social order has been heavily criticised. For instance, one may ask: to what extent should we trust Hobbes’s “Leviathan” to protect and maintain social order, peace, and justice, and to promote human well-being? The point here is that social order is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in a society ruled by an unchecked, unquestionable absolute power. It is often believed that “power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” In other words, the Leviathan may turn out to be a despotic leader who will eventually make life difficult, hurtful, painful, unquiet, and uneasy for the people. In a case in which the interests of the Leviathan do not conform to the interests of the people, rebellion is inevitable. Rebellion is not a phenomenon that comes easily or in peace. Rebelling against an autocratic and despotic leader (Leviathan) will inevitably lead to chaos, anarchy, confusion, disorderliness, and turmoil. Consequently, society is back to the state of nature where the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

From a different perspective, Karl Marx argues that social order depends on a society’s economic structure. That is, the relations between the mode of production and the economic structure of a society determine social order [9. P. 223]. However, Marx opines that social order is achievable through struggles between the ruling class and the working class. As such, he sees revolution as an unavoidable struggle to establish social order. Marx’s conceptions of social order are contrary to the view that social order is the absence of conflict because conflict itself is an agent for bringing about social order. The problem with Marx’s approach to achieving social order is that he persistently and strongly believes in violence, power struggles, and conflict as the only ways to overthrow the power and dominance of the ruling class and purposefully create a classless society where economic resources are shared

equally. This approach, also known as the “revolutionary approach,” occurs precipitously, abruptly, and always on a large scale, with many of the people in the society as victims of power struggles and a will to dominate. Apparently, the use of violence and conflict will no doubt lead to a disorganised, destabilised, chaotic, and lawless society. Besides, Marx’s use of violence to achieve social order is susceptible to a “circular problem of power dominance.” For lack of space, this problem will not be further substantiated. However, Marx’s view of social order is not without its criticisms.

It is conspicuous from the theorisation of social order considered above that it can only be achieved where there is harmony, cooperation, unity, solidarity, peace, interrelationships, and togetherness among individuals and groups in the society. This means that, unlike the windowless monads that exist independently of other monads, no human has an independent existence from others. In other words, living in isolation may not be impossible, but it is certainly detrimental and threatens human existence. Corroborating this view, Nsikanabasi and Mathias contend that stories of people living in isolation — neglected children, prisoners in solitary confinement — indicate that we need social contact to be physically and emotionally healthy and to simply stay alive [12. P. 288]. This is because while humans are individual beings, they are also social beings whose existence is meaningful to others. Hence, unlike monads, humans accept and agree on norms and values that hold their society together and maintain social order.

Leibniz’s methodology encourages an individualistic, structured society. That is, a society where the primacy of the individual is over and above that of a collective or group of people. A strict individualistic society is likely to lead to a clash of interests between the individual and society, in which the individual is committed only to his own interests and welfare, minding neither society’s interests nor the good of all. This society, in a monadological sense, comprises separate and unrelated individuals who do things differently and uniquely, with no common interest or goal. Put otherwise, not only is society individualistic, but it is also an unrelated, unconnected society. Consequently, a society overwhelmed with conflicts, clashes, rivalries, unhealthy competition, and struggles for dominance will unavoidably lead to social disorder and civil unrest. Leibniz’s monadology undoubtedly challenges the social order in Africa, as seen in the varied African experiences of intra-state and inter-state crises and conflicts that have claimed the lives of many innocent Africans and also plundered and depleted the limited available resources, thereby contributing to the underdevelopment and backwardness of many states in Africa. These experiences and sad situations range from ethnic diversity to tribalism, political struggle for power, strife for limited resources, boundary disputes, and religious fundamentalism and intolerance, amongst others. Ronald Badru gives some instances of conflictual problems in Africa:

There are many examples of conflictual relations in Africa to draw on, and some notable ones are: the Somali Civil War (2009 — present); the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi by the Hutus (1994); the Sierra Leone Civil War

(1991–2002); the Eritrean-Ethiopian War (1998–2000); the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970); and the Burundian genocides (against the Hutus by the Tutsi in 1972, and against the Tutsi by the Hutus in 1993). It is no news that presently, Nigeria is internally battling with the Boko Haram terrorism, which has decimated thousands of lives, destroyed millions of worth of items of property, truncated many desires and aspirations of the people, and negated economic progress in North East Nigeria resulting to Militant group in the North East, rampant kidnapping in all states in Nigeria, and above all, battling unemployment (Emphasis ours) [13. P. 171].

The above quotation illustrates the intra-state conflictual problem in Africa. Ronald Badru, further quoting Aremu, highlights some inter-state conflictual problems in Africa, which include:

“Nigeria-Cameroon dispute over the Bakassi peninsula since the 1970s; Algeria-Morocco conflict over the Atlas Mountains area in October 1963; Eritrea-Ethiopian crisis between 1962 and 1979; Somalia-Ethiopia dispute of 1964–1978 over the Ugandan desert region; Chad-Libya crisis of 1980–1982; Kenya-Somalia border war of 1963–1967 in which Somalia aimed at recovering its lost territories, including the Northern Frontier District of Kenya; and Tanzania-Uganda crisis in 1978–1979” [13. P. 171].

The consequences of the conflict in Africa include, but are not limited to, social disorder, the absence of peace and tranquillity, political instability, lawlessness, chaos, and increased corruption, among others. All these factors combined result in economic backwardness and abject poverty that bedevils most African states. Subsequently, Leibniz’s monadology, with its extreme independence and unrelated individuals, will undermine the social order needed in Africa. For instance, corruption, though multifaceted, is a situation in which resources meant for the welfare and good of many people are diverted, manipulated, squandered, and embezzled for personal benefit. In this case, since the individual’s interest is independent and does not align with the interests of society, the individual is at liberty to do what pleases and satisfies him, regardless of the common good, welfare, and interests of society. No doubt, this is detrimental to society’s overall development and growth.

Against Leibniz’s Monadology: The Imperative of African Communalism and the Quest for Social Order in Africa

The challenge of social order posed by Leibniz’s monadology could be addressed by an autochthonous theoretical framework. In other words, some virtues and values in African society are contrary to the interpretations and functions of monadology and, at the same time, have a positive impact on society. African society, by nature, is communalistic, and as such, the idea of an individualistic society, as portrayed in Leibniz’s monads, is alien to African society. This is evident in John Mbiti’s descriptions of African society as “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am” [14. P. 177]. Ifeanyi Menkiti also shares this view that “for Africans, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of

individual life histories, whatever these may be. And this primacy is meant to apply not only ontologically but also regarding epistemic accessibility” [14. P. 177]. Hence, a socially ordered society leads to collectiveness, togetherness, and a sense of belonging. However, based on the complexities of contemporary African society, especially in Nigeria, ethnocentric attitudes and personal interest are prevalent due to the diversity of cultures on the one hand and fear of marginalisation and domination on the other hand. According to Ekpenyong, as quoted by Nsikanabasi and Mathias, it is common in Nigeria to find people from the same cultural group arguing that their mode of dressing, greeting, cooking, or eating habits, and so on, are better than those of other cultural groups [12. P. 288]. This ethnocentric and tribalistic attitude has caused conflict, social disorder, chaos, and clashes among different cultures in Nigeria. Unlike the intolerant monads, to maintain social order, people must be able to coordinate their actions and cooperate to attain common goals [12. P. 288]. Different African societies associate different names with African communalism. Polycarp Ikuenobe describes it thus:

“This communal idea, that *a person is a person through other persons*, is *Ubuntu* in Bantu languages. In the Shona language in Zimbabwe, it is *Unhu*, and it is *Botho* in the Tswana language of Botswana. It is captured in Kiswahili by the concept of *Harambee*, which means ‘everyone pulling together,’ but the idea is exemplified in many cultures of Eastern Africa. This ethical idea is implicated in Julius Nyerere’s (1968) idea of *Ujamaa*. He sought to extend the traditional African communal values of extended family to relationships of caring, mutual support, cooperation, harmonious relationships, and solidarity to the wider society as a principle of governance (Emphasis ours)” [15. P. 131].

African communalism is therefore predicated on the moral principle that an action is blameworthy if its consequences bring more harm than good to the members of a community. Suffice it to say that any action that fails to promote the common good of the people and that is grounded in ill-willed intentions is morally wrong. Segun Gbadegesin, commenting on communalism in Africa, remarks that a high premium is placed on oneness, solidarity, mutuality, and belongingness among the members of a community [16. P. 133]. Every member, according to Gbadegesin, is expected to consider him / herself as an integral part of the whole and to play an appropriate role towards the good of all. Also, crucial to African communalism is “corporate social responsibility,” which is translated in Yoruba parlance to mean *Ajumose* [17. P. 233–253]. Oluwatobi D. Esan and Solomon K. Awe aver that corporate social responsibility is the very foundation of African communal living, which ensures that everyone strives to treat others with respect and dignity [17. P. 248–249]. Besides, the principle of *Ajumose* places a premium on cooperation and collective effort to maintain a socially ordered society in which everyone mutually agrees to respect one another, obey laws and constituted authority, and practice fairness and equity in the distribution of resources and benefits. Adhering to the principle of *Ajumose*, no tribe or culture should be seen as superior to another tribe, such that when it comes to the distribution of benefits and

rewards, some tribes (dominant ethnic groups) are believed to dominate, subjugate, and marginalise some other “minority tribes.” It is a truism that marginalisation and domination of some tribes by dominant ethnic groups are one of the causes of social disorderliness and crises in Nigeria. An instance is evident in the operations and activities of the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), which perpetrate agitation for secession. Meanwhile, the civil war experience is still fresh in memory, and it is difficult to forget its attendant consequences. The minority ethnic groups, particularly the Niger-Delta militants, perceived themselves as not belonging to the oneness of Nigeria; thus, they perpetuate violence, vandalise pipelines, kidnap, and engage in civil disobedience, among others. Nevertheless, strict adherence to the principle of *Ajumose* will bring all tribes together in oneness and unity regardless of size or economic strength. No ethnic group is self-sufficient, self-contained, and independent. To maintain and sustain a socially ordered society, therefore, each tribe needs to see Nigeria as their home, to be collectively protected against internal and external intrusion and attack.

Another value related to African communalism is what Ronald Badru calls “African neighbourliness.” According to Badru, African neighbourliness is “a positive sense of community between the self (in the singular or plural sense) and the other (in the singular or plural sense), who share non-extensive or extensive proximity; it is a cultivated sense of togetherness between the self and the other” [13. P. 171]. African neighbourliness is analogous to African communalism, which stresses togetherness, mutuality, collective relationships, and the recognition of the self and others as a way to resolve conflict in Africa, thereby maintaining social order in society. The functionality of African communalism, and by extension African neighbourliness, finds expression in Yoruba (African) cultural proverbs, which say: *agbajo owo la fi'n s'oya, ajeji owo kan ko gbe'ru d'ori* — this means that a whole hand is required to beat a chest; a part of the hand cannot lift a load to the head. Another Yoruba proverb says *Igi kan ko le da igbo se* — this means that a tree does not make a forest. In another adage, *otun we osi, osi we otun, lowo fi mimo* [18. P. 319] — this is translated to mean using the right hand to wash the left hand, and the left hand to wash the right hand, is the way to get the hands clean. Apparently, unlike the monads’ concepts of self-sufficiency, self-independence, self-sustenance, self-reliance, and self-support, the Yoruba (African) culture believes that the essence of a being is discernible in human relationships (cooperation) with others.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, we have examined Leibniz’s monadology and the challenge it poses to social order in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. This paper contends that Leibniz’s monadology presents a significant challenge to social order in Nigeria. By social order, we refer to a state of affairs characterised by the absence of chaos and disorderliness. Moreover, to prevent chaos in an ordered society, members of the community must come together and agree on the norms, values,

taboos, laws, and rules that guide individual actions. To achieve this, Leibniz's monadology offers a contrasting perspective. His view posits that monads are windowless, self-sufficient, and exist independently of one another. Thus, rather than fostering an inclusive and co-extensive relationship, Leibniz's monads are distinctly exclusive and intolerant. However, a society with social order harmonises individuals' differences, allowing them to interact and communicate in ways that sustain and promote development. To avert chaos, disorder, and conflict among individuals in society, this paper argues that traditional African communal virtues and values should be embraced. African communalism ensures that individuals act not solely in their interests but also consider the interests of others. Consequently, Africans, particularly within the context of Yoruba culture in Nigeria, find Leibniz's monads alien and abhorrent in African society, where human relationships, solidarity, and complementarity define one's being and personality, influence constructive, rational decision-making, and ensure peaceful coexistence and social order.

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