

**THE AFRICAN PREDICAMENT AND A CASE FOR SINGER'S  
'SAMARITANISM': AN EXISTENTIALIST INTERPRETATION**

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ft.v5i2.2>

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**Abstract**

Africa has always been viewed as a land of the world's greatest potential. It has been described *ad nauseam* as a land of abundant natural and human resources, the cradle of civilization and the bastion of man's natural spirituality. In spite of this apparent superlative richness, the present African condition is also well documented as a paradox. If Africa is this resource rich, why is it so backward and economically poor? In line with the existentialist notion of solicitude and care, this paper argues for a case of global 'Samaritanism', that is, an unsolicited care for the other that is nonetheless morally obligatory by virtue of a shared world and common existence. Drawing insight from the submission of Peter Singer, this paper posits that, if we have the capacity to intervene and prevent something bad from happening, without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought morally to do it. This paper's contribution to existing knowledge rests on the extension of Singer's principle of 'Samaritanism' (hitherto restricted to doling out goods and money) to include solicitude and actionable intervention on life-threatening human conditions of whatever kind.

**Key words:** Africa, Cultural Menaces, Singer, Samaritanism, Existentialism, *Fursorge*

**Introduction**

The third century naturalist and geographer, historian and encyclopaedist, Pliny the Elder, was quoted to have said: "*Ex Africa semper aliquid novi*", which loosely translates as "Out of Africa there is always something new". In the reckoning of this inquisitive explorer of antiquity, whose vivid rhetorics wetted the appetite for research into Africa, the 'Dark Continent' was an enclave of the exotic, the novel, the newsy, the fantastic and the different. In today's world, although the news from Africa does not contain the exoticism of the ancient period, the same antediluvian prejudice created by difference still permeates our unbalanced information world order.

Exotic as Africa might have seemed, it has always been a land of the world's greatest potential. It has been described *ad nauseam* as a land of abundant natural and human resources, the cradle of civilization and the bastion of man's natural spirituality. In spite of this apparent superlative richness, the present African condition is also well documented as a paradox, for if Africa is this resource rich, why is it so backward and economically poor? What Externalist and Internalist agencies do we hold responsible for the African situation? This paradoxical scenario puts the continent and its people in a complex predicament evidenced by Africa's arrested development and retrogression. This condition of arrested development and perpetual dependence is what is presented as the African Predicament. What is the 'African predicament'? What has been the response to it? Is there need for another response?

This paper is an ambitious proposal in social ethics in that it seeks to address the African predicament from a normative standpoint. By virtue of this disciplinary objective, it is a speculative, philosophical reflection that employs the transformative worldview approach to interrogate the existential situation of the African people in post-coloniality. In this regard, it is a phenomenological inquiry into a lived experience of a people, and by that token devoid of the empirical analyses with which many presentations in the social sciences are familiar.

### **The African Predicament**

All through history, narratives about Africa and its peoples have been the creation of curious occidental minds colliding with the unfamiliar. Earliest Graeco-Roman narrators and natural historians such as Strabo, Pliny the Elder, who brought Africa into the social consciousness of their kindred, were so baffled by the inexplicable difference between their own world and the world of those they called *ethiops* or the blacks (AWOONOR 2006, 388). Whatever it was they presented to their world, by this epistemic encounter, formed the basis for the barrage of denigration directed at the African. In the multifarious classifications of the human person, be they anthropological, biological, political, religious; in whatever narrative of taxonomy, however naive or benign, black people have been placed in the lowest stratum of the classification table. They are rendered as the fall guys of humanity - docile, lazy and incapable of effecting change in their society. Disadvantaged by lopsided global relations, black people have not enjoyed a genuine expression of their history of change and activism. Often times, history has judged them either as unfortunate victims of an ever-competitive world, or as cannon fodder for social evolution (OYEBOLA 1976, 47f.). The result of this structural violence, with which they have come to live

by, is a problematic situation or state of perplexity which Africans, as a people and as a geo-political entity, have continually labored to address. This is the African Predicament. Among other existential situations, it is characterised by the paradox of plenty, cultural menaces of globalization, an accommodating but destructive metaphysics and, arrested development cum dependency syndrome:

### ***The Paradox of plenty***

This is an asymmetrical situation of a continent rich in valuable natural resources but lacks the wherewithal to turn these resources into wealth for the people. Africa, based on different research findings, is said to possess 99% of the world's chrome, 85% of its platinum, 70% of its tantalite, 68% of its cobalt and 40% of its gold (EISELE 2007, Web N.P). Another source claims that Africa retains 40% of the world's Hydro-electric power, 42 % of the world's bauxite, 38 % of the world's uranium, 42 % of its gold, 88 % of its diamond and 10 % of its oil (THE ECONOMIST 1996, Web N.P). Despite this abundance, the African condition mirrors a dismal quality of life, characterized by abysmal health care system, inexcusable incapacitation over electricity power supply, limited access to education and incredibly poor standard of living.

### ***The cultural menaces of globalization***

This is the cultural consequence of a collision between the African mind and the recent mutation of capitalist ideology that is innocuously described as globalization. Devoid of its seemingly harmless interpretation as 'global integration', or villagisation of the globe through telecommunication, or cross-fertilization of ideas without barriers, the typical globalization is a rapacious, exploitative, racially hegemonic phenomenon in social relations that accentuates lopsided dichotomies. As far as the African is concerned, it unearths certain cultural menaces (N'DIAYE 1981, 20) amongst which is *cultural expropriation*, which involves a repackaged interpretation of the African culture by a dominating western culture, through some ethnocentric epistemologies developed in great western universities and institutions. The danger in this is that a non-African vision, for instance, is being traded to Africans because they do not have the means and resources to organize long-term projects and researches without the assistance of the developed world. It is also unveiled in *cultural alienation*, which is the estrangement of the African from the roots of his life-world through a brutal and systematic supplanting of the exigencies of a dominating culture. It is a deliberate incapacitation of the African's state of spiritual becoming, a deliberate denial of his existentiality as well as a truncation

of his mental potentialities, through a freezing of his power of being and acting.

The cultural menace of globalization is also revealed in *cultural disappropriation*, which is either the voluntary or unconscious loss of identity and replacement by a borrowed identity. Under the guise of modernism or universalism, the culturally disappropriated man becomes a ‘cultural bum’ cut off from creation and begging for sustenance in other cultures. The implication is that he is made to be reliant not on himself but on the dictates of the colonizer or neo-colonizer as the case may be (ADELE 1980, 48). American sociologist, Robert Park, characterized these African and black men as ‘Marginal men’ (FALAIYE 2003, 150). Marginal men, Park argues “exist in two cultural worlds and in two different societies at the same time, without being totally a part of either” (FALAIYE 2003, 150).

#### ***Accommodating and self destruct metaphysics***

African Metaphysics has been described as a dynamic, accommodating, open interpenetration of forces. This description of the African ontological thought is traceable to Placide Tempels’ pioneering research on Bantu Philosophy, wherein the Belgian priest provides systematic grounding to African ontological scheme using the Bantu theory of forces. According to Tempels (1959, 375), in Bantu ontology, being is qualified as ‘force’ rather than having force. In the explication of this metaphysical scheme, Tempels posits that vital force flows from the first founder of the clan through the ancestors to the families and individual of the tribe. Besides, presumably, this idea of ‘force’ is connotatively different from the western notion of the term. It is not only associated with animate objects, but also it is even the pulsating influence of motion and change in inanimate objects since vital force can flow in and out of inanimate objects (RUCH and ANYANWU 1981, 90). Owing to this doctrine of vital force, the African is said to see things participating in one another because through the hierarchy of forces a being sustains itself in its interaction with being. Thus, K. C. Anyanwu posits: “Everything the African thinks about and feels has to be in the image of a living force interacting with other living forces (RUCH and ANYANWU 1981, 51-52). By this token, it is also said to posit the view that all of nature is related; and being so related, nature (including Man) is not to be exploited or desecrated. Unah pursues this position of dynamic metaphysics further when he argues that, since every aspect of reality is a self-presenting of spirit or force, dynamic metaphysics “cultivates in its adherents an attitude of tolerance and peaceful co-existence. It makes a man more accommodating of his fellowmen and engenders a respectful approach to things and people” (UNAH 1996,

351-352). The accommodating spirit and openness entailed in this 'dynamic metaphysics' is open to negative interpretation. Whilst on the one hand it is said to create openness to mutual influences of ideas, on the other hand, the latitude it affords ideas, events and phenomena to interact also creates room for all kinds of ideas, worldviews and orientations to dominate Africa (RUCH and ANYANWU 1981, 369f). Notwithstanding, there exists some historical narratives that negate this acclaimed permissibility of the African 'dynamic metaphysics'. Many African communities have been known to engage in violent resistance of other cultures until they succumbed to the latter's technological superiority. Rather than a spirit of live and let live with which the African metaphysical temperament has been associated, incidences of forced occupation, massacres and other sanguinary episodes are responsible for the violation of the African spiritual and ontological space.

Other destructive elements of this dynamic metaphysics have been highlighted by prominent African philosophers, amongst whom are Paulin Houtoundji, C. B. Okolo, Innocent Asouzu and Pantaleon Iroegbu. For instance, Houtoundji (1996) questions the imposed ontological scheme of the Bantu people on the generality of African peoples and cultures, and maintains that the intellectual underpinning behind Tempels' theorizing was inherently Western. Justifying Houtoundji's critique of Bantu Philosophy as "Tempels' philosophy with African paraphernalia", Iroegbu argues that besides its superficial racial and reductionist undertone, Tempels' Bantu Philosophy, both in material content and formal presentation, "is not able to get into a personal critical-analytic and synthetic-hermeneutic interpretation of the content" of the proposed Bantu reality (1995., 291). Chukwudum Okolo, on his part, questions the originality and African content of Tempels' hypothesis, when he dismisses it as a reactionary "... social and political manifesto", a sort of "apologetical" project laden with the common western prejudices that seek to re-invent Africa solely for a western audience (OKOLO 1988, 89). In the same vein, Asouzu (2013, 60-66) argues that, by positing the African conception of being as *force vitale* (vital force) Tempels was inferring that the African was of grasping the quiddity or transcendental notions of being. The danger in this presentation is a reduction incapable of the African worldview to an accidental, inessential quality. Yet, it is in this debased notion of African conception of reality that many scholars and philosophers seek intellectual refuge for Africa's social order.

***Arrested development and dependency syndrome***

Coupled with all the aforementioned features is the claim of arrested development and its attendant dependency syndrome. Since an influential position of African development theory blames the West for the cause of Africa's problems – underdevelopment, leadership crises, state of infrastructure and low premium for human life – it is also argued that the West has the solutions to those problems.

As it has always been since the encounter between Africans and the colonial interlopers, almost every facet of African life seems reliant on the West. African people are providentially endowed as evidenced in the abundant human and natural resources at their disposal. Yet, to enjoy the prospects of their natural resources they have to depend largely on the technology of the West. Be it gold, diamond, oil, bauxite, or the value chain of cash and food crops, the production, costing, marketing, control and regulation of Africa's natural products are controlled by the west. When it comes to the production of ideas, Africans would only make sense of themselves or give legitimacy to ideas about themselves only when discourses are tailored to suit the canons provided by the West. In order to optimally harness its potential and organize its business, financial and commercial potential, Africa depends on partnerships and agreements in a global order controlled by the West. To understand social and political problems of the African people, models of interrogation and engagement have to come from scientific postulations developed in Western intellectual cultures. With this kind of dependency, black peoples, as Oyebola (1976, 21) observes “have remained poor imitators of the other races since their isolation from the rest of the world was broken five centuries ago. Before then, we have shown no evidence of any originality that wasn't foreign inspired or influenced”.

So demoralizing is this dependency syndrome that the current state of graft and poor leadership credential of African leaders, the abysmal living condition and culture of corruption pervading a greater part of the length and breadth of Africa, seem to present no hope for the people. This seeming hopelessness raises questions about the capacity of the African to think through existential problems that befall him. Little wonder, Oyebola (1976, 91) submits that mental laziness, greed and indiscretion are the most crippling factors which have kept the black race the world's underdog.

**Some Responses and their shortfall**

In response to the African predicament some causative factors have been identified. Prominent among them is the Externalist position that was popularized by Walter Rodney. According to this position, the

underdog status of the African is blamed on the Externalist thesis that African development is hinged on the structural dependence brutally imposed on the continent by the West. The Externalist thesis cites the impact of the strategy of conquest perpetrated by the West as the chief factor responsible for the African predicament. It argues that through the brutal regime of slave trade, colonialism, neo-colonialism and lately globalization the Euro-Western economic order imposed an alien system of political economic competition that served the interest of their home country at the expense of Africa's development (RODNEY 1972). It argues also that this imposition is responsible for the enforcement of an economic growth regime that is at variance with the sub-human existence on ground. In support of this position, Claude Ake observes that:

The present conditions of the third world countries are not in the least analogous to the conditions of the industrialized countries in the earlier stages of their economic development. The present condition of the third world is the effect of the slave trade, pillage, colonialism and unequal exchange. (1982, 153)

To extricate Africa from this stranglehold, Rodney insists that only “a radical break with the international capitalist system, which has been the principal agency of the underdevelopment of Africa over the last seven centuries” (1972, 7), can return Africa to its supposed pre-colonial glorious state.

However, a diametrically opposed view, spearheaded by the Internalist thesis of African underdevelopment, posits that the African predicament is traceable to internal factors. It argues that the problem of the African polis resides in Africa and not in the West. To substantiate their claim the internalist thesis refers to the graft and poor leadership credential of African leaders, who deliberately distort the concept of power to the benefit of the ruling class and their foreign cohorts. It further argues that Africa is where it is today because of the selfish acquisitive tendencies and the love of power of political actors who rode on the crest of spontaneous nationalism to assume leadership from colonial administrators. In the words of George Ayittey its main proponent, “we cannot forever go on pretending black leaders are saints. White leaders fail their people too, so what is wrong with me saying that black leaders have failed their people (AYITTEY 1998, 4). In another expression, he says “... they (African leaders) looted Africa's wealth for deposit in Swiss bank accounts, while their own people starved (AYITTEY 1998, 23). Africa, this position maintains, has been infiltrated by ‘opportunists’, who, working for a dubious neo-liberal

capitalist world economy, collude with local scavengers, to overlook the profligate leadership of African rulers and politicians. By so doing, these opportunists aided by African intellectuals foster a partnership that relishes the already disproportionate distribution of power and wealth between the north and south, the rich developed world and the poor African continent.

In between the above mentioned positions, there is the response of so-called 'African Socialists'. These were political theorists and pre-Independence nationalists, who upon assumption of political power, attempted to address the African predicament by putting into practice their various theories of African Socialism. Prominent among these nationalist thinkers are Julius Nyerere's *Ujamaa*, Leopold Sedar Senghor's *Negritude*, Kwame Nkrumah's *Consciencism* and Obafemi Awolowo's *Democratic Socialism*. Irrespective of slight differences in the submissions of these thinkers, they all presuppose a fusion, more or less, of African traditional thought system and ideas of development from western intellectual cultures, as a means of interrogating the African predicament.

The most recent response to the African predicament is the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) which was established in 2001. NEPAD was initiated by some prominent African leaders, with the approval of a group of leaders of the eight foremost economies worldwide otherwise called the G8, as a proposal for a radical transformation of the African continent. It proposes a commitment by African leaders and peoples to put the continent on a path of sustainable growth, and urges the rest of the world, especially the developed world to partner with her. According to the plans of this partnership, Africa's economic reconstruction, development and coveted renaissance is hinged on a partnership with principal global economic actors. This so-called reconstruction would depend on Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and Oversea Development Assistance (ODA). Hence, NEPAD was prided as the compass to Africa's socio-economic and political destiny, the springboard to global respectability, and the catechism for economic salvation.

One of the beautiful things about NEPAD is that, it was an African awakening to a new world order on a fast track; and as such, it drew the attention of the African to the intricate reality of today's world, and urges her to seek her place therein. For a region condemned to dependence and hopelessness, NEPAD was not only a clarion call to seek redress, but also an image-laundry strategy to extricate Africa from the cesspool of negative stereotypes. Hence, the South African Council of Churches contends:

NEPAD is in many respects a marketing strategy for Africa that attempts to overcome the negative image and sentiment that Africa generates in the consciousness of many political, business, and civil society circles outside the continent. (2002, Web N.P)

Be that as it may, NEPAD is laden with internal contradictions. Besides being infested with ambiguities, its deliberately flawed formal requirement for partnership falsifies the partnership (OKEREGBE 2012, 51). Its falsity is highlighted by its ‘fire brigade’ approach to development proposals, which often disregards the contributions of African peoples (TANDON 2002, Web N.P), and the meaningful engagement of African communities – the civil society, the religious bodies – over the contents and strategies of NEPAD. This leads to the questions about democratic participation, and whether the initiators of NEPAD could be viewed as genuine representatives of the people over a crucial matter as African development.

### **Singer’s Global Samaritanism**

Putting in abeyance other avenues of solving the problem of the African predicament, this work proposes a position which we may call Global Samaritanism. As the noun in the term suggests, Samaritanism is borrowed from two incongruent states of affairs: one from the moral learnt in the Parable of the Good Samaritan found in the Gospel of Luke, and the other from Peter Singer’s non-Christian ethics of charity. Conceptually, Global Samaritanism is rooted in Peter Singer’s ethics of poverty reduction but adopts the nomenclature derived from the Parable. To understand the recommendation posited let us put Singer in perspective. In his work, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”, Singer (1972, 229) posits an audacious proposal that seeks to address global poverty through the universalization of a radical moral commitment towards the other in the form of obligatory charity. In this way, he ties charity to moral duty. Whilst Singer’s work is directly concerned with food crisis, hunger and basic survival within the context of relief assistance to suffering people in real life situation in Bengal, his postulation may be interpreted in the light of any existential situation that leads to suffering and death.

Devoid of the practical scenario and particular response depicted in this work, Singer’s work is built around certain principles of universal, existential possibility. The preamble to his argument is an assumption “that suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad” (SINGER 1972, 231). This, by no means, is a hang-over from the

utilitarian suasion that views events and circumstances which bring pain or minimize pleasure as morally bad. Suffering, of any form – especially death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care – causes pain; and in Singer’s reckoning and by enlightened common sense is at variance with man’s aspiration to enjoy natural physical good that his temporal destiny permits. Another assumption is a universalizability principle which he qualifies thus: “if it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything morally significant, we ought morally, to do it” (SINGER 1972, 231-232). He illustrates this graphically with the example of a drowning child in a shallow pond. According to him, in application of his universalizability principle, “I ought to wade in and pull the child out. This will mean getting my clothes muddy, but this is insignificant, while the death of the child would presumably be a very bad thing” (SINGER 1972, 231).

In spite of its deliberate obviation of theistic nuances, Singer’s moral proposal is not too different from the essential message of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, namely that socio-political profiling of people, such as race, ethnicity, region, caste, does not prevent one from carrying out a moral duty – that which one ought to do; hence the sobriquet Samaritanism. In a shared world, or as existentialists say, in a world of common field of beingness, Singer’s radical moral proposal is very instructive in addressing the African predicament. In view of the catalogue of suffering that has become the lot of the African, it fits well to suppose that the African predicament is a bad thing. If this is the case, just like the Bengal emergency cited by Singer, if it is in one’s power to prevent something very bad from happening (African predicament), without thereby sacrificing anything morally significant, one ought morally to do it.

To properly reiterate his position, Singer erects his principle on two planks. Firstly, he argues that proximity or any form of justification on geographical grounds does not make any moral difference if one is to prevent something bad from happening. That one can, or ought to, assist in a situation of suffering in his neighborhood, does not justify the denial of assistance to one who is further away. In other words, if I feel morally obliged to assist someone, it does not matter if that someone is a rich man’s kid in my middle class neighborhood, or some unknown illiterate poor woman in war-torn Sudan. The moral obligation here is preventing something bad from happening if one has the power to do so, without doing something bad, or sacrificing something of comparable significance. Moreover, the issue of ineffective management of funds for distant charities and relief operations, which hinders assistance to remote places and discriminates on geographical grounds, is being

addressed by the efficiency of today's technology. In today's global village, no nation, no race is isolated from the rest of the world.

Secondly, that one's relational state, that is, either as an individual or in a community of others, does not make any moral distinction about the circumstance in which one can prevent something bad from happening. Says Singer: "The principle makes no distinction between cases in which I am the only person who could possibly do anything and cases in which I am just one among millions in the same position" (1975, 232). A person should so act as to prevent something bad from happening in so far he does not put himself or others in moral jeopardy to so act. In the light of providing aid for the needy, this position suggests that he should so generously contribute to help the suffering needy in so far as he is not sacrificing anything morally significant, by which is meant denying oneself of a basic need (SINGER 1972, 237). He goes further to reinforce this argument by drawing support from Thomas Aquinas' submission on the act of charity. Aquinas had argued that, since in the natural order instituted by divine providence, material goods are provided for the satisfaction of human needs, it follows that in the apportioning of property by human law, the satisfaction of man's necessity should not be hindered from such goods (SINGER 1972, 240). In other words, because material goods are intended to satisfy the needs of human beings, the organization of the human society through human law, should be such that these material goods are distributed and acquired in such a manner that they must not prevent man satisfying his basic necessity. Material goods, rather than being an instrument of oppression and pauperization, are to the beneficial service of man – satisfaction of man's necessity. This imperative of satisfying man's necessity is highlighted by Aquinas' condemnation of the abhorrent lopsided distribution of material goods when he writes: "... whatever a man has in superabundance is owed, of natural right, to the poor for their sustenance" (SINGER 1972, 240).

Singer's invocation of a frugal medieval monastic ethic may be really upsetting in contemporary social order, which views success from a questionable pedestal of material prosperity. In an age when capitalism and its tendencies have pervaded many aspects of social relations, the structural injustice perpetrated by an obscenely disproportionate distribution of material goods amongst peoples of the world, is often taken for granted as a natural order. Surplus cannot abound in one part of the world while abysmal lack takes charge elsewhere. It is this uncritical and loose naïve thinking, operative in western socio-economic life that Singer considers immoral. Singer's 'Samaritanism' may hurt those societies that promote rabid accumulation as an index of power; it may even seem outmoded in this age of social atomism and

individualism, yet it unveils the transcultural nature, as well as the universality of any moral position that seeks to become a standard for addressing global problems.

### **The Existentialist Interpretation**

There is an existentialist streak in this principle. Apart from being a philosophical reflection that appeals to the moral sense of the individual, Singer situates the ontological foundation of this principle on the presupposition of a common humanity, and he does so without recourse to any theological agency. Although many scholars have maintained the Internalist dictum that the problem of the African *polis* resides in Africa and not in the West (AYITTEY 1992; FALAIYE 1999), Global Samaritanism, without negating the thesis of internalist theorizing, reiterates the solicitude and ethical demands which today's inclusive global social order imposes on man (HEIDEGGER, 1967). In his laborious explication of the common traits of man as an existential being, Heidegger introduces the concept of *Mitsein*, *Mitleid* and *Fursorge* to counterbalance the misleading interpretation of *Sein Lassen* (letting-be) as aloofness. Through the invitation of the concept of *Mitsein* (Being-with), Heidegger demolishes the anarchism and individualism that would have followed from a misconceived rendition of *Sein Lassen* had he (Heidegger) not progressed in his discussion of the subject. From his explication of the concept of Being-with, he presents human existence as basically social. We are not first an aggregation of egos for which sociality is a secondary accompaniment. Rather, the human person is a social self. The very fact of his personhood makes him a Being-with, just as his everyday encounter attests to his social nature.

In furtherance of this thesis, Heidegger gives ethical muscle to this existential bonding of humanity by introducing the concept of *Mitleid* (suffer-with) or what may also be rendered as compassion. In fact, according to Hatab “the notions of *Mitsein* and Being-in help to show how compassion is possible, and indeed the phenomenon of compassion is a perfect illustration of the existential validity of Heidegger's configuration of Being-in-the-world” (HATAB 1995, 414). As the term suggests, compassion invites us to “*Mit-leid*” (Bear-with) others, to share in the pain of others, for in it the misfortune, the grief, the sorrow of others touch and alter our experiences, and we are urged to do act (HATAB 1995, 414). By this arresting invitation, the intending self is tumbled inside out, and our experiences dwell in the other — as a being-with-the-other. What this analysis brings to the fore is that finitude opens up the world as our world. It is this finitude, made evident in the human predicament, which brings about compassion.

However, the disposition to act does not entail a 'Father Christmas' benevolence or 'Feeding Bottle' assistance; rather it is a frank confrontation that appeals to the other to be the best he can be. It is to care-for the other. Rendered in the Heideggerian sense as *Fursorge*, to 'care-for' involves an existential situation that "helps the other to become transparent to himself in his care, and to become free for it." It does not dominate but rather liberates persons and helps them realize their potential. This attitude of 'caring-for' is the special invitation to attend to the authentic possibilities of others.

### **Implication for the African People**

Drawing insight from the above submission, it may well be that the problem of the African may take root in Africa, but solving that problem requires frank commitments that would take us beyond Africa. The point being amplified here is that in today's world, the African predicament is no longer the problem of the black man domiciled in sub-Saharan Africa. Beyond the far-fetched existential commonness of humanity, globalization, colonial kinships and economic liberalization have made the mutual interpenetration of ideas and values imperative in the present world order. A riot by militants in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria may shoot up the price of oil in the global market, just as a draconian and unpopular law in a Commonwealth nation in Africa may lead to a policy shift in the Home Affairs ministry in the UK.

Let us take for instance, the illegal migration of African youths to countries of Europe and other parts of the western world and the problem it causes those nations. Ordinarily, people, apart from family members and well wishers, are often indifferent to mishaps befalling desperate African youths, who, en route Europe to eke out a living or seek a better life, die of starvation and inclement situations either in the Sahara Desert or while crossing the Mediterranean Sea. However, if they manage to get to their destination in Europe, both the government and the people of the host country are often apprehensive because of the nuisance value of these immigrants. This is understandable because most of these African youths often unconsciously transfer their habituated culture of illegality, graft, mediocrity and corruption of their society into the host country. In their desperation and unaccustomed state of living, which more or less is averse to the organized structure of governance they find themselves in foreign countries, these youths soon begin to contravene the laws of their host countries. And as a backlash, these youths suffer ill-treatment and unjustified brutality, while the host country resort to measures of engagement that often lead to diplomatic row with immigrants' home governments.

What the foregoing seems to suggest is this: although the practical import of Singer's principle involves intervention in form of doling out money and providing goods, its applicability is extendable to other forms of solicitude and moral intervention that would influence the over-all socio-political space. It would entail assistance to effectively police democratic regimes, beyond the checks and balances of constitutional provisions. With regards to the African predicament, if Singer's Samaritanism is actionable, it would entail speaking truth to power and taking moral actions against willful perpetration of evil by African leaders. It would involve actions that would purge African leaders of the inordinate power-craze and misappropriated privileges that negate genuine moral leadership and foster heinous crimes that lead to evil. It may also, at a more ambitious level, demand that a coalition of interventionists take action against regimes and persons perpetrating evils so laboriously explained by Singer. However, the validity of their claims to action lies with the proviso: if it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything morally significant, we ought morally, to do it. The point Singer is driving at is that in any situation, where a person is convinced that he or she has a moral obligation to prevent evil, such a person should be guided by the principle of universality, impartiality and equality. If any evil is worth preventing, it does not matter where the evil is domiciled, whom such a bad thing is happening to, and the circumstance of the preventable evil.

### **Conclusion**

Having exposed the African predicament and examined the myriad interventions towards mitigating the African predicament, it was observed they are laden with inconsistencies and internal contradictions. Owing to these observations, this paper interpreted Peter Singer's proposal for aid for the needy from an existentialist perspective as a principle for addressing the African predicament. It has been argued that this principle, aptly dubbed Global Samaritanism, is existentialist in moral orientation. It opens up a socio-ethical scheme that universalizes the obligatory solicitude which the Biblical parable of the Good Samaritan prescribes. It has also been argued that if the African predicament is a bad thing, that is a moral situation that does harm to the human being in Africa, then one is morally obliged by virtue of our common humanity to prevent it, if it is within one's power to prevent something very bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything morally significant. The implication of this is that, to insist that Africa solves its problem itself seems not only non-feasible in today's world, but also counterproductive to global relations. The argument that

distance and status are inhibitive factors to Samaritanism has been invalidated by Singer's argument to the effect that discrimination on the basis of geographical location or one's circumstance of solicitude (that is, either as an individual or in concert with others) does not matter in preventing evil or something bad from happening, if carrying out such moral actions is based on the principle of universality, impartiality and equality.

In spite of the apparent condition of arrested development discussed earlier, Global Samaritanism is not a charge of vulnerability or perpetual dependence. That a section of the global community enjoys a voluntary intervention by another into its crises neither suggests vulnerability nor perpetual dependence. It all depends on how that society responds to that intervention. One does not discountenance the fact that the initiative for survival and sustenance of a given people rests on how they develop the wherewithal to solve problems in their existential milieu. Standing aloof amidst a myriad of self-inflicted problems, and waiting for hand-outs from some powerful 'Father Christmas' nations to solve them is tantamount to slavery. Perpetual dependence of this nature is inconsistent with the proposal of Global Samaritanism. Global Samaritanism is not a strategy by one party to perpetuate dependence on the other; it is not a display of naked power to appropriate, and make the other a lackey. Rather Global Samaritanism is a response to a respected other, whose well-being needs to be ameliorated by the very fact that this other is a mirror of my humanity. Thus, whilst Global Samaritanism recognizes the moral integrity of a society that genuinely strives to be the best it can authentically be within the limits of its resources, it also seeks to express the solicitude or ethics of Being-with-others that should guide the human community in crisis situations.

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