

**A CRITICAL EXPOSITION OF  
KWAME GYEKYE'S COMMUNITARIANISM**

by

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I declare that *A Critical Exposition of Kwame Gyekye's Communitarianism* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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## **KEY TERMS**

Communitarianism; Equiprimordiality; Federal Republic of Nigeria; Metanationality; Multicultural community; National culture and national identity; Nation-state; Personhood; The common good; Towards nationhood.

## SUMMARY

This dissertation argues that Gyekye, in his idea of communitarianism, has a contribution to make towards the understanding of the socio-political structures of multicultural communities in Africa. Gyekye's construct of metanationality, in relation to his communitarian ethics, addresses the socio-political and cultural problems confronting multicultural communities, with particular reference to Nigeria. In an attempt to achieve his idea of a "metanational state", Gyekye claims that: (1) "personhood" is partially defined by a communal structure; (2) equal moral attention should be given both to individual interests and community interests; (3) it is necessary to integrate the "ethic of responsibility" with "rights"; (4) members of the nation-state should be considered equal; (5) in order to achieve nationhood in a multicultural community, it is essential to move beyond "ethnicity" and (6) in an attempt to form a national culture, attention should be drawn to "the elegant" aspects of cultures of various ethno-cultural communities.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

The most important question... relates to the *extent* to which the individualist outlook will take over from the ethos of the communal way of life evolved by African cultures. Can it be expected that the individualistic ethos will cut into the pristine communal orientation sufficiently deeply to numb or vitiate the sentiments of a shared, communal life that characterizes pre-urban life? Will the ethos of individualism, in the wake of urbanization, make demolitionary inroads into the traditional communal values? Well, maybe; and perhaps to some extent.... I do not imply, given the fundamental importance of the value of the community for human life, that the African communitarian social or moral practice should be totally abandoned, that communitarian values should give way to extreme individualism - the type that tends to ride roughshod over the claims of the community. I mean to suggest instead that the practice would need to be re-evaluated and the necessary refinements made to it (Gyekye 1997:278).

### **1.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The aim of my research is to give a critical exposition of Kwame Gyekye's idea of communitarianism<sup>1</sup>. I will investigate Gyekye's construct of

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<sup>1</sup> Communitarianism derives its principles from the idea that a person, when born, finds himself or herself, not in isolation but, among other individuals and thus establishing the relational nature of a person.

metanationality<sup>2</sup> with its emphasis on moderate communitarianism. It is my contention that Gyekye has a contribution to make towards the understanding of the social and political structures of multicultural communities in Africa. Although Gyekye is a Ghanaian philosopher and draws most of his examples from an analysis of the social order of the traditional Akan society of Ghana, his ideas have relevance to other African communities, such as Nigeria. In the preface of *Tradition and Modernity* Gyekye (1997: xii) explains this as follows: "Because I consider the post-colonial experiences of the African people - experiences in dealing with problems attendant to transition to a new era or phase of development - to be largely common, I have made the whole of the sub-Saharan Africa (rather than a specific nation or region of it) the focus of my attention in this book".

While not ignoring the diversities of the cultures of Africa, Gyekye emphasizes that there are certain underlying similarities between the cultures of Africa. According to him, one of the commonalities among African cultures is a communitarian social order. I will argue that Gyekye's idea of communitarian ethics can assist us to understand and address the socio-political and cultural problems that confront multicultural communities in Africa.

Multicultural communities in Africa, such as those in Ghana, Nigeria and

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<sup>2</sup> Gyekye claims that it is possible to achieve nationhood in a multicultural community through his construct of metanationality. His aim is to achieve a nation-state where the interests of members, in spite of their ethno-cultural group of origin, will be served.

Kenya encounter problems of ethnic conflicts and integrating several ethnic groups into a large cohesive political community. Some ethnic groups are given preferential treatment at the national level while others are marginalised. For instance, members of different ethnic groups do not have equal opportunities and are often not treated equally.

For the purpose of this investigation, I will focus on the Federal Republic of Nigeria. I have chosen to make Nigeria the focus of my attention, because it is an outstanding example of a multicultural community with diverse ethno-cultural and linguistic groups. Nigeria is highly heterogeneous and culturally diverse with over three hundred and fifty ethno-cultural and linguistic groups. The question is: Why would it be necessary to replace the practice of federalism in Nigeria with Gyekye's construct of metanationality?

## **1.2 FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA**

From my exposition of practice of federalism in Nigeria it will become clear why I proposed to investigate Gyekye's construct of metanationality with its emphasis on moderate communitarianism. While still under colonial rule, Nigeria was amalgamated in 1914 when the Eastern, Northern, Western and Southern parts of Nigeria were brought together under one government and leadership. The Eastern part of Nigeria, also known as the Eastern Region, is dominated by the Igbos. The Northern part of Nigeria, also known as the Northern Region, is

dominated by the Hausas. The Western part of Nigeria, also known as the Western Region, is dominated by the Yorubas. The Southern part of Nigeria, also known as the Southern Region, is dominated by ethnic groups, such as Efik. After independence in 1960, the number of geographical zones or regions in Nigeria was increased from 4 to 6. The Federal Republic of Nigeria comprises various states that are in principle autonomous and that are in the position to make decisions and implement policies on political, cultural, social and legal matters which have direct impact on them.

The principle of "federalism" was introduced in Nigeria to oppose an unitary kind of government. The aim of federalism is to accommodate various states, where each state is, to some extent, meant to remain autonomous and under separate political authorities. This, in effect, means that each state has the power to make decisions and policies that impact on its political, cultural, legal and economic life. The federal state, with its central authority, is meant to enjoy autonomous power with regard to matters that could affect the entire nation and with regards to its security and defence. The application of this principle of government continued during the post-colonial period.

The reason why Nigeria resorted to a federal state was to address the problem of cultural and socio-political heterogeneity that was and still is confronting the country. The history of Nigeria as regards its socio-political and cultural experiences shows that the principle of federalism has failed to address the problems. Instead, the country experienced a

bloody civil war, from 1968 to 1970, as a result of cultural and socio-political tensions among the various "Regions" and "ethnic groups". Nigeria has also experienced wars and disputes as a result of religious conflicts. The history of Nigeria, since its independence in 1960, could be said to be characterized by socio-political tensions, unrest and confusion. An epistemological problem occurs as a result of the manner in which members perceive the "State". This problem leads to socio-political alienation in relation to the "State" and its members. Members find it difficult to identify with the "State". Their understanding of 'ownership' of the "State" is misguided. In the same vein, members have no reason why they should remain loyal to the "State". I consider the kind of federalism that is presently being practised in Nigeria a failure. It does not make sense to the people and makes national culture and identity difficult to achieve.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is made up of a federal capital territory and thirty six states, "existing within six broad geographical zones, viz: north-west, north-east, north-central, south-west, south-east and south-south" (Mamman et.al 2000:xiii). According to the last census that was conducted in 1991, Nigeria had a population of 120, 000, 000 people. Its current population is estimated to be between 130, 000, 000 and 135, 000, 000 people (NISADC News 2002:21). Nigeria stretches over 923, 800 sq km (NISADC News 2002: 21ff). The present geo-political structure of Nigeria came into being "as a result of desperate national attempts to bring together over 350 ethnic groups, each contesting from time to time, for regional self-identity and a fairer share of the national

'cake'"(Mamman et.al 2000:xiii). Each of the states comprises several ethnic groups. Each of these ethnic groups has a unique set of cultural values and a distinct language. Nigeria, like most multicultural communities in Africa, confronts particular cultural and socio-political complexities. To give us a better idea of the cultural diversity and complexities of the people of Nigeria, I will briefly consider the various cultural groups that constitute the federal capital (Abuja) and each of the 36 states.

The Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) is not considered one of the 36 states that constitute Nigeria - it is the capital territory of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It comprises the *kwa* language group and other ethnic groups, such as the Bassas, Gades, Gwandaras, Koros and Ganaganas. The *kwa* language group are found predominantly around the Niger-Bunue confluence (Mamman, Oyebanji & Petters 2000:563-566).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria consists of the following 36 states:

- (i) The Abia State is inhabited by the Igbos and the Igbo language serves as a common language that is spoken by its members. There is a cultural similarity among the Igbos in this state (Udo & Mamman 1993:30ff).
- (ii) The Adamawa State is dominated by the Fulani and the Hausa, who settled all over the state. Smaller ethnic groups like the Bachaman of Numan and the Kilba of Gombi are also found in the Adamawa State (Udo et al 1993:42).

- (iii) The Akwa Ibom State comprises two major ethnic groups, the Ibibio and the Annang. Several other smaller ethnic groups such as Oron, Ibeno and Andoni are members of the Akwa Ibom State (Udo et al 1993:54).
- (iv) The Anambra State is inhabited by the Igbos and the Igbo language is used as a common language which is spoken by all with minor difference in dialects. There is cultural similarity among the Igbos (Udo et al 1993:70).
- (v) The Bauchi State comprises the following five major ethnic groups: the Gerawa, Ningawa (Tera Ningawa), Hausa, Fulani and the Tangala. Within this state several ethnic groups exist, including the Tula tribes. Each of these groups speak different languages (Udo et al 1993:84ff).
- (vi) The Bayelsa State is dominated by the Ijaw ethnic group whose members speak the Ijaw language. Other Ijaw dialects include Tamu, Mein, Jobu, Oyariri, and Tarakiri. Other ethnic groups are Urhobo and Isoko. Some notable languages in the State are Epie, Atisa, Nembe and Ogbia. The culture of the people is expressed in their unique dresses, festivals, arts, dancing and folklore. These cultural differences distinguish this group from other ethnic groups (Mamman et al 2000:80).
- (vii) The Benue State comprises various ethnic groups of which two of them, Gboko and Otukpo, are dominant. Each ethnic group speaks a different language (Udo et al 1993:98).
- (viii) The Borno State is dominated by an ethnic group, known as

Kanuri. Other ethnic groups are Babur-Bura, Marghi, Shuwa, Fulani, Hausa and Mandara. Thirty languages are considered important languages of the Borno State. Arabic culture and arts have influenced and, in some cases, replaced the culture and arts of the inhabitants (Udo et al 1993:112).

- (ix) The Cross River State is inhabited by three major ethnic groups represented by three main linguistic groups. These groups are the Efik, Ejagham and Bekwarra. The dominating language in this state is the Efik language. It is known as the language of trade and commerce among the inhabitants of the Cross River State (Udo et al 1993:127).
- (x) The Delta State comprises the following five major ethnic groups: the Urhobo, Igbo, Izon, Isoko and Itsekiri. They all speak Urhobo, Igbo, Izon, Isoko and Itsekiri respectively (Udo et al 1993:140).
- (xi) The Ebonyi State is dominated by the Igbo speaking indigenes. However, there are non-Igbo speaking people of the state, such as the Okpotos and the Ntezis. English is widely spoken as a second language (Mamman et al 2000:152).
- (xii) The Edo State comprises many communities who trace their descent to the ancient Bini Kingdom. The main language spoken is Edo, although variations are observed from one subsection to another. For instance, the Esans speak the Esan dialect while the Etsakos speak the Etsako dialect. Also, in Akoko/Edo there is a multiplicity of languages which include Yoruba, Igbirra, Okpameri, Uneme and Ososo. The diversity of dialects is highly magnified at



the borderlands with Igala-speaking communities in Esan south-east, Urhobo, Izon and Yoruba communities in the Ovias (Udo et al 1993:156).

- (xiii) The Ekiti State is culturally homogeneous. The Ekitis, whose ancestors migrated from Ile-Ife, form one of the largest ethnic groups in Yoruba land. They speak a dialect of the Yoruba language, known as Ekiti. Slight differences are noticeable in the Ekiti dialect of the Yoruba language (Mamman et al 2000:172-173).
- (xiv) The Enugu State is ethnically and linguistically Igbo. It is inhabited by the Igbos. However, the state is divided into three cultural zones, based on local dialectal patterns. These are Abakaliki, Enugu and Nsukka (Udo et al 1993:167).
- (xv) The Gombe State is dominated by the Hausas and the Fulanis. There are other several small ethnic groups, such as the Tula tribe in Kaltungo and the Cham in Balanga. The Hausa language and Fulani language are commonly spoken in the state (Mamman et al 2000:200).
- (xvi) The Imo State is inhabited by Igbos who are culturally homogenous. Igbo language is spoken throughout the state with minor differences in dialects (Udo et al 1993:182).
- (xvii) The Jigawa State is made up of three major ethnic groups: Hausas, Fulanis and Kanuris. They speak different languages and practice different cultures. There are other minor ethnic groups (Udo et al 1993:194-195).

- (xviii) The Kaduna State is inhabited by the following major ethnic groups: the Kamuku, Gwari, Kadara, Hausa and Kurama. Each of these groups speak different languages (Udo et al 1993: 205-206).
- (xix) The Kano State is dominated by the Hausa-Fulani. The Nupe and Kanuri occupy the distinct tracts of the state. Yoruba and Igbo also form an important part of the state population. Kanawa is another ethnic group that forms part of the state. The Shua Arabs and Lebanese communities have been more easily assimilated into the culture of the Kanawas because of their affinity in trade and Islamic background (Udo et al 1992:221-223).
- (xx) The Katsina State is predominantly a Hausa-Fulani state. Most members of the state speak the Hausa language (Udo et al 1993:245-247).
- (xxi) The Kebbi State has diverse ethnic groups among which the following are dominant: Hausas, Fulanis, Kebawa, Dakarakaris, Kambaris, Gungawa, Dandawa, Zabarmawa, Dukawa, Fakkawa and Bangawa. These ethnic groups speak diverse languages and dialects, with the Hausa language being spoken all over the Kebbi State (Udo et al 1993:259-260).
- (xxii) The Kogi State comprises two major ethnic groups, speaking different languages. The dominant ethnic groups are the Igalas and Inikpi (Udo et al 1993:272-273).
- (xxiii) The Kwara State is dominated by three major ethnic groups: the Yorubas, the Nupes and the Barubas. Each of these groups speaks different languages. There are also other minor ethnic

groups that form part of the state (Udo et al 1993:283-285).

(xxiv) The Lagos State is dominated by the people of Yoruba who are known as the indigenous peoples of the state. They are made up of subgroups of the Aworis in Ikeja, the Egus in Badagry area, the Ijebus in Ikorodu and Epe. The Lagos Island consists of Benin and Eko Aworis as well as Yorubas and other immigrants (Udo et al 1993:300-301).

(xxv) The Nassarawa State incorporates numerous ethnic groups. The major ethnic groups include Eggon, Tiv, Alago, Hausa, Fulani, Mada, Rindre, Gwandara, Koro, Gbagyi, Epira, Agatu, Bassa, Aho, Ake, Mama, Arum and Kanuri. While English and Hausa are widely spoken in the state, all the ethnic groups indicated above have their own languages or dialects. Traditional religions are widespread. However, Christianity and Islam have a greater impact among the people (Mamman et al 2000:385).

(xxvi) The Niger State is a land of diversities in terms of cultures and physical setting. The dominant ethnic groups in the state are the Nupes, Gbagyi (Gwari) and the Hausas. The remaining ethnic groups form small units. Approximately eighteen minor ethnic groups are found in the Niger State (Udo et al 1993:332-333).

(xxvii) The Ogun State is dominated by the Yoruba ethnic group. This is subdivided into sub-ethnic groups comprising the Egbas, Egbados, Ijebus and the Remos. Other Yoruba sub-ethnic groups like the Eguns, Aworis, Oyos, Ilages and the Ikales are dispersed across the Ogun State. Apart from the

Yoruba ethnic group, other groups such as the Hausas, Igbos, Urhobos and Edos are settled in the major urban centres of the Ogun State (Udo et al 1993:350-351).

- (xxviii) The Ondo State is dominated by the Yoruba ethnic group. The most known ethnic sub-groups are the Akoko, the Akure, the Ekiti, the Ifo (made up of Apoi and Arogbo), the Ikale, the Ilaje, the Ondo and the Owo (Udo et al 1993:366-367).
- (xxix) The Osun state is populated mainly by the Yorubas who speak the same language, namely the Yoruba language. But within the population, there are groups associated with particular dialects of the Yoruba language. They include the Osuns, Ifes, Ijesa, Osogbo, Ile Ife and Ilesa (Udo et al 1993:379-380).
- (xxx) The Oyo State is a relatively homogenous socio-cultural state occupied by the Yoruba speaking peoples. There are, however, various sub-ethnic groups, each having its peculiar Yoruba dialect. The groups are the Ibadan, Ibarapa, Oyo and Oke-Ogun. Living among these main sub-ethnic groups are others from neighbouring Kwara, Kogi, Osun, Ondo and Ogun States. Important migrant Yoruba groups and tribes living in the Oyo State are Egba, Ijebus, Remo, Ife, Ijesha, Ekiti, Hausa, Igbo, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ibiobio, Epira, and Fulani (Udo et al 1993:391-393).
- (xxxi) The Plateau State is culturally and linguistically heterogeneous with over fifty ethno-linguistic groups. No single ethnic group is large enough to claim a majority position, but the following are

regarded as the majority: Birom, Angas, Gwandara, Mada, Nwangahvul, Ebira, Tiv, Taroh, Goemai, Migili, Koro, Tal, Afo, Fier, Afizere (Jarawa), Gbagyi, Miango, Alago, Rindre, Youm, Bogghom, Rukuba, Piapungi, Kwalla, Montol, Yukun, Challa, Pon-kulere, Pyem, Miship, Mupun, Buji, Kanuri and Nunku. Each of the ethnic groups has its own distinct language (Udo et al 1993:410-411).

- (xxxii) The Rivers State comprises of diverse ethnic compositions. There are many ethnic groups or communities. The major ones are Kalabari, Ikwerre, Okirika, Ibani (Bonny and Opobo), Nembe, Ekpeye, Ogba, Etche, Izon, Khana, Gokana, Eleme, Ndoni, Abua, Odual, Ogbia, Engenni and Epie-Atissa. Linguistic scholars have grouped these communities into six major linguistic groups namely: Ijoid, Lower Niger (Ighoid), Ogoni, Central Delta, Delta Edoid and Lower Cross. The Ijoid group comprises four groups of dialects, namely eastern Ifo, Nembe-Akassa, Izon and Inland Ijo. The Lower Niger (Igboid) includes dialects, such as Ekpeye, Ikwere, Ogba, Egbema, Ndoni, Etche and Igbo. The Ogoni group includes large numbers of dialects, which can be grouped into four, namely Khana, Gokana, Eleme and Ogoi. The Central Delta comprises many 'tongues', such as Abuan, Odual, Kugbo-Ogbia, Ogbogolo, Ogbromiagum and Obulom. The Delta Edoid groups consist of three languages: Epie-Atisa, Egene and Degema. The Lower Cross group has only one member in the Rivers State with the rest being in the Akwa Ibom

- State and the Cross River State (Udo et al 1993:423-425).
- (xxxiii) The Sokoto State comprises mostly Hausa and Hausa/Fulani people. But there are other groups too. These include the Yorubas, Ibos, Tivs, Idomas and Ebira, as well as the Buzus from the neighbouring Niger Republic (Udo et al 1993:438-439).
- (xxxiv) The Taraba State is a highly heterogeneous multi-ethnic state with over eighty indigenous ethnic groups, which speak different languages. Some of these groups are numerically very small and this poses the problem of political insignificance. Some of the major ethnic groups include Fulani, Mumuye, Jukun, Jenjo, Kuteb, Chamba and Mambilla (Udo et al 1993:452).
- (xxxv) The Yobe State comprises the following ethnic groups: the Baburs, Baddes, Bolewas, Fulanis, Hausas, Kanuris, Kare-Kares, Magas, Ngamos, Ngizim and the Shuwas. Each of these ethnic groups has a separate language (Udo et al 1993:468-469).
- (xxxvi) The Zamfara State is dominated by the Hausas. However, other indigenous ethnic groups include the Zamfarawa, the Gobirawa, the Burmawa, the Fulanis and the Katsinawas. In addition, the following ethnic groups are identified: the Gerawa, the Zazzagawa, the Wadejawa, the Dara Bazawa, the Alibawa Bere-Beri, the Kanuri and the Nupe (Mamman et al 2000:547-548).

Considering the above information, it is clear that Nigeria is a federal state with a lot of cultural diversity and socio-political complexity. I will now discuss some of the socio-political and cultural problems that confront Nigeria as a multicultural community.

Firstly, the introduction of federalism in Nigeria and its practice thereof resulted in an epistemological problem. The Federal State is considered by its members as a separate entity which, strictly speaking, has nothing to do with them. Members find it difficult to apprehend the relation between the "State" and themselves, on the one hand and the role of the "State" in the economic and socio-cultural lives of its citizens, on the other hand. Accordingly, members fail to understand why they should identify with the Federal State.

The second problem that Nigeria experiences is that members are not treated equally, and often, they do not receive equal opportunity at the national<sup>3</sup> level. Some members are favoured more than others. The level of opportunity given to members, in most cases, is based on irrelevant factors such as ethnicity, language and religion, rather than on merit. The issue is how to achieve a nation-state, that is, a political community with distinct territorial boundaries and a government that has ultimate central authority, where everybody is treated equally.

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<sup>3</sup> Gyekye (1997: 114) distinguishes two meanings of the concept of a nation: one refers to an ethno-cultural community of people who share the same culture, language and history, while the other applies to culturally plural political communities called nation-states, or multicultural states. In the context used above, the term 'nation' refers to the latter meaning.

The third problem Nigeria faces is the issue of strong ethnic affiliation. Members of various ethnic groups tend to show strong allegiance towards their ethnic groups. On the one hand, members of a multicultural community are expected to remain loyal to the nation-state. On the other hand, members of the various ethnic groups, due to strong ethnic affiliation, are expected by those ethnic groups to show strong loyalty towards those ethnic groups. Socio-cultural conflict and division may be engendered by such strong ethno-cultural affiliations.

The fourth problem that challenges Nigeria, as a multicultural community, is that most dominant ethnic groups are favoured socio-politically at the expense of the minor ethnic groups. As such, the latter are marginalised at the national level. Gyekye (1997:192) argues that privileging of one ethno-cultural group or certain ethno-cultural groups over others results in particular political and social disintegration. Often the minor ethnic groups are not fully represented at the national level where important decisions, that concern their social, political and cultural lives, are being taken.

The fifth problem Nigeria has to deal with is that in most cases, cultures of the major ethnic groups, such as the Igbos, the Yoruba and the Hausas, tend to influence and even determine the national culture. Gyekye (1997:114) argues that the complexity of a multicultural community generates "daunting problems of creating cultural and national identity: hence the plethora of problems confronting modern



states seeking to achieve the essence of nationhood". Another serious problem in this regard is the issue of linguistic diversity. There are hundreds of languages spoken by the various cultural groups. The 'developed languages', which are often the languages of the major ethnic groups, tend to dominate at a national level. The future of the cultures and languages of the various ethno-cultural and linguistic groups may depend on national policies, which in turn may be influenced by the dominant ethnic groups who are fully represented at a national level.

Finally, Nigeria faces the problem of achieving nationhood<sup>4</sup>. This problem arises because the moral and social attitudes of members of the various ethno-cultural groups toward one another is not positive and conducive to the advancement of nationhood. Members from different groups often perceive one another as "strangers". Also any form of nation-building<sup>5</sup> tends to privilege certain ethnic groups, most often the dominant ones, over the minor ones. The issue, then, is how to achieve a measure of cultural, social and political unity and cohesion and some sense of a common national identity that could accommodate members from the various groups.

### **1.3 GYEKYE ON METANATIONALITY**

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<sup>4</sup> Nationhood is understood as a moral and political ideal to be achieved through the creation of a real and abiding sense of national identity.

<sup>5</sup> For Gyekye (1997: 84 & 85), nation-building is defined as "a conscious and purposive attempt to bring people together to think, act, and live as if they were *one* people belonging to one large ethno-cultural community ..." - that is, as if they were bound together by a common interest. Nation-building takes effect if the economy of the nation-state is developed "in such an equitable manner as to benefit each region or ethnic community in the state"; which in turn brings about cohesiveness.

In his work *Tradition and Modernity*, Gyekye addresses some of these problems confronting multicultural communities. Gyekye proposes a new idea of nation-state that will be able to accommodate all its members in spite of their ethno-cultural and linguistic groups. To achieve this, Gyekye advocates a new ideal, termed "metanationality".

The idea of metanationality with its emphasis on moderate communitarianism, as to be considered in this work, transcends the principle of federalism. It takes into account the problems that are confronted by Nigeria, as a multicultural community. It sets out to address these problems with its emphasis on achieving nationhood, national cohesion and integration.

The ideal of metanationality "requires that we consider every citizen of the nation-state, irrespective of the family, clan, or communocultural group into which she happens to have been born, as an individual of intrinsic moral worth and dignity, with a claim on others to respect her"(Gyekye 1997:103). However, according to Gyekye, the ideal of metanationality is possible if the idea of communitarianism, in its strict sense, is re-evaluated.

Strict communitarianism argues against the idea that an individual has intrinsic moral worth and inherent qualities. This idea of communitarianism has, as its underlying principle, the notion that the achievement of personhood is conferred by the cultural community. Thus,

personhood is wholly culturally defined. This view does not allow for individual rights.

Gyekye (1997:37), reacting against the notion of strict communitarianism, proposes a moderate communitarianism. His idea of communitarianism tends to support and promote an open and democratic society. It does not give ontological primacy to the community. Rather, it holds that attainment of personhood does not wholly depend on a communal structure. It accepts the reality of individual autonomy as well as the relational and communal character of an individual. Gyekye's idea of communitarianism ascribes equal moral standing to the community and the individual. It is important to draw a distinction between the terms individual and personhood. In the context used here, the term individual refers to each member of a community. A member of a community becomes an individual from the moment of his or her conception. Personhood, as used in this dissertation, can only be attained or defined.

Gyekye's ideal of metanationality forms an essential aspect of his idea of communitarian ethics. According to Gyekye (1997:103), the metanational conception of the nation-state does not deny that the individual is dependent on, and is partly constituted by, social relationships and communal ties. At the same time, the ideal of metanationality does not affirm that only the interests of individuals should count in designing socio-political institutions, to the detriment of communal interests and goals.

## **1.4 THESIS**

In this dissertation I will argue that Gyekye's idea of communitarianism not only elucidates the socio-political and cultural problems confronting multicultural communities in Africa, but also that it is a valuable contribution towards resolving ethnic conflicts and integrating several ethnic groups into a metanational state.

## **1.5 APPROACH**

I will concentrate mainly on Gyekye's major work, *Tradition and Modernity* (1997). The idea of "person and community", and the notion of "ethnicity, identity and nationhood", which Gyekye developed in this book, will form the basis of this dissertation. I will consider his notion of communitarianism in relation to the rights of the community, on the one hand, and individual rights, on the other hand; his views on personhood; the common good; ethics of responsibility; ethnicity; and his ideal of metanationality.

Gyekye's view on communitarian ethics attempts to integrate individual rights with the notion of community interests. This approach separates Gyekye's view on communitarianism from those of Menkiti and Mbiti, who are strict communitarian thinkers. Menkiti's and Mbiti's views on communitarianism will only be considered in relation to Gyekye's response to them. I choose to consider Menkiti's and Mbiti's views on communitarianism, firstly, because Gyekye's idea of the kind of

communitarianism that should be practised in Africa could be viewed as a response to Menkiti's and Mbiti's idea of radical communitarianism. Gyekye (1997:37) has the following to say about these two African philosophers' views:

Making Mbiti's statement, "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am," his point of departure, the African philosopher Ifeanyi Menkiti, from Nigeria, for instance, infers that the African view asserts the ontological primacy of the community, that "as far as Africans are concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of the individual life histories, whatever they may be".

Secondly, Gyekye's (1997:48) idea of personhood in African thought is a response to Menkiti's view that personhood, as understood in traditional Africa, "is the sort of thing which has to be attained". According to Menkiti, attainment of personhood depends on the person's contributions towards the community. Thus, for him personhood is not something a person is born with. Gyekye disputes Menkiti's view on the attainment of personhood. He (1997:48-49) argues:

Menkiti's analysis becomes more perplexing when he asserts that "full personhood... is attained after one is well along in society" and this "indicates straightaway that the older an individual gets the more of a person he becomes". The notions of "full personhood" and "more of person" are as bizarre as they are incoherent.

Finally, Gyekye argues that Menkiti's and Mbiti's views on

communitarianism are radical or unrestricted. He argues that the kind of communitarianism defended by Menkiti and Mbiti would have deleterious consequences for individual assertiveness.

Gyekye (1997:35-36) uses the terms 'communitarianism' and 'communalism' interchangeably to mean the same. Gyekye does not make any attempt to show the reason why he uses these two terms interchangeably. He takes the similarity between the two concepts for granted. In my own point of view, however, the principles that underlie the concept of communitarianism are not essentially similar to the principles that underlie the concept of communalism. To accept the two terms to mean the same could lead to an error of *non sequitur* or even 'over assumption'. Communalism is a very old concept used by thinkers in Africa, such as Senghor and Nyerere. They often used the term communalism in relation to "African Socialism". In this regard, Nyerere developed the concept of "Ujamaa" to show the kind of principles that underlie the socio-political life of 'traditional African communities'. Literally speaking, the concept of "Ujamaa" means "familyhood".

## **1.6 PREVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

This dissertation consists of five chapters. In chapter one, I will briefly give an exposition of the problems that confront multicultural communities, with particular reference to Nigeria. I argue that Gyekye's idea of communitarian ethics addresses these problems. I will consider

the methods, the scope of the dissertation and relevant parts of Gyekye's idea of communitarianism.

In chapter two, ontological and social questions about the individual in relation to his or her socio-political and moral environment will be considered. I will explore the notion of personhood in terms of the relationship between the individual and his or her community. Personhood is fully culturally defined if it is fully embedded in a cultural community. Personhood is partially culturally defined if it is partially embedded in a cultural community. Personhood is not defined by a cultural community if it is not embedded in a cultural community. The view that personhood is wholly defined by a cultural community is supported by the kind of communitarianism defended by Menkiti and Mbiti. This view is called radical communitarianism. The view that personhood is partially defined by a cultural community is supported by moderate communitarianism, such as Gyekye's. This view ascribes equal moral standing to the community and the individual. It attempts to integrate individual values with the values of the community. According to this view, an individual, though by nature a communal being, is also a being with inherent attributes, such as rationality. Then, the notion that personhood is not embedded in a cultural community is supported by extreme liberal thinkers.

The focus of this chapter is on how a person is perceived in traditional African society: is a person perceived as an autonomous individual, or is

a person perceived as a “cultural extended being”? By “cultural extended being”, I mean a relational being who needs the community and other individuals for the achievement of his or her goals. I will consider whether attainment of personhood is fully culturally defined, partially culturally defined or whether it does not depend on any cultural factors. In this regard, I will examine the views of three African philosophers: Gyekye, Menkiti and Mbiti.

Chapter three deals with Gyekye’s idea of communitarianism as a response to socio-political and cultural problems that confront multicultural communities, with particular reference to Nigeria. Gyekye argues that the kind of communitarianism proposed by Menkiti and Mbiti is too radical. Their ideas of communitarianism do not take into account the notion of individuality. Rather, they maintain the primacy of the community over the individual.

The kind of communitarian ethics that is defended by Gyekye is a moderate one. It strikes a balance between individual rights and the rights of a community. Gyekye argues that equal moral standing must be given to both the community and the individual. Accordingly, he proposes the principle of equiprimordiality. The community needs the individual for its development and at the same time, the individual needs the community to achieve his or her goals.

Gyekye maintains that despite the natural sociality of a human being,



which at once places her in a system of shared values and practices and a range of goals, there are nevertheless grounds for maintaining that a person is not fully defined by the communal or cultural structure. An individual human being naturally possesses some inherent (mental) attributes, such as rationality; having a moral sense; capacity for virtue and making moral judgment. Gyekye argues that it is necessary to integrate the idea of individual rights with the notion of a communitarian ethos in addressing the socio-political and cultural problems confronting multicultural communities in Africa.

The underlying principles of Gyekye's idea of moderate communitarianism are his notions of the common good and the principle of individualism. Gyekye holds that intrinsically connected with the notion of the community is the notion of the common good. For him, the common good means "a good that is common to individual human beings - at least those embraced within a community, a good that can be said to be commonly *and* universally, shared by all human individuals, a good the possession of which is essential for the ordinary or basic functioning of the individual in a human society" (1997:45). This means, a good that is needed by all members of a multicultural community, irrespective of their different ethnic affiliations.

For Gyekye (1997:279), the notion of individuality - in the sense of individual initiative and responsibility for one's actions - does exist in traditional African communities. He maintains that the notion of individuality, in the context used here, "does not give rise to moral egoism". It does not promote selfishness. Accordingly, his idea of individuality is a diluted one.

Drawing on Gyekye's views, I will argue that individual rights are essential in regulating relationships among members of a multicultural community. Each member, irrespective of his or her ethnic group of origin, should be able to exercise his or her rights, which include freedom of speech, freedom of movement and freedom of choice. In this way, members will be able to enjoy equal opportunities and be treated equally. Also they will be entitled to the essential and basic needs such as security, food and shelter.

Chapter four deals with the issue of how to achieve nationhood in a multicultural community. Gyekye (1997:83) maintains that nationhood "has become a normative concept in that it has come to describe a desired level of ideal political arrangement embodying ideal or satisfying human relationships". Nationhood is achieved by way of nation-building. For Gyekye, nation-building is defined as "a conscious and purposive attempt to bring different people together to think, act, and live as if they were *one* people belonging to one large ethno-cultural community" (1997:85); that is, as if they are bound together by a common interest.

I will consider Gyekye's idea of nation as it denotes the ethno-cultural community. Gyekye maintains that the *telos* of the pursuit of nationhood in a multicultural community is analogous to the idea of nation as it denotes the ethno-cultural community. Gyekye (1997:80) describes an ethno-cultural community as a community of people who believe themselves to be bound by some intrinsic ties. He refers to nation, as it denotes ethno-cultural community, as a social (sociological) concept, rather than a political concept.

The issue is, however, how to achieve nationhood in a multicultural community that comprises numerous ethno-cultural communities. Gyekye (1997:81) argues that a "complex notion" of nation as a multicultural state is formed when various ethnic groups are mechanically merged (i.e., without common interests or shared values). Many ethno-cultural communities in Africa were forcibly placed within the same territorial borders by colonial powers and were expected to achieve a common form of cultural and political life.

Chapter five deals with Gyekye's view on national culture and identity as regards multicultural communities in Africa. Gyekye argues that the "need for a national culture clearly would be felt more in a heterogeneous or multicultural society, one constituted by a medley of communocultural groups, than in a homogenous society whose culture can be said largely to be homogeneous or national..." (1997:106). It stands to reason that, due to cultural diversity, the need or search for

a national culture seems to be a problem for a nation that consists of heterogeneous communocultural groups.

Gyekye (1997:108-109) proposes two methods through which national culture can be developed in a multicultural community. The first method has to do with selecting and developing the material aspects of various cultures. Applying this method, "one can focus only on what may be referred to as the material aspects of culture, such as music, dancing, sculpture, painting, and crafts" (1997:108). Further, he argues that only "elegant" features of the cultures of the diverse groups will gain a place in the new national culture. The main problem pertaining to this method of selecting a national culture relates to the criteria of selection. The second method of developing a national culture entails that the new state "will have to build national institutions, create new values and patterns of attitude and behaviour, create new symbols and myths about a common past, promote and urge new outlooks and self-definitions, new hopes, goals, and aspirations..." (1997:109).

This chapter also considers the issue of national cultural identity. National cultural identity is defined by a set of values, practices and outlooks, commonly shared by members of a nation. The issue is whether it is possible to achieve national cultural identity in a multicultural community. Gyekye (1997:112) argues that "it might be supposed that the existence of diversities in a national culture runs contrary to the notion of a cultural identity at the national level, the reason being that a national culture constitutes part of the basis of

national cultural identity". Gyekye distinguishes between a private and a public aspect of a national culture. The public aspect of a national culture includes political, social, economic and legal values. The private aspect of a national culture includes "aesthetic perceptions, such as styles of dress, tastes in food, and forms of music and dance..." (Gyekye 1997:112). The private dimension of a national culture would evince diversities with regard to how the individual members express their ideas and creative endowments. The public aspect of a national culture would disclose "only a minimal diversity, if at all, and would thus present a most reliable and enduring basis of national unity and integration" (Gyekye 1997:112).

Also, Gyekye (1997:113) argues that the development of a national culture and identity, in a multicultural community, is not really possible without a common or national language, that is, without an indigenous *lingua franca*. The main problem about Gyekye's new idea of nation-state is how to form a national language in multicultural communities, such as Nigeria, with numerous ethno-linguistic groups.

Finally, I will conclude this dissertation by examining whether Gyekye's idea of moderate communitarianism assists us in understanding the socio-political structures of multicultural communities in Africa and whether it correctly addresses the problems confronting these communities, with particular reference to Nigeria.

## **CHAPTER TWO:**

### **THE IDEA OF PERSONHOOD AND RIGHTS**

.... despite the natural sociality of the human being, which at once places him in a system of shared values and practices and a range of goals - which, in short, places him in a cultural structure - there are, nevertheless, grounds for maintaining that a person is not fully defined by the communal or cultural structure. I have made the observation that, besides being a social being by nature, the human individual is, also by nature, other things as well. By "other things," I have in mind such essential attributes of the person as rationality, having a moral sense and capacity for virtue and, hence, for evaluating and making moral judgments: all this means that the individual is capable of choice (Gyekye 1997:53).

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, ontological and social questions about a person in relation to his or her moral and political environment will be considered. These questions centre around the personhood and rights of an individual. It should be noted that, in this dissertation, I will limit my conceptual analysis of the terms 'personhood' and 'rights' as it relates to *African communitarianism*.

The main issue I will explore here, is how a person is perceived in traditional African communities: is a person perceived as an autonomous

individual? Or is a person perceived as a cultural extended being? Another issue I will investigate is the kind of ontological relationship that exists between an individual and a community. Does a cultural community enjoy ontological primacy over its members? Depending on how one conceives of the ontological relationship between a person and a society, one may argue that personhood is either wholly culturally defined, partially culturally defined or not determined by cultural factors.

Personhood is culturally defined if the attainment of personhood is 'fully embedded' in a cultural community. As such, the community determines the personhood of its members. Personhood is partially culturally defined if realization of personhood is 'partially embedded' in a society. This entails that the realization of personhood is not completely embedded in a society. This view maintains that a person is an individual and at the same time, a cultural extended being. Proponents of the view that the attainment of personhood is independent of cultural factors hold that the realization of personhood is unembedded in a societal structure. This view is supported by extreme liberal thinkers.

In my discussion of the three views on personhood, I will draw out Gyekye's response to Mbiti and Menkiti. My intention, however, is not to place Gyekye in dialogue with Menkiti and Mbiti, but to consider Gyekye's reply to these two African philosophers' views on personhood and the notion of rights.

## **2.2 PERSONHOOD AS FULLY DEFINED BY A COMMUNAL STRUCTURE**

The kind of communitarian ethics - radical or moderate - that is practised in multicultural communities in Africa will determine how personhood is attained. In this sense, realization of personhood depends on the kind of social and cultural relationships that exist between an individual and a community.

The argument advanced by Mbiti and Menkiti is that personhood is fully defined by a cultural community. This means that a relationship between an individual and a community is associative in character. It can be described as a set within a set, in the sense that all the elements of the big set are also found in the small set. Such a relationship depicts a symmetrical character. I will not use the term "set" in its geometrical sense as used in arithmetical calculation. Rather, I will apply the word "set" to refer to "entity", that is, "individual entity" and "group entity". It has to do with the kind of relationship between a cultural community and its members according to the views of Menkiti and Mbiti.

### **2.2.1 An exposition of Mbiti's and Menkiti's arguments**

Mbiti and Menkiti give a restricted meaning to the issue of personhood. The main idea that underpins the realization of personhood, as conceived by both thinkers, is that of the primordially of community rights over the individual rights. Accordingly, individual values and



interests are de-emphasized. An individual does not play any role towards the realization of his or her personhood. Instead, personhood is wholly defined by a cultural community.

John Mbiti (1970:141), in his effort to clarify the idea that underlies the notion of the primordality of community rights over individual rights, maintains that in African societies, whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can say: "I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am". For Mbiti it follows that "we are" gives meaning to "I am". Consequently, "I am" cannot exist independently on its own. "I am", in this sense, stands for the individual while "we are" stands for the community. This means that the individual wholly needs the community for his or her existence. Since the individual is not as such created<sup>6</sup> by the community, it is problematic to argue that "I am" entirely depends on "we are" for its existence. I maintain that the individual does not entirely depend on the community for its existence.

Menkiti supports Mbiti's view that personhood and rights wholly derive from the 'structural rights' of a community. Menkiti and Mbiti's views on personhood do not take into consideration individual freedom to make choices. In this case, he or she may find it difficult to transfer his or her loyalty from an ethno-cultural group to a nation-state.

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<sup>6</sup> The term 'created', as regards personhood, refers to the relationship between a community and the individual. It does not point to 'creator and creature' relationship, in its strict sense, for example the relationship between 'God', as a creator and a human being, as a creature.

Menkiti shares Mbiti's view that the individual wholly depends on the community for his or her existence. Taking Mbiti's view on personhood as his point of departure, Menkiti (1984:171) holds that as far as Africans are concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories<sup>7</sup>. Maintaining the notion of the ontological primacy of the community, Menkiti (1984:172, 174) makes the inference that according to the 'African world-view', "it is the community which defines the person as person, not some isolated static quality of rationality, will, or memory". This inference supports the notion that personhood is wholly defined by the cultural community. Menkiti, in his view on personhood, considers an individual as a communal being only. For him, an individual is not defined by personal characteristics, which are unique to him or her. He claims that the idea of individual rights and the recognition of personal characteristics are foreign to Africa.

Gyekye objects to the idea that the notion of individual rights is foreign to cultural communities in Africa. To prove his point, Gyekye draws on his studies of Akan philosophy. The Akan culture, according to Gyekye, recognises the idea that an individual is both a communal being and a rational being with inherent moral worth. Gyekye (1997:53) argues:

... besides being a social being by nature, the human individual is, also by nature, other things as well. By "other things," I have in mind such

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<sup>7</sup> By "individual life histories" I mean individual experiences and attitudes which characterize an individual human being. These factors, though not accepted by strict communitarian thinkers like Mbiti, also determine and shape a person.

essential attributes of the person as rationality, having a moral sense and capacity for virtue and, hence, for evaluating and making moral judgments...

Accordingly, Gyekye rejects the argument that personhood is absolutely conferred on the individual by the community. An individual enjoys some inherent rights despite the natural sociality of the human person which at once places him or her in a system of shared values and practices and a range of goals which in turn places him or her in a cultural structure. For Gyekye personhood can only be defined "partially, never completely by one's membership of the community" (1997:59). Gyekye's idea of personhood, therefore, disputes Menkiti's views.

My main criticism of Menkiti's views on personhood, which Gyekye fails to comment on, is based on Menkiti's assertion that there exists 'an African world-view'. By so doing, Menkiti is supporting what Hountondji calls 'cultural unanimism'<sup>8</sup>, which has to do with the illusion that all men and women in various communities in Africa speak with one voice. This view could result in a rejection of all elements of pluralism and also waving out reality of all internal contradictions and tensions. Also, such a view could result in the denial of an intense intellectual life. Contrary to Menkiti's view, I argue for 'African world-views'.

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<sup>8</sup> According to Hountondji, there is an assumption that Africa does possess her own traditional ideology. This ideology is in the singular, i.e. a collective set of ideas which the whole African community unanimously adheres to. Hountondji terms this particular assumption the unanimist prejudice.

Also, Jomo Kenyatta's (1965:188, 297) study of the traditional life in Kenya disputes Menkiti's notion on personhood. Kenyatta does not ascribe equal moral standing to both a community and an individual (like Gyekye does). Although he argues that an individual's uniqueness is a secondary fact about him or her, he does not reject the reality of individual uniqueness.<sup>9</sup> This is where his view on personhood differs from that of Menkiti. While Kenyatta recognizes the reality of an individual's uniqueness as a secondary fact about him or her, Menkiti rejects the reality of individual uniqueness by maintaining that the traditional African social order is completely communal.

Menkiti's second premise regarding personhood is that the attainment of personhood is processual in nature. He argues that the 'African world-view' supports the idea that personhood is acquired (1984:172). According to him, personhood is not merely granted as a consequence of birth. Menkiti's second premise on the realization of personhood supports his first premise that the community defines the person as person. For Menkiti, personhood is not something one is born with but something he or she attains. Personhood depends on the level of individual

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<sup>9</sup> Jomo Kenyatta is a radical communitarian thinker, but his views on communitarian ethics are not as radical as those of Menkiti and Mbiti. He argues that "individualism and self-seeking were out in Gikuyu 'philosophy'". In this sense the concept of individualism stands in opposition to the idea of communalism. From this point of view, he argues that according to the Gikuyu ways of thinking, nobody is an isolated individual. He argues further that the "pronoun 'I' was used rarely in public gatherings". This does not mean that the pronoun 'I' is not used at all. Uniqueness of an individual is not ruled out completely. Rather, it is given a secondary position. He holds that "an individual is first and foremost several people's relative and several people's contemporary, while his or her uniqueness is a secondary fact about him or her" (Kenyatta J. *Facing Mount Kenya* as quoted by Gyekye in *Tradition and Modernity* 1997: 36-37). The fact that Kenyatta maintains the primacy of community separates his views on personhood from those of Gyekye. For more information on this, see Gyekye, K. *Tradition and Modernity*, 1997: 36-37.

contributions towards the common good. Menkiti argues that personhood is the recognition given to an individual to show that he or she attained a certain moral status in a community. Thus, according to Menkiti, "full personhood is attained after an individual is well along in a society". The implication of this view is that "the older an individual gets the more of a person he becomes" (1984:172, 174).

Gyekye (1997:49) describes Menkiti's view on personhood as incoherent. On the one hand, Menkiti writes that personhood depends on one's contributions towards the community. On the other hand, he maintains that the older a member of a community gets the more of a "person" he becomes. But the level of one's contributions towards the community does not necessarily depend on the person's age. Empirically speaking, it is possible that younger members of the community could contribute more towards the community than the older ones. Does it mean, then, that elderly people who make less contributions towards the community than the younger ones should be considered to have attained "full personhood" based on their age? Menkiti's emphasis on age as an important factor to determine who should attain "full personhood", is problematic.

Menkiti's third premise on the idea of personhood entails that personhood, according to the 'African world-view', "is something at which individuals could fail" (1984:173). In this sense, individuals can fail to attain 'full personhood', if they are unable to show strong allegiance

towards that community. For instance, this could happen when individuals fail to contribute towards the common goal. The community will refuse to recognize the individuals as “persons”. This means that the individuals are not given certain moral status as members of that community.

The above discussion points to Menkiti’s view that in the ‘African world-view’, a community enjoys ontological primacy over the individual. Accordingly, personhood is fully defined by the cultural structure of a community. Menkiti’s view on the realization of personhood is to be understood in terms of the idea of ‘role-structural rights’.

### **2.2.2 A “set” within a “set”**

The kind of relationship that exists between a cultural community and its members, according to Menkiti and Mbiti<sup>10</sup>, may be described as that of a set within a set. The big set refers to a cultural community, while the small set refers to an individual members of a community. The big set contains the values of a community, while the small set contains the values of an individual. Everything that is found in the big set is also found in the small set. The elements of the small set are determined and shaped by the elements of the big set. Accordingly, the small set cannot function on its own. It needs the big set for its functioning. The

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<sup>10</sup> The phrase “a set within a set” is analogous to Mbiti and Menkiti’s ideas of communitarianism. I use this phrase to explain their views on personhood and rights in relation to the cultural community.

question is: is it possible for the small set to function on its own without the help of the big set? It may be argued that the small set can subsist on its own because it is not created by the big set. Even the big set is not the author of its own existence.

In this kind of relationship, liberty and rights play little or no role as far as personhood is concerned. The idea of "role-structural rights" plays an important role in this kind of relationship, in the sense that the community structures a framework from which individual members make choices. Members of the cultural community are, thus, obliged to act within such a framework and they must be fully committed to the affairs of the community. In other words, they must show strong loyalty to the community. The emphasis is on group solidarity and achievement of community interests.

Gyekye, in his view on personhood, opposes the idea that the realization of personhood is totally embedded in a communal structure. This view may, as I will point out later, pose a serious problem when considered in the context of multicultural communities with numerous ethno-cultural and linguistic groups.

### **2.3 PERSONHOOD AS PARTIALLY DEFINED BY THE COMMUNAL STRUCTURE**

The view, according to moderate communitarian thinkers, that

personhood is partially defined by the communal structure is defended by Gyekye. The above view opposes the idea that personhood is wholly defined by the communal structure. It also disputes the view of extreme individualism, that is, that an individual alone defines the person<sup>11</sup> he or she is to become. Gyekye (1997:54) supports the idea that personhood is partially defined by a communal structure, on the one hand and partially defined by the individual, on the other hand. This view is based on the premise that the achievement of personhood is partially culturally determined. Although a community, through its cultural structures, plays an important role as regards the achievement of personhood, individuals can, independent of a community, make important choices.

I want to point out that the relation between an individual and a cultural group is neither completely associative nor completely non-associative in nature, but moderately associative. By this I mean that an individual, in his or her relationship to the cultural group, partially depends on the latter. Although an individual and a group can share common goals and interests, it does not necessarily mean that the goals and interests of an individual do not differ from those of a cultural group.

My argument is that the relationship between an individual and a community is not that of a "set within a set". Everything that is found inside the big set is not automatically found inside the small set. The

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<sup>11</sup> In this context, the term 'person' has the same meaning as personhood.



big set represents a community and a small set represents an individual. At the same time, the relation between an individual and a community is not that of two separate sets that have nothing to do with each other. An individual, who in this context is referred to as the small set, is able to determine some elements and characteristics of this set; which are not likely to be found in the big set. This makes it possible for an individual to express his or her right to make choices that will influence his or her life. This points to Gyekye's concept of communitarianism in Africa which maintains the equiprimordiality of individual and community values.

The concept of equiprimordiality underpins Gyekye's idea of communitarian ethics. His notion of moderate communitarianism is based on his argument that both individual values and interests and the values and interests of a community should be given equal attention. His aim is to bridge the gap between extreme individualism and extreme communitarianism. Emphasizing the values and interests of a community at the expense of individual values and interests or vice versa is, according to Gyekye, an error.

The idea of equiprimordiality is an attempt to come to terms with the notion of the "natural sociality" of an individual, on the one hand and the concept of "individuality", on the other hand. It entails acknowledging the claims of both communitarian thinkers and liberal thinkers by integrating individual desires and social values. It could be said that it

stands to reason that no society is wholly communal or individualistic in its entirety. Rather, the idea of communitarianism or individualism, as applied to any society, is a matter of degree. This position cannot, however, be taken for granted but must be argued for, as Gyekye does in his work.

Gyekye (1997:41) maintains that the view that personhood is partially defined by a communal structure requires the recognition of "equal moral standing" between an individual and a cultural community. An individual is an inherently communal being, embedded in a context of social relationships and interdependence, and never an isolated individual. However, an individual possesses other attributes, such as rationality and the capacity for evaluating and making moral judgements. Gyekye (1997:41) argues that:

we should expect a human society to be either more individualistic than communal or more communal than individualistic. But, in view of the fact that neither can the individual develop outside the framework of the community nor can the welfare of the community as a whole dispense with the talents and initiative of its individual members, I think that the most satisfactory way to recognize the claims of both communality and individuality is to ascribe to them the status of an equal moral standing.

Persons come to know who they are in the context of relationships with others. Community consciousness serves as a bedrock for individual expressions and fulfilment. The community mood is manifested in the

feelings of individuals belonging to the same community.<sup>12</sup> In this sense, individual members of a community are understood as relational beings, who need others for the achievement of their goals. They are considered cultural extended beings. However, this does not imply that individuals lose their individuality or self-assertiveness. Individuals have personal desires and, to some extent, they are responsible for their realization.

In my opinion, although a community, through its norms, can assist in nurturing its individual members, individuals are responsible for their own situations in life. Their efforts as individuals are vital for achieving their goals and needs, which may be different from those of a community. A community cannot take over the burdens and responsibilities of its individual members.

Proponents of the view that the achievement of personhood is partially defined by the communal structure, such as Gyekye's, emphasize the dual features of the individual. Gyekye (1997:133) describes an individual "as a communal being and also as an autonomous, self-determining, self-assertive being with a capacity for evaluation and choice". The effect of Gyekye's idea of personhood is that an individual member of an ethno-cultural group is not obliged to show strong allegiance towards that group for him or her to achieve personhood. Consequently the person is free to make choices. He or she can also

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<sup>12</sup> Jomo Kenyatta (1965:36) holds that according to Gikuyu ways of thinking everybody's uniqueness is a secondary fact about him or her. This point of view is not the same as Gyekye's idea of African communitarianism. Gyekye (1997:104) believes that an individual human being is born into an "existing human culture, the latter being the product of the former" - thus accepting the reality of the relational character of an individual.

stand out and criticise some decisions of the group which he or she finds irrational. In this way the transfer of loyalty from various ethno-cultural groups to a nation-state becomes possible.

Gyekye holds that it is problematic to emphasize the priority of the cultural community at the expense of the individual, and vice versa. His answer to the question: which of the two - individual rights or the rights of the community - have priority, is the following: "It requires recognizing the claims of both communality and individuality and integrating individual desires and social ideals and demands" (1997: 41). The issue of priority of rights - whether that of individuals or the community - has to be considered contextually, bearing in mind the social and moral values that underlie a particular community.

The difference between Gyekye's idea of personhood and the views of Menkiti and Mbiti becomes clearer when comparing their views on the notion of "rights". In Menkiti's and Mbiti's notion of personhood, the emphasis is on "role structural rights". The argument of Menkiti and Mbiti is that the question whether an individual will be recognized as a person or not, depends on his or her contributions towards the common interest. Rights are only considered as the rights of a community because individual rights are not accepted. This implies that personhood derives from, and is shaped by the structure of the community. Accordingly, Menkiti and Mbiti uphold an extreme communitarian ethics. In contrast to Menkiti's and Mbiti's view, Gyekye argues for the recognition of both

communal and individual rights. This view becomes clearer when we analyse Gyekye's idea of metanationality.

The notion of metanationality transcends the idea of strong ethnic solidarity and affiliation based on ancestry or kinship ties. The issue of ethnic affiliation is a problem that confronts multicultural communities - where many ethno-cultural and linguistic groups merge to form a nation-state. This can result in socio-political tension among various groups. This is what Gyekye calls "particularistic subloyalties and obligations" (1997:102).

Gyekye's idea of the metanational conception of the nation-state does not, however, deny that the individual self is dependent on, and is partly constituted by, social relationships and communal ties. The idea of metanational concept of nation-state deals with the argument that while designing socio-political institutions, individual interests will not override communal interests and goals. Gyekye's idea of metanationality entails integrating the notion of individual rights with the idea of communitarianism. He argues that his idea of the metanational conception of the nation-state should be distinguished from metaphysical individualism, which "sees individuals as self-sufficient beings, not dependent on social relationships for the realization of their goals and potentials" (1997:103). Gyekye's idea of metanationality should be distinguished from moral individualism, the view "that it is only the interests of individuals that should form the basis for designing

socio-political institutions" (1997:103).

Furthermore, Gyekye's metanational conception of the nation-state should be distinguished from Menkiti and Mbiti's views of extreme communitarianism. He holds that:

(t)he metanational conception of the nation-state...does not deny that the individual self is dependent on, and is partly constituted by, social relationships and communal ties; nor does it affirm that only the interests of individuals should count in designing socio-political institutions, to the detriment of communal interests and goals (Gyekye 1997:103).

Gyekye's main criticism of the extreme communitarian ethics of Menkiti and Mbiti, is that it fails to recognize those attributes which define a person as an individual human being, such as the ability to make choices. Gyekye (1997:47-48) argues:

The individual is by nature a social (communal) being, yes; but he is, also by nature, *other* things as well; that is, he possesses other attributes that may also be said to constitute her nature. The exercise or application or consideration of these attributes will whittle down or delimit the "authoritative" role or function that may be ascribed to, or invested in, the community. Failure to recognize this may result in pushing the significance and implications of the individual's social nature beyond their limits, an act that would in turn result in investing the community with an all-engulfing moral authority to determine all things

about the life of the individual.

Gyekye (1997:48) says that by holding that a community enjoys ontological primacy, "one could easily succumb to the temptation of exaggerating the normative status and power of the cultural community in relation to those of the person". He maintains that Menkiti and Mbiti, in their views of personhood, submit to this temptation. The real status of the cultural community, in relation to its members, has to be reconsidered.

There are basic rights which compel members of a multicultural community, irrespective of their ethno-cultural groups of origin, to co-exist and work together in such a community. These basic rights should be exercised by members of a community without exception. They include: respect, dignity, equality of opportunity, equality before the law, freedom of association and freedom of choice. I maintain that the recognition of these basic individual rights will make it possible for individual members of various cultural backgrounds to co-exist as members of *one* nation-state. Members will be able to appreciate and respect one another irrespective of their ethnic groups of origin. Also members of various cultural communities, such as Ibibio, Oron, Tangale, Mandara, Efik, Urhobo, Ososo, Ogoni and Hausa in Nigeria, will not feel bound by the cultural structures of these communities. There will be less emphasis on ethnic allegiance.

Arguing against Menkiti and Mbiti's idea of strict communitarianism,

Gyekye (1997:39) holds that a cultural community is not only the basis for both defining and articulating the values and goals shared by various individuals but alone constitutes the context in which the “civilization of the potential of the individual can take place, providing her the opportunity to express her individuality, to acquire and develop her personality, and fully become the kind of person she wants to be<sup>13</sup>”. This view does not deny, however, individual members of a cultural community their “self-assertiveness” and freedom of choice.

At the level of nation-state, the emphasis is on individual rights which guarantee self-assertiveness and freedom to make choices. According to Gyekye, the idea of individual rights and freedom should not be in conflict with the achievement of the common good and the notion of a community of mutuality. Gyekye’s idea of individual rights does not mean absolute individualism - the kind that results in “moral egoism”. Rather, it results in “responsibility to oneself as an individual as well as responsibility to the group” (1997:278).

The kind of cultural and political construct peculiar to Africa in general, necessitates the justification of duties to the community. Individuals perform some duties in the cultural community and they are expected to contribute towards the interests of the community. On the one hand, individual members owe some duties towards the community, while on

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<sup>13</sup> This shows how much Gyekye appreciates the necessity of individual freedom and choice. This is, *inter alia*, what differentiates Gyekye’s view on communitarianism from Menkiti and Mbiti’s views. While Menkiti and Mbiti advocate role-structural rights, Gyekye accepts and appreciates the vitality of individual rights, though not rejecting the notion that an individual is also a communal being by nature.



the other hand, they possess some rights that need to be respected by others and the community. In this way, the community will not be given too much power or authority in relation to individual members.

Gyekye holds that individual rights and individual interests, the exercise of which is meaningful and achievable only within the context of a human society, "must therefore be matched with social responsibilities" (1997:67). The view that personhood is partially defined by the cultural structure advances both the claims of individuality and communality - the assertion that individual desires and the interests and values of the community ought to be equally morally acknowledged. In this regard, Gyekye writes: "For the community needs the individual and the individual having a natural link to the community, can hardly function properly outside the framework of the community" (1997:66).

The above argument depicts the view that a human person is socially incomplete. To achieve completeness, his or her relational and social characteristics must be supplemented by the individual's self-assertiveness and personal freedom<sup>14</sup>. In exercising his or her rights and personal freedom, an individual is able to question aspects of his or her culture that appear irrational. Some aspects of a culture or a group may

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<sup>14</sup> The idea of self-assertiveness advanced by Gyekye as regards his notion of personhood is in accordance with Kant's moral philosophy. Kant holds that there are "innate rights" which belong to everyone by nature and so could be termed "natural rights - our fundamental moral ends" (Kant (1965:95) quoted in Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*, p. 64). However, Gyekye's notion of personhood is also characterised by the concepts of 'sociality' and 'relationality'. These two concepts are fundamental in his idea of communitarian ethics. At this point, Kant's moral philosophy departs from Gyekye's principle of morality in relation to personhood.

appear unintelligible, for instance, where a community practices the “*osu* cast system”. This is a system where some members of a group are discriminated against and avoided by others because their fathers and forefathers were sacrificed to the “gods”. It is, therefore, a taboo to relate to such people or to inter-marry with them. In my opinion an individual should be invested with the power and capacity to evaluate or re-evaluate many of the practices in his or her community.

In terms of Gyekye’s understanding of communal and individual rights, communitarianism cannot accept the notion of communality without recognizing individual rights. It has to recognize the dual characteristics of a human person. For Gyekye (1997:64):

...implicit in the communitarianism’s recognition of the dual features of the self - the self as an autonomous, assertive entity capable of evaluation and choice and as a communal being - is a commitment to the acknowledgement of the intrinsic worth of the self and the moral rights that can be said necessarily to be due to it.

Considering the relational feature of an individual, Gyekye (1997:67) argues that: “the relational character of the individual by virtue of her natural sociality immediately makes her naturally oriented to other persons with whom she must live”. The individual is immediately “plunged into a moral universe” at birth. Accordingly, the communal structure “prescribes or mandates a morality that, clearly, should....orient the individual to an appreciation of shared” interests and

benefits and not exclusively for the good and interests of the individual.

For Gyekye (1997:188), "living in relation with others", the individual is involved "in social and moral roles, duties, obligations and commitments", which ought to be fulfilled by him or her. Members of a multicultural community (that is, nation-state) owe their duty of mutual input, interaction and contribution to the growth and development of a "nation-state", with the intention of achieving a common welfare. By this, I mean that an individual, by exercising his or her freedom of choice and assertiveness, uses their ideas and talents for the benefit of the society. In this regard, Gyekye (1997:67) maintains that the common interest and benefit "of shared relationship" require that every member of the community contributes to the good of all.

The ethical values of compassion, solidarity, reciprocity, co-operation, interdependence, inter-relation, social well-being and common good impose a sense of duty on the individual towards other members of a nation-state, irrespective of their ethno-cultural or linguistic group. 'Natural imposition' of a sense of duty on the individual, as such, confirms the notion of incompleteness of the person. Accordingly, human persons, though they enjoy individual rights and assertiveness, are obliged to perform some duties to other members of a nation-state and to the community at large. This notion derives from the relational characteristic of the human person. Stressing the necessity of responsibilities within a community, Gyekye holds that negligence to

consider both the status of responsibilities and obligations, *and* the privileging of rights could lead to the fragmentation of social values and, consequently to the breakdown of social relationships.

Gyekye's idea of personhood, with regard to his principle of metanationality, addresses the possible danger of strong ethnic allegiance and ethno-cultural solidarity (based on kinship ties) in a multicultural community. People may only be accepted as members of a particular "cultural community" if they prove to have ancestry ties with that community. Among the "Igbo speaking people" of Nigeria, for instance, there is a distinction between "di ala", and "non *di ala*"<sup>15</sup>. This kind of distinction forms the "kpim"<sup>16</sup> of kinship relationship, as found among the various ethnic groups.

The kind of relationships that exist at the level of the nation-state should not be based on the idea of ethnicity. Rather, they should be based on the principle that an individual possesses inherent rights and moral worth. By this I mean that the kind of treatment shown to individual members of the nation-state should not depend on their ethnic

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<sup>15</sup> "*Di ala*" means son of the soil and it is essentially a symbolic word used among the "Igbos" of Nigeria. "Non *di ala*" means not a son of the soil. He lacks kinship ties in relation to the community. The idea of role structural rights does not apply to the "non *di ala*". The word soil, as used here, is also a symbolic term. In fact, the "non *di ala*" is never a "person" since the attainment of personhood is questionable because the attainment of personhood depends on whether or not he is accepted by the society. The relationship between "*di ala*" and "non *di ala*" is drastically curtailed. This forms part of the "*osu* cast system", which I referred to earlier. This has some moral implications which I will not explore here. I maintain that, in order to achieve the kind of meta-national state advocated by Gyekye, socio-cultural practices, such as the "*osu* cast system", should be reconsidered and questioned.

<sup>16</sup> The word "kpim" is an "Igbo" term, which in this context means the substance of kinship relationships.

groups of origin. The controlling factor here is that members of the nation-state, regardless of their ethno-cultural affiliation, should be regarded as possessors of moral worth and rights, and ought to be treated as such. I contend that individual rights, as opposed to 'role-structural rights', guarantee cordial relationships among members of a nation-state. The various ethno-cultural structures should be transcended for the sake of building the nation-state and the emphasis should be on constitutional patriotism<sup>17</sup>, rather than on ethnic loyalty.

#### **2.4 INDIVIDUAL AUTONOMY AS THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLE OF PERSONHOOD**

Menkiti, in his notion of personhood, disputes the Sartrean existentialist view. For Sartre "the individual alone defines the self, or person, he is to become" (Quoted in Menkiti 1984: 179). For Sartre, the focus is on the individual human being. In the introduction of *Being and Nothingness*, it is stated that "Sartre's insistence upon the vast and indeed almost limitless extent of human freedom is ... central to existentialism" (Sartre 1981:xiii). Sartre adopts the view that individuals are free to choose their attitude, their morality and the person they want to be. For Menkiti, an individual plays no role towards the realization of his or her personhood. Personhood is not something an individual is born with. It is the cultural community alone that defines personhood.

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<sup>17</sup> The idea of "constitutional patriotism", as used here, does not refer to Habermas's view. Rather, it should be understood in relation to Gyekye's idea of moderate communitarianism. It refers to the situation where individual members show loyalties and commitment to the "political community".

On the one hand, Gyekye (1997:53) disagrees with Menkiti on his interpretation of personhood in African moral and political thought. On the other hand, he disputes the idea of extreme liberal thinkers that the individual alone defines the self, or person, he or she is to become. He maintains that both the community and the individual play vital roles in defining personhood. Though a human being is by nature a social and cultural extended being, he or she is also by nature a possessor of mental features and essential attributes, such as rationality. Thus personhood is both defined by the cultural structure and personal experiences and interests. Gyekye says:

...if the mental feature plays any seminal role in the formation and execution of the individual's goals and plans, as indeed it does, then it cannot be persuasively argued that personhood is fully defined and constituted by the communal structure or social relationships (1997:53).

I have considered Gyekye's arguments against extreme communitarian views. I will now turn to Gyekye arguments against extreme liberalism, in relation to personhood. Gyekye (1997:45) holds that "individualism" is an "accurate description of the society that stresses individual interests and rights". He further points out that the supporters of individualism "maintain that the pursuit of a common good", which is the main idea that underlies communitarianism, "in an individualistic society will do violence to the autonomy and freedom of the individual". This view he disputes.

Those who defend extreme individualism hold that personhood does not depend on communal structures. This means that personhood is not defined by a cultural structure. They defend the notion of individual rights at the expense of the common goals and interests of a community. In this regard Gyekye (1997:45) points out that:

... individualists start out by considering the individual to be prior to the community and equipped with conceptions of the good perhaps totally different from the purpose of the community...

Liberal individualism<sup>18</sup> considers individual autonomy essential when discussing the issue of personhood. On the one hand, intrinsically connected with the notion of individualism is the idea that an individual chooses his or her own good. According to the liberalists, an individual's good and interest do not depend on the common good. On the other hand, intrinsically connected with the concept of communitarianism is the notion of common good - "a notion that seems to be a bugbear to individualists thinkers and has consequently been maligned and burlesqued by them" (Gyekye 1997:45). The liberals' conception of individual autonomy stands in contrast to the underlying principles of a common good and community of mutuality.<sup>19</sup> Individualist thinkers maintain that the pursuit of a common good in an individualistic society

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<sup>18</sup> Darlene (1995:179) maintains that "(l)iberal individualism in general is known for its atomization of society and also for the isolation and alienation which it produces". Since the time of Hobbes and Locke, the liberal political theorists have made it their primary objective to defend the idea that 'men', as such, have inalienable rights, and that societies derive their power from the consent of their members.

<sup>19</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the communitarian principles of the common good and community of mutuality see Gyekye, K. *Tradition and Modernity*, 1997: 45.

will do violence to the autonomy and freedom of the individual. Consequently, this will fetter individual freedom to choose his or her own good and life plans. The emphasis here is on individual autonomy, individual interests, and individual rights with particular reference to his or her freedom of choice. Accordingly, the person he or she is to become wholly depends on the individual. In this way individual autonomy is given primacy with regard to personhood.

Gyekye (1997: 47) points out that extreme individualist thinkers maintain that many of the essential social relationships will sustain themselves through voluntary choices of individuals in civil society, and as such, would not require the assistance of the communal structure. Likewise, individualist thinkers maintain that in an individualist state the common good will be adequately promoted by the individuals themselves and not by the society. Thus, proponents of individualism reject communitarian ethics, which is based on the notions of the common good, community of mutuality, interdependence and common well-being. While communitarian thinkers maintain that the common good is the good of the community, the proponents of individualism hold that the common good is the aggregate of the goods of individuals.

Contrary to the view advanced by the extreme liberal thinkers, it could be argued that individual members of a community do not have absolute freedom and rights to do what they want to do. Individuals need one another to function in the community. They, also, need one another to



achieve their goals and objectives. For individuals to coexist in the community, they should recognize and appreciate each others' rights and freedom to choose what they want also. Recognizing each others' rights and freedom could result in members of the community respecting and appreciating each other. They might find it necessary to consider how their actions or behaviours could affect one another's life. It could, then, stand to reason that the individual has a limited freedom to do what he or she wants. This view could be seen as an antithesis to the view that the individual has an absolute freedom to do whatever he or she wants. Empirically speaking, it is also unintelligible to maintain that individual members of the community have an absolute freedom to do whatever they want. I will develop an argument that the individual members of the community have a limited freedom to do what they want.

The individual's freedom to choose what he or she wants could be curtailed by the rights of the community. The individual owes some duties towards the community in return for benefits, such as security, socio-economic assistance which he or she receives from the community. In order to achieve a peaceful and an ordered community, the community might decide to develop a set of values, which includes legal, socio-political, moral and 'cultural values', and a code of conduct that should be followed by its members. It can also create and develop institutions that will assist in the implementation and enforcement of these values.

Conduct of the individual that could have a negative effect on the lives

of others might not be permissible. The interests of an individual member, on the one hand and the interests of the community, on the other, should be considered. Also the interests of individual members, in relation to one another, should be considered. In case of conflict of interests, the various interests should be weighed against each other. I also maintain that members should be allowed freedom at the private domain. Freedom of members might be curtailed at the public domain. For example, actions of members of the community that could have a negative impact on the economic, security and environmental life of the community might not be permissible. In addition, the actions of members that could obstruct law and order also might not be permissible.

Even at the level of private domain, members should not be allowed an absolute freedom to do what they want. Some of the actions of members at the private domain could, though minimally and indirectly, have some negative effects on the lives of other members. For instance, everybody has the right and freedom to do what he or she wants with his or her life. He or she is free to listen to any kind of music, make any kind of joke, eat any kind of food and choose any kind of friends he or she wants. Also everybody enjoys freedom of speech. Freedom of speech, even at the private domain, could be limited in a situation where another person, for instance a member of one's family, such as a 'minor', could be influenced negatively by such speech. It is then necessary in such a situation to consider the outcome of one's speech, that is, how this

could affect others. It is my contention, therefore, that there are situations where the freedom of an individual member of the community to do whatever he or she wants could be restricted.

Gyekye intends to balance the concept of individual rights against the notion of the common good. His idea of communitarian ethics aims at integrating the concept of individuality with the principle of communitarianism. He makes individual rights subject to the notion of the common good, which serves as the main underlying principle of communitarianism. Gyekye (1997:278) points out that by "individualism" he does not mean extreme individualism - the type that tends to ride roughshod over the claims of the community. The kind of individualism Gyekye has in mind is a diluted one. In fact, it is a moderate kind of individualism. Gyekye (1997:278) argues that his idea of individuality "does not give rise to moral egoism". Rather, his idea of individuality promotes "individual initiative and responsibility for oneself".

Gyekye, with regard to personhood, adopts much of the liberal picture to make possible a view of political organisation which involves individual rights, on the one hand and the notion of the common good, on the other.<sup>20</sup> This means that Gyekye makes provision for individual rights in his idea of communitarian ethics.

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<sup>20</sup> This is made clear in Gyekye's idea of equiprimordiality, which holds that equal attention should be given to individual rights and common interests. Individual rights play an important role in Gyekye's idea of moderate communitarianism. It plays a regulatory role in relationships among members of the nation-state.

## 2.5 TOWARDS COMMUNITARIAN ETHICS

Some liberal thinkers, in relation to individual autonomy and rights, maintain the notion of "non-state". In this way they advocate for a totally open society. This is a society where individual rights and autonomy hold sway. Gyekye disputes the idea of an "individualistic society" in his idea of communitarian ethics. He (1997:45) maintains that an "individualistic society" could result in a situation where "the individual" is considered "to be prior to the community and equipped with conceptions of the 'good' perhaps totally different from the purpose of the community...". A possible response from liberal thinkers to this criticism is that the notion of the common good should be seen as the aggregate of the particular goods of individual persons. Gyekye (1997:45) maintains that the response from the liberal thinkers is not strong enough to counter the criticism against their view point that "the individual is prior to the community...".

Another argument advanced by defenders of individualism is that - many of the essential social relationships will sustain themselves through voluntary choices of individuals in civil society, and so would not require the assistance of the communal structure or the state. Responding to this claim, Gyekye (1997:45) argues:

The optimism about the ability of essential social relationships to sustain themselves through the voluntary activities of individuals without the

support of the state exaggerates the moral virtues of the individuals to have deep, extensive, and consistent concerns for the well-being of others; thus, the individualist optimism reasonably discounts or underrates the self-interested proclivities of the individual.

In the same vein, Gyekye (1997:66) holds that there is a "danger or possibility of one slipping down the slope of selfishness when one is totally obsessed with the idea of individual rights...". Accordingly, Gyekye's notion of communitarian ethics is based on the principle of the common good and solidarity, though not at the expense of individual rights.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

I have shown that Gyekye's idea of personhood and rights addresses the problem of strong ethnic allegiance which gives rise to particularistic subloyalties and obligations in a multicultural community. His view on personhood disputes Menkiti and Mbiti's views on the achievement of personhood in African communities. Menkiti and Mbiti's views on the realization of personhood are problematic, especially where various ethno-cultural and linguistic groups merge to form a nation-state. For them, the cultural community wholly defines personhood. This means that personhood is not acquired through one's own effort, but it depends on one's commitment to the community. He or she is expected to show strong allegiance towards the community. Menkiti and Mbiti's views advance strong ethnic allegiance which makes transfer of loyalties from

various ethnic groups to a nation-state difficult.

To combat this problem, Gyekye proposes that personhood is not wholly defined by a cultural community. Rather, personhood is partially defined by a cultural community. He argues that an individual, though a communal being by nature, possesses by nature inherent characteristics, such as rationality. He or she possesses innate natural rights and moral worth which make it possible for him or her to make choices. According to Gyekye, members of various ethnic groups are not obliged to remain loyal to those groups, especially when it seems irrational. In the metanational state, members will be able to challenge some features of their cultures that do not appeal to reason. He also maintains that individual rights are essential for regulating relationships between members of the nation-state.

In this chapter, I have shown that an individual is, on the one hand, a relational and communal being and on the other, individualistic in nature. He or she is not wholly a communal being. Accordingly, he or she does not entirely depend on the community for his or her personhood. Personhood is partially defined by the community. An individual has a role to play towards the kind of person he or she wants to be. The community does not have an absolute right. Both the community and the individual have equal moral standing. An equiprimordiality is maintained between the rights of the community and individual rights. Accordingly, the individual should be free to question some of the socio-political, cultural and ethical values being practised in the community.

However, the individual does not have absolute freedom. In exercising his or her freedom the individual should consider the needs and interests of others. I, thus, support Gyekye's proposal to integrate the values of the community and values of the individual. This point brings me to Gyekye's idea of moderate communitarian ethics which I introduced briefly in this chapter, but which I will discuss in detail in chapter three.

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **GYEKYE'S IDEA OF COMMUNITARIAN ETHICS**

Moderate or restricted communitarianism gives accommodation to communal values as well as to values of individuality, to social commitments as well as to responsibilities to oneself. ... I believe strongly that a moral or political theory that combines an appreciation of, as well as responsibility and commitment to, the community as a fundamental value, and an understanding of, as well as commitment to the idea of individual rights, will be a most plausible theory to support. Guided by the assumptions about the dual features of the self with an implied dual responsibility, it should be possible to deflate any serious tension between the self and its community (Gyekye 1997:76).

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria, as a multicultural community, is confronted with particular socio-political and cultural problems. These problems include: ethnic tension; opportunities given to individual members are often based on secondary factors, such as ethnicity and religion, rather than on merit; over emphasis on group rights at the cost of individual rights; strong ethnic affiliation that complicates transfer of loyalties to the nation-state; marginalisation of minority groups; complexity in achieving a national culture, with particular reference to a national common language; and difficulty of achieving nationhood where all members are accommodated.



In chapter two, I introduced Gyekye's idea of equiprimordiality with particular reference to personhood. In this regard, I discussed the relationship between the community and the individual. It was argued that equal moral standing should be ascribed to both the community and the individual in the sense that both individual and community interests should be given equal attention. There is a close connection between Gyekye's idea of personhood discussed in chapter two and his notion of communitarian ethics that will be discussed in this chapter. It is important to understand that Gyekye's notion of communitarian ethics is based on his idea of personhood.

In this chapter, I will give an exposition of Gyekye's idea of communitarian ethics, in relation to the problems confronting multicultural communities, especially Nigeria. The key issues I will discuss here are: (1). Gyekye's notion of community. (2). The meaning of communitarianism. (3). The ethical values underpinning Gyekye's moderate communitarianism, which include the common good and community of mutuality; the principle of reciprocity; and ethics of responsibility. (4). The role of "rights" in regulating relations between members of the nation-state.

In order to have a proper understanding of Gyekye's idea of communitarian ethics it is important to consider the meaning of the terms "community" and "communitarianism". My analyses of these concepts are based on context rather than content. I use the terms

“community” and “communitarianism” in their narrow sense, in the light of Gyekye’s notion of communitarianism.

### **3.2 GYEKYE’S NOTION OF COMMUNITY**

Gyekye maintains that a community refers to particular social settings and networks characterized by sharing an overall way of life. Sharing an overall way of life entails “the existence and acknowledgement of common roles, values, obligations, and meanings or understandings” (1997:43). The social settings and networks of the community are characterized by the social and normative features mentioned above. He holds that these social settings and networks are of different forms and shapes: “thus, the family (both nuclear and extended), clan, village, tribe, city, neighbourhood, nation-state - all these are kinds of community” (1997:43).

In this sense the notion of community is understood within a context. A person takes part in various kinds of community such as family, clan, village, tribe and nation-state. Gyekye holds that since a person participates in a variety of communities, “it would follow that she would participate also in a variety of social relationships” (1997:43). The kind of social relationship that takes place at a family or clan level differs from that which occurs at a tribe level; these also differ from the nature of social relationships that take place at the nation-state level. Gyekye

(1997:43) writes:

Thus, a person's essential social relationships are by no means coextensive with only one community. People are therefore members of many different communities, different in size and operating at different levels, and are likely to develop different aspects of their sociality in the various communities.

The nature of social relationships at the family level and even at the clan level is simple compared with the type that exists at the tribe level. It becomes more complex at the level of the nation-state. The nation-state, such as Nigeria, comprises various cultural groups whose members are meant to coexist with each other. Considering the tension that often occurs among these groups, the issue is how these individuals will work together towards the achievement of the common goal.

Gyekye distinguishes between ethno-cultural community and multicultural community. An ethno-cultural community is a community of people who believe themselves to be bound by some intrinsic ties. For example, the people of Yoruba, Ogoni, Izon, Isoko, Itsekiri, Urhobo, Fulani, Efik, Esan, Kanuri, Kadara, Gwari, Kurama, Kambari, Kebewa, Bangawa, Nupe, Egba, Ijebu, Ijesa, Birom, Mada, Tiv, Ndoni, Ikwere, Ogba, Okirika and Chamba origin believe themselves to be bound by some intrinsic ties, such as the same culture, language and history.

A multicultural community is formed when various ethno-cultural

communities merge. According to Gyekye the complexity of this kind of community generates daunting problems in creating and developing cultural and national identity. Characteristics, such as unity, solidarity and cohesion, which are manifested by monocultural communities, seemed to be largely absent in a multicultural community. Gyekye, in his idea of moderate communitarianism, argues for the forming of a nation-state, where those characteristics that are manifested in a monocultural community, will abound.

Despite a person's membership of different communities which operate at various levels, the person (at each level) would participate in a community life essential for the development of his or her well-being, identity, and potential. In his attempt to provide a specification for a relevant community, in spite of the different levels of community, Gyekye "equates the community with cultural community" (1997:44). The reason for this, according to him, is that culture constitutes the greatest portion of our necessary social context. Accordingly, cultural community in the sense used here, does not necessarily mean a monocultural (ethno-cultural) community.

### **3.3 THE MEANING OF COMMUNITARIANISM**

Communitarianism is based on the notion that a person when born finds himself or herself, not in isolation but, among other individuals and thus establishing the relational nature of a person. Gyekye (1997:42) argues that communitarianism sees the individual as an inherently communal

being, embedded in a context of social relationships and interdependence. Furthermore, he argues that a person also possesses some inherent characteristics, such as freedom.

Communitarianism sees the community as a reality in itself and not as a mere association of individuals. A community, in the context of communitarianism, is seen as a group of persons linked by interpersonal bonds, which are not necessarily biological, who consider themselves primarily as members of a group and who share common goals, values and interests. Gyekye holds that the interpersonal bonds that exist among individuals need not be biological for a community to be formed. This distinction separates Gyekye's idea of communitarianism from the kind of communitarianism defended by Menkiti and Mbiti.

According to Gyekye's idea of communitarianism, members of the community may be bound together by other factors, such as the common good and shared values, instead of biological ties. This qualification means, that members of a community may be bound together because they share a common language, culture, identity and interests.

Considering the communitarian features of African cultural and political beliefs, it stands to reason that a sense of community that is said to characterize social relationships among individuals in African communities is a direct consequence of a communitarian social arrangement found among Africans. In communities, such as the Igbo and Yoruba in Nigeria, the Akan in Ghana, the Zulu and Sotho in South

Africa and the Gikuyu community in Kenya, individualism<sup>21</sup> and sheer self-seeking are not accepted. Community consciousness serves as a bedrock through which the individual realizes and fulfills himself or herself. The mood of the community is manifested in the feeling of the individuals as members of the community. In the African conception, a person is naturally a communitarian being who connotes both the social and political aspects of a human being. Gyekye (1992: 104) argues "that an individual human being is born into an existing human society and, therefore into a human culture, the latter being the product of the former".

As regards the above claim, I want to point out that Gyekye does not intend to attribute metaphysical priority to the individual over the community, or vice versa. It is possible to argue, however, that a human being is a product of a community. In this sense, the community gives rise to an individual human being. Gyekye's intention, when he holds that a person is born into an existing community, is to portray the relational and the societal features of the person in the context of the cultural community in Africa. It thus follows that the idea that a person is born into an existing community supports the view that a person is by

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<sup>21</sup> Individualism in this context means the conception that individual rights and interests supersede communal interests. In other words, individual interests are sought for their own sake and not ultimately for the common good. The notion of individualism in the sense used here does not mean the same as that used by moderate communitarian thinkers, like Gyekye. In case of moderate communitarianism self-assertiveness could stand as a means through which the individual could realize his or her goals, considering the options offered to him or her by the community. The notion of individual autonomy in the context of moderate communitarian thinkers does not, in anyway, override the relational and social features of the individual.

nature<sup>22</sup> a communitarian being.

The communitarian aspects of African moral and political thought are reflected in the communitarian features of the social structures of African societies. In this regard Gyekye (1997: 36) maintains:

These communitarian features ... are held not only as outstanding but also as the defining characteristics of African cultures. The sense of community that is said to characterize social relations among individuals in African societies is a direct consequence of the communitarian social arrangement.

Gyekye holds that Menkiti and Mbiti's<sup>23</sup> "descriptions of African culture make clear its communitarian nature" (1997: 37). However, what they do not make clear, "is what type of communitarian notion is, or can be said to be, upheld in the African moral and political theory: radical or moderate". The issue is that Menkiti and Mbiti's ideas of communitarian ethics raises serious socio-political and cultural problems when they are applied to multicultural communities in Africa, such as Nigeria. By this I mean that Menkiti and Mbiti's ideas of communitarianism are too radical and do not consider the complex nature of a multicultural community.

### **3.4 ETHICAL VALUES UNDERPINNING GYEKYE'S IDEA OF**

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<sup>22</sup> The phrase "by nature" refers to basic attributes and features that characterize the person.

<sup>23</sup> An exposition of Menkiti and Mbiti's ideas of communitarianism was given in chapter two.

## **COMMUNITARIANISM**

The kind of communitarian moral and political theory that Gyekye defends considers the community as a fundamental human good. It advocates a life lived in harmony and in cooperation with others. His idea of communitarianism proposes a life of mutual consideration and interdependence. It supports a life in which a person shares in the fate of the other. It encourages a life that provides a viable framework for the fulfilment of the individual's nature or potential. Gyekye's notion of communitarianism advocates a life in which the products of the exercise of an individual's talents or endowments are regarded as the assets of the community.

The following fundamental values that underpin Gyekye's moderate communitarianism will be discussed: the common good and community of mutuality; the principle of reciprocity; and ethics of responsibility. These ethical values are closely connected.

### **3.4.1 The common good and community of mutuality**

Intrinsically connected with Gyekye's idea of communitarianism is the notion of the common good and community of mutuality. The common good, according to Gyekye, literally means a good that is common to individual human beings and which is embraced within a community. Gyekye (1997:45) maintains that the



common good means a good that can be said to be commonly, universally, shared by all human individuals, a good the possession of which is essential for the ordinary or basic functioning of the individual in a human society.

Analysing the above definition, it could be said that the common good ought to be shared by the individual members of the community. Nobody should be excluded from sharing in the common good for any reason.

The common good is considered as a set of basic goods that members of the community need and strive to attain. It is a set of goods that is essential for the survival of all members. Gyekye (1997:46) holds:

It should be understood that by "the goods of all the members" one is referring only to what can be regarded as the basic or essential goods to which every individual should have access. There is no human being who does not desire peace, freedom, respect, dignity, security, and satisfaction.

All members of the community desire to have access to the basic goods. It is primary to the person of every human being to be respected and accepted, and not to be unfairly discriminated against for any reason. Members of the community should be treated equally and should be given equal opportunity. They are required to accept one another as individuals with moral worth and with a need to be respected. Gyekye (1997:46) points out that the insistent advocacy and pursuit of such

concepts as sympathy, compassion, social justice, and respect of persons makes sense, because there is a belief in the common good. He suggests that the pursuit of social justice is intended to bring about certain basic goods that every individual needs.

The basic or essential goods that members need to function as human beings form part of the commonly shared values. Gyekye's idea of the political community implies the recognition and existence of such basic goods. It is this idea that underpins the thoughts and activities of people who live together in an organised human society. Gyekye (1997:46) holds:

... if there is a human society, if human beings can live together in some form of politically organized setting despite their individuality - despite, that is, their individual conceptions of good life, individual ways of doing things, and so on - then the existence of a common good must be held as the underlying presupposition.

It entails therefore, that members of a multicultural community (as a political community) should appreciate one another as individuals with moral worth and then work towards the achievement of the basic goods.

Gyekye (1997:42) maintains that a community - whether it is a communocultural community or a political (multicultural) community - is understood as "a group of persons linked by interpersonal bonds", who among others share common goals, values and interests. Such a

community Gyekye calls a community of mutuality. Individual members of this kind of community are seen as inherently communal beings, and never as isolated individuals.

The concept of a shared life is considered an important concept which underlies the community of mutuality. The concept of a shared life connotes common values, common interests, common purposes and understandings. Gyekye (1997:42) holds that the sharing of an overall way of life is an important characteristic of a cultural community that distinguishes it from a mere association of individuals who are held together and sustained merely contractually. The community is seen to comprise of a group of persons who are linked by interpersonal bonds. As members of the community, this group of persons express some desire and willingness to advance the interests and goals of the community. By so doing, they show their commitment to the community.

In order to achieve the community of mutuality and the idea of the common good in this context, it is vital that important values like sense of duty, obligations and the individual commitment to the community be accepted and appreciated. The individual can only do this if he or she acknowledges the reality of common values and their necessity.

In the community of mutuality, members are expected to show concern for the well-being of one another with the aim of advancing the common good and interests. As Gyekye (1997:42) himself puts it: Members "have

intellectual and ideological as well as emotional attachments to their shared goals and their values and, as long as they cherish them, they are ready to pursue and defend them". The logic is that members of the community have the tendency of defending, serving, upholding and developing<sup>24</sup> the community in question (in the context of the moderate communitarianism) if they understand and appreciate the values and goals which their culture, directly or indirectly, represents or upholds.

Another important and essential characteristic of the community of mutuality, which cannot be separated from the idea of the common good and shared life, is the issue of mutual sympathies. Mutual sympathies among members of the community could be expressed consciously or unconsciously in the course of the association among members. Thus, Gyekye (1997:42) argues that social relationships which form the essential features of the community, *inter alia*, "are expressed in ... comprehensive interactions, and mutual sympathies...". He maintains that over and above the social relationships that form part of the features and structure of a community, is the issue of sharing an overall way of life.

The sharing of an overall way of life is part and parcel of the social interactions that are totally embedded in the life of mutuality. For Gyekye such a sharing of an overall way of life is an essential and

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<sup>24</sup> Members of the community, in the view of the radical communitarian thinkers, are fully embedded in the community. As such, they have no rights to challenge and question the values embedded in the culture no matter how unacceptable they may seem. Cultural growth and development, may become difficult.

fundamental for any conception of a cultural community. It implies the existence and the acknowledgement of common roles, values, obligations and understanding. Through such social participation and correlation comes the awareness of one's personal identity which is created and nurtured in the "context of the relationship with others, not as an isolated lonely star in a social galaxy" (Gyekye 1997:43).

In addition, Gyekye (1997:44) maintains that since there are various constitutive elements of a culture apart from language, "it should be possible for people to share any aspect of a culture without a shared language". This does not in anyway imply that Gyekye advocates a kind of community that does have a common language.<sup>25</sup> His intention here is to create the awareness that language, though very important, must be seen as part of the entire set of "shared cultural values".

Gyekye also maintains that the issue of the common good, irrespective of a shared language, cannot be separated from the notion of "the community", because as a member of the community, the individual "would need to have food, shelter, security, goodwill, friendship and self respect" (1997:44). He or she needs these basic needs, notwithstanding the language he or she speaks or the faith he or she professes.

In this subsection, I have explicated Gyekye's understanding of the common good and community of mutuality. Based on my own analysis,

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<sup>25</sup> At a later stage, Gyekye advocates for a common language, even among the members of multicultural communities like Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya.

the understanding that the common good refers to a set of goods which is commonly shared by individuals stands out clearly in the definition of the common good. By implication this means that individual members of the community should be given equal opportunity to strive towards the attainment of the common good. All members of the community are capable of aspiring and striving towards a set of basic goods, such as freedom, respect, security, peace and harmony. People should not be denied the opportunity to strive towards the realization of these basic goods based on irrelevant factors, such as religion, ethnicity and language group. Otherwise the rights of members of the community not to be discriminated against will be infringed.

Community of mutuality refers to a community that is characterized by a shared life. My interpretation of a shared life is that individual members of the community are considered as people who are bound together by common interests, common values and common goals. Members of the multicultural community come from various ethno-cultural groups. Members will be in a better position to appreciate one another if they are meant to understand the fact that they are equal. Accordingly, they will, though not necessarily so, have reason to live in peace and harmony, to show concern for the well-being of one another; and to, commonly, assist in building the community. I maintain that members could become interested in contributing towards the growth of the community if they are convinced that they are part and parcel of the community. Accordingly, individual members of the community will work

towards the achievement of the common welfare.

Members of a community will show sympathies towards one another if it is reasonable for them to do so. It could be difficult, strictly speaking, to determine when it would be reasonable for a member of the community to show sympathies towards others. It could be easier for members to show sympathies towards those people who are close to them as a result of blood relationships, use of a common language, common religious faith and socio-political beliefs and practices than those who do not share a common tie with them. It is an exceptional case for members to show sympathies to those who are not close to them in any of the manners explained above. It could be possible, however, for individuals to show sympathies to people from a different cultural, language or religious group. In this case, one of the major questions that might confront individual members is whether other members who come from different cultural groups really deserve their sympathies.

Gyekye is of the view that the common good, whether there is a shared language or not, cannot be separated from the notion of community as such. This is because, as members of the community, individuals need food, shelter, security, goodwill, friendship and self respect. I do not dispute the fact that individuals need these basic goods. Rather, it is arguable to hold that members of the community can strive together as a community to attain the common good in absence of factors, such as

a common language. A community of people, though not necessarily, presupposes the existence of a common language. However, this does not mean that language has metaphysical priority over the community. My contention, however, is that the idea of a community in the context used in this work cannot be separated from language. I question the possibility of achieving such levels of mutuality, proposed by Gyekye, in a multicultural community such as Nigeria without a common language.<sup>26</sup> Essentially, language plays a critical role in the establishment of a cultural community. If it is disputed that language plays an important role in the realization of a mutual life and interest in the cultural communities, the question is: what factors will then motivate the individual members of the multicultural community to strive towards achieving a community of mutuality and common interest?

The ethical values of the common good and community of mutuality are considered ideal values that underpin the cultural community. However, my contention is that Nigeria could reflect a community mutuality, if there are factors which could motivate members from various groups to coexist and to work towards the common interest. The view that members of the various cultural groups could coexist in peace and harmony and assist in developing the nation-state for the fact that they are united by a common interest is promising. There are, however, some factors, such as national culture and identity which could make it

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<sup>26</sup> In many nations in Africa, there are as many languages as there are cultural groups. The respective language of each group is one of the essential integers that unifies the members of that group. The ability to communicate in a particular language creates a sense of identity.



possible for members to become united by a common interest. The notions of the common good and community of mutuality and how to realize them, in the context of a multicultural community, will become clearer when I discuss chapters four and five.

### **3.4.2 The principle of reciprocity**

In his idea of moderate communitarianism, Gyekye intends to consider how to achieve understanding, peace and harmony among members of a multicultural community. Although members of a multicultural community come from various groups, they need one another in order to achieve their goals. When members of the community consider one another as incomplete and relational beings who need one another to survive, they will be able to appreciate and accept one another. This *ethos* strengthens the sense of mutuality among members and it cultivates in them the reason to coexist and respect one another. The idea of communitarian ethics, which accommodates the notion of reciprocity, could help in establishing a sense of mutuality and relationality among people of diverse cultures, interests and orientations. This is the idea of communitarian ethics that is defended by Gyekye.

There is a close connection between Gyekye's notion of community of mutuality and the principle of reciprocity. The latter refers to a life of interdependence, where members assist one another to achieve his or

her goals. It is a life lived in cooperation. Gyekye (1997:75-76) writes:

...the communitarian moral and political theory, which considers the community as a fundamental human good, advocates a life lived in harmony and cooperation with other, a life of mutual consideration and aid and of interdependence, a life in which one shares in the fate of the individual's nature or potential...

Gyekye claims that this kind of life, that is a life of mutual consideration and aid and of interdependence, is "very rewarding and fulfilling" (1997:76). A life of interdependence could result in harmony and understanding among individual members of the community. By so doing, members of the community will be able to establish some mutual bonds. This in turn makes it possible for them to share mutually in each other's problems and success. According to Gyekye (1997:42), the concept of mutuality that is based on interpersonal bonds could be expressed as follows:

Members of the community (society) are expected to show concern for the well-being of one another, to do what they can to advance the common good, and generally to participate in the community life.

I have briefly examined Gyekye's principle of reciprocity. Members of the community need one another in order to survive. Nobody can function properly in absolute isolation. Each member of the community needs

assistance from others to achieve his or her goals. This supports the view that a human being is a relational being who needs other human beings to function properly in the community. Every person is an incomplete being and therefore needs others for his or her completeness.

In order to achieve a sense of unity and harmony in a multicultural community, it is vital for members of the community to live in cooperation and in mutual consideration with one another. The talents and endowments of individual members could improve the well-being of the community. Accordingly, improvement on individual talents and endowments could have a positive effect on the nation-state. For example, if members could develop and improve on their talents, such as pot crafting, this could, either directly or indirectly, have a positive effect on the economy of the nation-state.

Members of a multicultural community, such as Nigeria, should be encouraged to assist one another in nurturing and developing their potentials. Individuals can only develop and achieve the fullness of their potential against the backdrop of their relationship with other individuals. In this regard, I support Gyekye's view, that it shall be the duty of every member of the community to respect the dignity of other members. Also, he or she is expected to respect the rights and legitimate interests of other members and live in unity and harmony and in the spirit of common brotherhood and sisterhood. Members of the community are expected, through their talents, to make positive and

useful contributions towards the advancement of the common welfare.

According to Gyekye, in an ideal nation-state, members would have the right to make choices concerning whom to deal with. They would have freedom to exit from one ethno-cultural group and to enter into other groups of their choice. Since all members are accepted and treated equally, and for the reason that they are encouraged to make choices concerning whom to deal with, they are able to appreciate the necessity of working towards the achievement and advancement of public welfare and interests.

If social relationships that are based on the notion of reciprocity are maintained in the community, it could result in members becoming morally sensitive about common values. The notion of reciprocity is, however, problematic when considered in relation to a multicultural community. Promotion of common welfare through individual commitment could be possible only if cordial relationships exist among members of the multicultural community on the one hand, and between the community and its members on the other. In order to achieve cordial relationships and a spirit of reciprocity among members of a multicultural community, issues, such as discrimination based on ethnicity and religion; ethnic tension and dispute; and how to achieve a national culture should be considered. Individual members of the nation-state could only live in peace and harmony if the specific problems were addressed.

### 3.4.3 Responsibility as a principle of morality

Gyekye's idea of an ethic of responsibility should be considered in relation to his notion of equiprimordiality. An ethic of responsibility deals with the duties of members of the community towards the community and other members of the community.

A distinction should be drawn between Gyekye's discussion of the communitarian framework and his own ideas on an ethic of responsibility. Gyekye (1997:52, 62) makes it clear that he has a difficulty with the communitarian framework that has very little or no place for rights. Gyekye, in his idea of an ethic of responsibility, pays attention to both duties and rights.

Gyekye (1997:66), in his attempt to show the meaning of responsibility as it applies in his idea of communitarian ethics, writes:

...by responsibility<sup>27</sup>, I mean a caring attitude or conduct that one feels one ought to adopt with respect to the well-being of another person or other persons.

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<sup>27</sup> These responsibilities include the responsibility to help others in distress, the responsibility to show concern for the need and well-being of others and the responsibility not to harm others.

Embedded in his notion of "rights of community" is the responsibility expected of individual members in relation to others. Gyekye (1997:52) points out that an ethic of responsibility "stresses sensitivity to the interests and well-being of other members of the community, though not necessarily to the detriment of individual rights".

The communitarian framework, in general, recognizes that there are some responsibilities which individual members have towards the community and others. In contrast to the communitarian framework, the type that pays little or no attention to rights, Gyekye (1997:66) maintains:

The communitarian ethic acknowledges the importance of individual rights but that it does not do so to the detriment of responsibilities which the individual member have or ought to have toward the community or other members of the community... the communitarian moral theory considers responsibility as an important principle of morality.

The notion of the ethic of responsibility is, though not necessarily so, demonstrated when members of a community show moral sensitivity towards others. For example, members could share in the burdens and sufferings of other members of the community by offering to assist them in time of difficulty. Moral sensitivity is, then, promoted among members of the community .

For a clear understanding of the basis of the ethic of responsibility, Gyekye, in his idea of communitarianism, maintains that the community does not come into existence by mere association of individuals. Accordingly, the individual responsibilities towards the community as a whole and towards other members of the community, do not derive from a mere social contract between individuals. "The social contract theory", in the opinion of Gyekye (1997:67), is a contrivance for voluntary, not natural, membership in the society. For him, the concept of an ethic of responsibilities flows from the "communitarian ethos and its imperative". Members of the community perceive themselves as human beings with moral worth and dignity. Based on this perception, they adopt a caring attitude or conduct towards one another and this solidarity strengthens the spirit of inter-dependence and inter-relatedness among them. This, also, sustains a sense of harmony, solidarity, common good, mutuality and sympathy among members. However, the question is whether it is logical to maintain that members will show a caring attitude towards one another simply because they perceive themselves as human beings with moral worth and dignity. Realistically speaking, relationships among human beings, especially among members of a multicultural community, are often complex. To maintain that members of a multicultural community will show a caring attitude towards one another, based on the fact that they consider themselves as human beings with moral worth and dignity, could result in a fallacy of over-simplification.

Gyekye maintains that community life constitutes the basis for moral

responsibilities and obligations. Each member of the community demonstrates a high level of moral responsiveness and sensitivity to the needs and well-being of other members. There is a close connection between the ethic of responsibility and other ethical values underpinning the communitarian ethics. Gyekye (1997:66) holds:

The ethical values of compassion, solidarity, reciprocity, cooperation, interdependence, and social well-being, which must be counted among the principles of the communitarian morality, primarily impose responsibilities on the individual with respect to the community and its members. All these considerations elevate the notion of responsibilities to a status equal to that of rights in the communitarian political and moral thought.

It is clear from Gyekye's argument that his idea of the ethic of responsibility accommodates the notion of rights. This separates his views from those of extreme communitarian thinkers, like Menkiti. The latter maintains that "in the African understanding, priority is given to the duties which individuals owe to the collectivity, and their rights, whatever these may be, are seen as secondary to their exercise of their duties" (1984:180).

In contrast to the extreme communitarian framework which Menkiti defends, Gyekye develops the principle of equiprimordiality. Both the ethic of responsibility and the principle of equiprimordiality should be understood against the backdrop of Gyekye's construct of



metanationality. For Gyekye, members of the community will be able to relate freely with others if they are given the opportunity to express their rights and freedom. They also, though not necessarily so, could freely and willingly transfer their loyalties to the nation-state if they are given the opportunity to do so.

The idea of rights is important in regulating relationships at the level of the nation-state. I referred to Gyekye's notion of rights when I was discussing the idea of personhood in chapter two. I also considered the notion of rights in relation to both the community and the individual. In this chapter, I consider the notion of rights an important factor in regulating relationships among individual members at the level of the nation-state.

The notion of responsibility and Gyekye's idea of rights could be given equal attention. Gyekye (1997:65) writes:

(n)eglect of, or inadequate attention to, the status of responsibilities and obligations on the one hand, and the obsessional emphasis on, and privileging of, rights on the other hand, could lead to the fragmentation of social values and, consequently of social relationship and integrity of society itself.

### **3.5 THE ROLE OF "RIGHTS" IN REGULATING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG MEMBERS OF THE NATION-STATE**

Rights play an important role in regulating relationships between “selves” and others in the public domain. While some of the human actions only affect the person performing the actions, others do affect the public either directly or indirectly. For this reason, I would like to draw a distinction between human actions within the private domain and those within the public domain. In most cases actions performed by an individual within a private domain only affect the person performing the action, while actions performed by an individual within the public domain affect others. Only those actions that affect other people, either directly or indirectly should be restricted and curtailed.

According to Gyekye’s moderate communitarian perspective, individuals should be allowed to exercise their rights in the private domain. Gyekye (1997:65) maintains:

(i)ndividual rights to expressions that are of a strictly private nature may not be disallowed, unless there is overwhelming evidence that such expressions can, or do, affect innocent members of the society.

For Gyekye the exercise of individual rights is meaningful only within the context of human society and must therefore be harmonized with social responsibilities (1997:65). The concept of rights in relation to the idea of communitarianism, according to Gyekye, makes possible a socio-political system that is more flexible and open than the one found in strict communitarianism. A socio-political system that is open could also promote and enhance transfer of loyalties. In this way a sense of inter-

dependence among members of the nation-state could be promoted.

Gyekye's idea of moderate communitarianism could promote good government and accordingly, assist in realizing the well-being of all members of the nation-state. It emphasizes the importance of the principles of freedom, equality and justice among members of the community. Members are given equal opportunity and are treated equally before the "Law". They enjoy both the first degree rights<sup>28</sup> and political rights. These aspects of rights will in themselves regulate the relationships between individuals and others in the public domain. Fundamental rights are guaranteed to all members.

Fundamental rights include the right to life, right to dignity, right to personal liberty, physical integrity, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right to the freedom of expression and association and the right to freedom from discrimination.

Naturally, though not always the case, an individual possesses some attributes that project his or her ability to make important decisions that can improve both his or her life and that of others. Some of these attributes include rationality, ability to make moral judgments and decisions. The possession of these attributes does not depend on one's

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<sup>28</sup> The first degree rights as used here mean the rights to the basic or essential goods which every human being needs for survival. These include the right to life, food and physical integrity.

affiliation to an ethno-cultural or linguistic group. Rather, the possession of these attributes wholly depends on the fact that a person is an individual human being. These attributes, where they are properly used, make it possible for members of the community to contribute towards the development of the community. Gyekye (1997:54) argues:

The creation and historical development of human culture result from the exercise by individuals of this capacity for self assertion; it is this capacity that makes possible the intelligibility of autonomous individual choice of goals and life plans.

An individual, according to Gyekye (1997:54), who finds himself or herself “enmeshed in the web of communal relationships” contributes positively and actively towards the growth of the community. This will only be possible if the person in question is given the opportunity to express his or her freewill and choice.<sup>29</sup>

In my own opinion, it may not be enough merely to give members the opportunity to express their freedom. Giving them the opportunity to use

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<sup>29</sup> Gyekye holds that individuals as participants in the shared values and practices may sometimes find out that aspects of those cultural givens are inelegant, undignified, or unenlightened and would thoughtfully want to question and as such re-evaluate them. The possibility of such re-evaluation, in his opinion, entails that the individual in question is not absorbed by the communal or cultural apparatus but can to some reasonable extent wriggle out of it, distance himself or herself from it, and consequently be in a position to take a critical look at it. Also, it means that the communal structure cannot in itself foreclose the reality and meaningfulness of the quality of self-assertiveness that the particular individual can demonstrate in his or her action.

their freedom may meet the formal or procedural requirement. The subjective requirement<sup>30</sup>, however, will be met if members are meant to realize the importance of expressing their rights and making proper use of their freedom of choice. It should also be made clear to members what will happen if the rights of members are infringed without a good reason. Members should be aware of the measures to be taken when they suffer such infringement. However, members should realize that their rights are not absolute.

The question is: why does Gyekye defend individual rights so vigorously, considering the fact that he is also a communitarian thinker? It should be borne in mind that Gyekye proposes the concept of the metanational state in his idea of communitarian ethics. The underlying principle in Gyekye's notion of metanationality is that every member of the nation-state, without exception, would be considered as an individual of intrinsic moral worth and dignity. Gyekye (1997:103) clearly points out that metanationality, in addition to being a theory about the composition of the modern state, in a culturally plural setting, is a theory about the moral worth of individuals. The concept of moral worth and dignity naturally belongs to every individual. Every member of the community has a claim on others to respect him or her. Since every individual is entitled to moral worth and dignity, all members of the nation-state should be treated equally and with respect.

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<sup>30</sup> While discussing the freedom of expression, I find it pertinent to draw a distinction between the formal requirement and the subjective requirement. While the formal requirement is met when it is explicitly stated in a legislation that members have freedom of expression, the subjective requirement is met if necessary steps are taken to make sure that members' rights to the freedom of expression are not infringed.

In consideration of the metanational state, as a political community, the emphasis is generally on "national loyalty". Members of the nation-state in their capacity as members, are expected to show solidarity towards the nation-state, notwithstanding their various cultural and ideological groups. It could be made clear in the law of the political community in question that the security and welfare of the people would be the primary purpose of its government. As such, the government of the nation-state would be based on the principle of "democracy and justice"; where every member could be accepted, respected and where every member might be expected to receive equal treatment.

Gyekye's aim is to consider whether it is possible to build a political community that does not conflict with the basic principles that underlie communitarian ethics and a political community that could accommodate its members, notwithstanding their ethno-cultural groups of origin. Members of the metanational state proposed by Gyekye, are expected to show obligations towards one another, on the one hand and towards the entire nation, on the other. He bases his argument on the principle of inter-relatedness as opposed to Menkiti and Mbiti's notions of 'role-structural rights'. Individuals owe some duties towards others in the course of their relationships with others. Both the notion of rights and the concept of duties could play an important role in regulating the relationships among members of the multicultural community.

Members, notwithstanding their ethnic-groups, could then take part in

making important decisions that would affect them directly or indirectly. By so doing, all members would be assured of their membership in the nation-state. They might be appreciated and recognized by other members of the nation-state. They would, then, become part of the nation-state and, as such, they could identify with it. Accordingly, members could contribute towards the achievement of the common welfare and assist in the development of the community.

The shaping and reshaping of the socio-political and cultural life of the community, such as Nigeria, could be made possible through the contributions of the individual members of the community; in their capacity as autonomous individuals.

If Gyekye's idea of the common good is considered, the 'nation-state' would, within the context of moderate communitarianism, exercise control over the 'national economy' in such a manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every member on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity<sup>31</sup>. In this way, the interest of every member of the nation-state will be served. Consequently, persons of various cultural orientations can accept and appreciate one another; while they see themselves as being regulated in their communal and political relationship by a common cause and interests.

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<sup>31</sup> This view also separates Gyekye's notion of communitarianism from the idea of capitalist society conceived by the extreme liberals. In the context of the latter, "state" does not play an essential role in controlling the national economy. The emphasis is not in achieving maximum welfare of every member of the society in question.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have considered some of the ethical values underpinning Gyekye's idea of communitarian ethics. These ethical values play an important role in promoting a kind of community where members could coexist and strive towards the achievement of the common good. However, as I have pointed out, there are other factors, such as a national culture and national identity, that could motivate members of a multicultural community, such as Nigeria, to strive towards the achievement of a community of mutuality. In order to achieve, in Nigeria, the kind of community of mutuality that Gyekye defends I have shown that it is necessary to treat members equally.

Rights, as regulator of relationships among members of the community, address the issue of discrimination in a multicultural community. The emphasis is that members of the community should be treated equally and should be given equal opportunity at the national level. Members should be given the opportunity to make important decisions that could affect their lives. However, rights of individuals are not absolute.

There is a link between Gyekye's notion of communitarian ethics, which I considered in this chapter and his ideas of nationhood and national culture and identity, which I will discuss in chapter four and chapter five. In chapter four, I will demonstrate how some of the ethical values underpinning Gyekye's notion of communitarian ethics could be achieved.



I will consider how to achieve a nation-state that will be able to accommodate and protect the interests of its members. Accordingly, I will consider how nationhood could be achieved in a multicultural community. The issue of rights which was discussed in this chapter will also form an essential aspect of Gyekye's notion of metanationality. In order to achieve the kind of nationhood which he proposes, Gyekye advocates the principle of metanationality. The concept of metanationality transcends the notion of ethnicity and concentrates on nation building.

Factors, such as national culture and identity with particular reference to language, are factors which could motivate members to work towards common interests. These factors will be discussed in chapter five. Also, members would be able to identify with the metanational state if they are in the position to participate in the national culture.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: TOWARDS NATIONHOOD**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Nationhood, according to Gyekye (1997:83), is a normative concept that describes a desired level of ideal political arrangement, which embodies ideal or satisfactory human relationships. When applied to a multicultural community, such as Nigeria, nationhood is achieved when the considerations of the common interests or the collective good of the members of the nation-state become the basis for the unity, cohesion, solidarity and commitment of the members. The social and moral attitudes of members of various "ethnic" communities towards one another ought to be positive and conducive to the promotion and maintenance of good neighbourly relationships.

In this chapter, I will firstly examine the socio-political situation in Nigeria with regard to specific problems confronting Nigeria. Secondly, I will give a detailed exposition of Gyekye's idea of nationhood and how this can be achieved. In this regard, I will consider the following: how nationhood is pursued; the nature of the nation-state; the principle of metanationality and its objectives. Finally, I will establish whether the problems Nigeria faces are addressed by Gyekye's communitarian ethics.

### **4.2 SOCIO-POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN NIGERIA**

Nigeria is a highly populated country. It is blessed with both human resources and natural resources. Its individual members are endowed with different kinds of talents. The talents of its members are manifested in various ways, such as crafts, music, trade, painting, entertainment and sports. Nigeria is also blessed with many professionals in the natural sciences, social sciences, cultural sciences, legal sciences and management sciences. Nigeria is known for its production of oil. There are many oil refineries in Nigeria and it exports oil to many countries in the world. The most popular oil refineries are found in Ogoni in the Rivers state and in Warri in the Bendel state. Apart from oil, Nigeria produces other products, such as cement, tin and timber. It lacks neither human resources nor natural resources. But in spite of all these positive characteristics, Nigeria experiences socio-political and economic crises.

The main problem that confronts Nigeria is how to build a nation-state that will serve the interest of all its members. Nepotism and unfair discrimination are experienced at different levels in government. Those who occupy important positions in government are chosen based on secondary factors, such as ethnicity and religion, rather than merit, experience and ability to deliver. Accordingly, people are not given equal opportunity. Often posts are not occupied by members based on merit, experience and ability to deliver. This kind of practice can be found in government at the national level. If the seat of presidency is occupied by a candidate who is originally from Hausa, for instance, it could be

seen as an opportunity for the Hausas to occupy the important positions in the government. A person who is elected to the seat of presidency could consider his<sup>32</sup> post as an opportunity to promote the quality of lives of members of his "ethnic" or religious group. The person makes sure that members of his "ethnic" or religious group do not lack facilities, such as good schools, water, electricity, good roads and hospitals. Accordingly, each of the groups would fight hard to make sure that someone from that particular "ethnic" or religious group occupies the seat of presidency.

It is rare for a president to come from the minority groups, such as Ogoni. These minority groups are marginalised and their members are often unfairly discriminated against. It is also difficult to find members of the minority groups who occupy important positions in government for the mere reason that they do not come from the same group or that they do not practice the same faith which those individuals who occupy the seat of presidency and deputy presidency exercise. Accordingly, members of the nation-state are, often, not given equal opportunity. This kind of attitude takes place not only at the national level, but also at other levels, such as individual states level.

A typical example of a situation where a minority group is being marginalised is that of the Ogonis. The Ogonis inhabit part of the Rivers state. Nigeria's biggest oil refinery is built in Ogoni. The famous human

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<sup>32</sup> I use the pronoun "he" and the possessive pronoun "his" for a specific reason. Females never had the opportunity to occupy the seat of presidency or the deputy presidency.

rights activist, Ken Sarawiva, comes from Ogoni. Ken Sarawiva was assassinated while fighting for the rights of the people of Ogoni. The substantial part of the economy of the 'nation' is being generated in this small community. Could you imagine the amount of pollution that takes place in this area due to the oil refinery? The life of the members of this minority group is being endangered due to the high level of pollution. The National government is mainly concerned with the money that is being generated in this area. Due to this tendency members of this group are being neglected.

Members of one group perceive, though not necessarily always the case, members of other groups as enemies. The civil war in Nigeria, which is popularly known as the "Biafran war", took place, *inter alia*, as a result of such perception. Also, some of the ethno-cultural groups, especially the Igbos felt marginalised at the hands of the Hausas. A lot of tensions existed between the Igbos and the Hausa. The Igbos intended to be independent and accordingly, able to govern themselves. The Yorubas were also involved in the war. The influence of the minority groups was not really felt during the war due to their small population. The civil war had and still has a negative impact on the kind of relationships that exist among members of the nation-state. The tensions, which are manifested in the various spheres of life, continue to exist. In the light of this situation, Nigeria is confronted with the problem of how to achieve nationhood. Nation-building tends to favour certain groups and specific individuals to the detriment of others. Consequently, the

economy of the nation-state is not adequately utilized.

### **4.3 NATIONHOOD: A PROBLEM IN NIGERIA**

In developing his ideas on communitarian ethics and nationhood, Gyekye focusses on multicultural communities in Africa. Gyekye (1997: xii) makes it clear that he made the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, rather than a particular community, the focus of his research. I will concentrate on Nigeria because it is a good example of a multicultural community with diverse ethno-cultural and linguistic groups. It is my contention that Gyekye's views on nationhood and his concept of metanationality are relevant to the problems in Nigeria. I will thus give a critical analysis of Gyekye's ideas of communitarian ethics and nationhood with the aim of establishing the relevance of his ideas to the Nigerian situation.

### **4.4 IN PURSUIT OF NATIONHOOD**

In this part of my work, I will consider how nationhood could be achieved in a multicultural community. In order to understand the idea of nationhood<sup>33</sup>, as used here, I will consider the various ways in which the term nation is used. Also, I will consider the idea of nation-building, the normative idea of nationhood and steps in achieving nation-building.

#### **4.4.1 Gyekye's understanding of the term nation**

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<sup>33</sup> The concept nationhood, as it applies here, refers to a desired level of ideal political arrangement embodying the ideal of satisfactory human relationships.

Nation can be understood in its primary sense and in its secondary sense. In its primary sense, a nation is considered as an ethno-cultural community. Some thinkers such as Herder (1965:324ff) contend that the primary use of nation is a natural one in the sense that members constitute one vastly extended family; for the reason that they relate to one another by blood. For him nation is considered as a blood related group. By this he means that members of a nation, in its primary sense, share common ancestry ties. Herder's explanation of the primary notion of nation could be criticised based on the following reasons. It is too narrow, including only people who are related by blood. Some factors, such as inter-marriage and affiliation with a group can result in a situation where all the members of the group are not related by blood. Gyekye argues that Herder's view on the original idea of nation does not make sense. Basing the idea of nation on blood-related factors "is more a matter of feeling or belief than of historical or genealogical fact;..." (Gyekye 1997:79). Strictly speaking, it is difficult to find any ethno-cultural or linguistic group that can boast of having common consanguinity. At least some members, due to reasons such as inter-tribal marriages and individuals relocating from one place to another, may not share common ancestry ties.

For Gyekye, in its primary or original sense, nation is considered to refer to a group or community of people who not only share a common culture, language, history and possibly a territory but who also believe that they hail from a common ancestral background and therefore closely related

by kinship ties. It does not necessarily mean that the people are related by blood. In the first place, the people are considered to share something in common for the reason that they share a common history and language. For instance each of the ethnic groups in Nigeria share a common language and history. Secondly, the notion that they share common ancestry ties is a matter of feeling or belief. "But whether members of a nation share kinship or blood ties or not", for Gyekye, "it would be correct to assert that relations between them are characterized by the ethos of cohesion, solidarity, fellow-feeling, and mutual recognition, sympathy, and understanding" (1997:79). This is the idea of nation Gyekye sets out to achieve in his idea of nationhood. It makes for "sharing, solidarity, interdependence, commitment to the cause of the nation, and sensitivity and responsiveness to the interests of fellow members of the nation..." (1997:81).

For Gyekye,  $N_1$  stands for the original or primary conception of nation; that is, nation as an ethno-cultural community. Applying this to the Nigerian situation, it means that the various ethno-cultural communities, such as Babur-Bura, Efik, Isoko, Uneme, Fulani, Gwari, Bangawa, Igala, Nupe, Ijebu, Urhobo, Tiv, Ogoni, Ikwere, Ibani, Okrika, Hausa, Jukun, Kuteb, Yoruba and Igbo form respective nations. There are over 300 nations in Nigeria.

In its secondary sense, the notion of nation is used to refer to the



multinational state<sup>34</sup>. This stands for a “complex, ethnically and culturally plural political communities” (Gyekye 1997:81), such as Nigeria. The various ethno-cultural and linguistic groups (that is, nations in the primary sense) merge to form the idea of nation in its secondary sense. The secondary idea of nation is complex in form. In Nigeria the 350 ethnic groups constitute nation (that is, a multinational state). Gyekye uses N<sub>2</sub> to refer to a multinational state.

From the above, one could infer that each of the ethnic groups is a nation in the sense that each of them is occupied by a group of people who share a common culture, language, history and a common ancestral background. Gyekye (1997:83) holds that although these ethnic groups merge to form the multinational state, they remain “subnations” or “subnationalities”. This means that they do not automatically lose their characteristics as nations.<sup>35</sup>

There are two problems facing the multinational state in its complex form. Firstly, though the multinational state is made up of several ethnic groups (that is, nations in the original sense), “it nevertheless at once lacks the virtues or the essential characteristics of a nation in its original sense” (Gyekye 1997:79). A nation in its original sense is characterised by essential features, such as an ethos of cohesion, solidarity, fellow-feeling and mutual recognition. Nigeria as a multicultural community

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<sup>34</sup> ‘State’ in the sense used here is extensive for the reason that it is almost invariably multiethnic, multinational, multilingual and multicultural.

<sup>35</sup> Here I refer to nation in its original or primary sense.

lacks most of these virtues. The second problem has to do with how to weld the constituent nations (in their original sense) into a whole, in such a way that the multinational state (that is, the secondary concept of nation) will emerge as a genuine amalgam of several nations<sup>36</sup>; thereby taking on the features of the latter. These problems will be addressed in an attempt to discuss nation-building and how to pursue nationhood.

#### **4.4.2 Building a nation**

The term nation is used here in its secondary sense. My contention is that nation-building<sup>37</sup> is essential for the achievement of nationhood. It will bring about cohesiveness, mutual recognition of members and fellow-feeling. Also it results in a sense of fairness in the distribution of resources and burdens of the state, in such a way that members of the constituent groups will feel accepted and fairly treated. Members of the various 350 ethnic groups that constitute the Republic of Nigeria may then find reason to believe that they are equal and as such demand equal treatment.

Nation-building is necessary where various parts merge to form a whole. In this sense, the various ethno-cultural parts constitute what is called Nigeria. Nation-building, in this context, applies to Nigeria as a

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<sup>36</sup> In this context, I use the term nation in its primary sense to mean the same as ethnic group.

<sup>37</sup> Here nation refers to multinational state.

multinational state. It means establishing among members of various groups, that constitute the state, a sense of unity, cohesion, solidarity and common cause.

The issue which I will consider is how to build a multinational state in such a manner that it becomes analogue of nation in its original sense; by manifesting and depicting elements of cohesiveness, solidarity and fellow-feeling. "Becoming an analogue of" nation in its original sense, "is the telos of the pursuit of nationhood" (Gyekye 1997:87). The essence of this is to develop a modern state in a culturally plural setting where every member is considered, "irrespective of the family, clan, or communocultural group into which she happens to have been born, as an individual of intrinsic moral worth and dignity, with a claim on others to respect her" (Gyekye 1997: 103). I maintain that it is problematic to build this kind of nation, especially when it has to do with a heterogenous community, such as Nigeria. Many factors, such as cultural and linguistic diversities are obstacles to the nation-building. Issues, such as cultural dominance, ethno-cultural conflicts and tensions, strong ethnic affiliation, and competing languages and elements of the various cultures that will form part of the national culture also make nation-building a difficult one.

In order to tackle this difficult task, I will give some philosophical considerations to the following points; collective good and common interests, social mobility, policy of decentralization, social and moral

attitudes of members, dignity of members, and cultural and political equality.

#### *4.4.2.1 Mutual interests among members*

A multinational state, such as Nigeria, is by its form a culturally plural society. This constitutes one of the essential features of a multinational state. The reason being that it is constituted by various cultural groups, each with its own cultural and socio-political values. A multinational state faces cultural diversity. As such, cultural homogeneity is not considered an intrinsic feature of the multinational society.<sup>38</sup> The merging of various cultural groups to form a multinational state does not result in an automatic disappearance of the cultural values that underlie each of these groups. The reality is that the cultures of these groups remain real even after the new state is formed. This is one of the issues that makes nation-building in a multinational state problematic. Gyekye's ideal of a multinational society may point to cultural pluralism in the sense that the elements of the various cultures still remain the same.

However, cultural pluralism does not necessarily preclude the possibility of horizontal relationships, inter-dependence and fruitful interactions among members of the various ethno-cultural groups that constitute the

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<sup>38</sup> Rather, cultural homogeneity is an outstanding characteristic of an ethno-cultural (monocultural) community.

state.<sup>39</sup> Members may have reasons to establish good relationships among themselves, realizing that they need one another in order to achieve their goals. In order to live in peace and harmony, members ought to appreciate and respect one another.

In order to establish good relationships and inter-dependence among members, Gyekye holds that the new multinational state must find ways of creating a sense of cultural belonging or identity in all its members without exception. An important way of doing this is by creating a sense of mutuality and common interests; which help in establishing cohesion, unity and fellow-feeling. Gyekye (1997:89) maintains:

.... it can be said that, despite the ethno-cultural plurality of the modern state, consideration of the common interests or the collective good of the citizens of the nation-state can be the basis for the unity, cohesion, solidarity, and commitment of the citizens<sup>40</sup>. Natural sentiments of loyalty and communal identities and consciousness that characterize the socio ethical thought and action of the members of the single ethno cultural community ought to feature prominently in the thought and action of the citizens of the multinational state.

Following the logic of Gyekye's argument, the question could be asked

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<sup>39</sup> The term state, in this context, refers specifically to a multinational state.

<sup>40</sup> The term citizen can be used to mean different things for different people considering the circumstances in which it is used. For instance, it can be given a political connotation in which case it is applied technically; which differs from country to country. Here, I will use the term 'citizen' to mean the same as 'member'.

why members of a multinational state consider it necessary to work towards a common interest. Members of a particular ethnic group may consider others as strangers for the fact that, culturally speaking, they do not have anything in common. Members may believe that they only have something in common with those from the same group. The fact that people from one group believe that they do not have anything in common with members of other groups could contribute to strong 'ethnic' affiliation and tensions among members of various groups.

To achieve a sense of mutuality among members of a multinational state, strong motivational factors have to be developed and proper arguments have to be advanced in this regard. The kind of natural sentiments of loyalties and communal identities among members of a multinational state, which Gyekye is talking about, becomes possible if there are sound and reasonable factors to motivate members.

#### *4.4.2.2 Social mobility*

The ethno-culturally plural nature of multinational states, such as Nigeria, suggests the possibility of socio-cultural division among members of various groups that constitute the states. Members tend to cling to the socio-political and cultural values of their respective ethnic groups. Another danger is strong ethnic affiliation which, if not checked, may result in neglecting the affairs and interests of the nation-state. Also, if the question of strong ethnic affiliation is not reconsidered, this

can effect the socio-political relationships among members of the nation-state at the national level.

The practice of strong 'ethnic' affiliation could result in 'favouritism' or 'preferential treatment', whereby all members are not given equal consideration and opportunities. Ethno-cultural background and ancestral ties, rather than merit, credentials and achievements, are considered the determinant factors for job opportunity, occupation of public and political offices, and educational awards, etc. Where the socio-economic and political behaviour of the governing body tends to be selective and based on group solidarity, disappointment and frustrations may start to well up among members who are affected negatively. Consequently, this can result in the disintegration of social relationships and loss of trust in the policies of the government. For Gyekye (1997:84):

.... the lack of fairness in the distribution of the resources and burdens of the state, which is the function of governmental authority and policy, for instance, is, in my view, a major causal factor in the disintegrative politics of many a nation-state, because it directly and deeply affects the economic, and ultimately, political welfare of the members of the constituent groups of the state who may feel cheated and unfairly treated. Citizens so treated are made to feel that they do not belong to the new state; nor is their future prosperity guaranteed by the new socio political dispensation.

Considering the level of unfairness, as regards the distribution of resources and offering of opportunity, achievement of nationhood may

become questionable and far-fetched. In order to address the issue of how to achieve nationhood, the notion of social mobility should be given serious consideration at a multinational level.

The point here is that multinational states, such as Nigeria, would be characterized by social mobility to enable members to have a sense of inter-dependence and to feel bound to one another based on the fact that they need one another to achieve their interests and realize national development, rather than strict ethnic considerations. Social mobility could promote cordial and sound relationships among members of multinational states and motivate them to work together in harmony for the achievement of common goals.

Apart from cordial and sound relationships that could be established among members, the notion of social mobility could lead to the creation of an open and democratic society. Another outcome of social mobility is that members are treated equally and equal opportunities are given to them based on qualification. In this way members will be able to express themselves and contribute positively.

Considering the "plural nature of the multinational state" (Gyekye 1997:89), it is essential, for the enhancement of fairness and equality among members, to make the multinational state an open society . The outcome of such practice is that the treatment given to members will not be based on ethno-cultural affiliation. Gyekye (1997:89), in his description of such society, writes:



...a society that insures the equal rights of all the citizens; a society that cherishes not only open government and public accountability but also consensual politics - the politics of participation, accommodation, and compromise to which every citizen can contribute.

In order to sustain the spirit of social mobility among members of the multinational state, the task of governing the state should not be left in the hands of the dominant groups. Rather political power should be shared 'equitably' among the constituent group communities that make up the "nation-state".

#### *4.4.2.3 Political power to be shared equitably*

Proper sharing of political power in a multinational state will help in sustaining a sense of belonging and a spirit of participation among members. It creates socio-political balance and combats group dominance by allowing the various groups to take part in making major decisions that concern them. Proper sharing of political power in a multinational state also makes it possible for various groups to participate actively in policy making and in directing the affairs of the state. The legal and political system of the multinational state could be drafted in such a way that the important political offices at the national level such as the presidency and deputy presidency, senates and other political authorities rotate among the various groups. "In time", according to Gyekye, "the highest political office of the state will have been held by persons from all the various groups of the multinational

state" (1997:90).

The argument advanced by Gyekye, concerning sharing political power among the constituent groups, is that such "political dispensation will be a potent factor in promoting a sense of belonging and relationships of mutual trust, recognition, and respect among the component groups of the multiethnic state and will, thus, greatly help to maintain its integrity" (1997:90).

The idea of sharing national duties and rotating important political offices among the constituent groups will enhance nation-building and the achievement of nationhood. This is because members of the minority ethnic groups will also benefit from the national resources. They will be properly represented in government and their needs and interests will be addressed. All groups will have the opportunity to contribute towards the future of the 'nation-state' through important decision making and policies. None of the groups, by virtue of size, population, and cultural superiority, is more important than others in deciding the socio-political life of the nation-state. In the same way, members of one group should not be considered more important than others because of their ethnic affiliation. All the members of the nation-state are equal and important and ought to be treated as such. For instance, the Igbos, Yorubas or Hausas should not be considered more important than the Ogonis, Orons, Efiks, Dandawas, Ijebus, Koros, Youms, Ekpeyes, Ikwerres and the Nembes. "All members of the state will have to be made to feel that they are equal citizens and are politically important and relevant"

(Gyekye 1997:90).

The idea of "shared power", in the context used here, poses the following problem: it will be too tedious to apply this concept in the Nigerian situation where there are over three hundred ethnic groups. Empirically speaking, it is unrealistic to consider each of the ethnic groups, in order to determine whether each qualifies to nominate candidates who will represent them at the national level. What factors will play an important role here and how do we determine them? Using the idea of shared power as a solution to the problem of shared power could be tedious bearing in mind the number of ethnic groups in Nigeria. However, the fact that shared power could be tedious in the Nigerian context is not good enough a reason why it cannot be applied. An alternative approach is the policy of decentralization.

#### *4.4.2.4 The policy of decentralization*

Here I am considering how Gyekye's notion of decentralization could assist in achieving nationhood. Decentralization is an important factor for the promotion of democracy and the enhancement of nation-building in a multinational state. By democracy I mean the kind of political dispensation where all members of the nation-state will, through a representative type of government, have a say in the ruling of the 'nation'. The interests of the people will, accordingly, be served.

I favour democracy by way of consensus and deliberation, though this kind of democracy might prove problematic due to population. Democracy by way of consensus could be adequate where the population of a community is relatively small. However, it could be argued that this kind of democracy is impractical because Nigeria is highly populated. A counter argument is as follows: Considering that (1) there are various forms of democracy and (2) technology is now available to exercise 'push button' democracy, it does not hold to argue that democracy by consensus is possible only if the population is small.

Decentralization, as used here, does not mean the same as "power sharing". It does not insist that every ethnic group must have its turn in government at the national level. Decentralization means bringing development to the people at the grass root (that is, local) level. It entails directing the affairs of the nation in such a way that all members, in spite of their ethnic groups of origin, will benefit. For nation-building to be achieved, national development should be pursued equitably and fairly. The notion of decentralization plays an essential role for the achievement of nation-building. The development process at grass-roots level will be directed and implemented by the people through the help of their representatives. The latter will then be accountable to the people who they represent. The representatives of the people will then serve as mediators between the national government and the people whose interests they are meant to represent.

The aim of decentralization is to ensure that the allocation of national resources and projects have horizontal benefits and that it spreads across the board, reaching the whole regions and districts. I maintain that decentralization, in the sense discussed so far, is a necessary factor in promoting good governance and development because of the political and economic consequences that go with it. Decentralization could yield positive results where the state is divided into regions and constituencies that are not 'ethnic oriented'. Members, who do not necessarily share common ancestral ties, may form part of a region or district. The grouping of a nation-state into districts and regions may be based on factors such as geographical location rather than ethnicity.

The dominant ethnic groups could still receive preferential treatment at the expense of the minority ones if the purpose of decentralization is the development of various ethnic groups. It should be borne in mind that the distribution of national resources and allocation of projects that should benefit ethno-cultural communities will still be based on national policies. These policies, in most cases, are drafted by members of dominant groups who occupy important political positions at the national level. Various ethnic communities will not proportionally receive equal amount of development if they are not fairly represented at the national level, where important decisions that concern them are being taken.

#### *4.4.2.5 Social and moral attitudes of members*

Gyekye claims that in the interest of attaining nationhood, social and moral attitudes of members of the constituent ethnic communities towards one another must be positive and conducive to the promotion and maintenance of good neighbourly relationships. Due to strong ethnic affiliation, members of one ethnic community quite often perceive others from different ethnic backgrounds as strangers. The term stranger, as it applies in this context, means “the person who does not belong to your own ethnic group, whether you know him or not....” (Gyekye 1997:91). In this sense, those who belong to the same ethnic community are recognized as the “insiders” while others are seen as the “outsiders”.

My concern is that this kind of attitude, if not addressed, might be transferred to the national level. It might also penetrate into the government where those who belong to a particular community, practice the same faith or speak a particular language acknowledge themselves as “insiders” and others as strangers. This kind of attitude may promote favouritism and could also lead to a situation where job opportunities are based on ethnic affiliation, rather than merit. This kind of attitude may as well lead to national disintegration and may, accordingly, obstruct nation-building. Gyekye (1997:91) makes the following remarks:

Thus, people who are supposed to be fellow citizens, in a new multiethnic state, regard one another as strangers. Attitudes toward the strangers are often not charitable. Fear, distrust, suspicion, and sometimes antipathy are evoked by the presence of the stranger. Can a multinational state be built on the basis of such perceptions of its

citizens? Hardly.

In agreement with Gyekye's view, I contend that a multinational state cannot be built on the basis of the perception of its members which is influenced by strong ethnic affiliation. If nationhood is to be achieved in the ethnically plural state, the attitudes and perceptions of the members about their relationships with others have to change.

The question is: how can this be achieved? In my own view, the perception of members of the nation-state about their relationships with one another could be altered through education. In this context, I use the term "education" to mean the same as the Latin word *educare* which means to lead out of ignorance. However, it could be argued that "education" goes further than *educare*. There is a need to make members aware of the fact they need one another in order to build the nation-state. The emphasis is on how to build a nation-state that will serve the interests of its members. This kind of education considers the need to establish a common national course. The attitude of members to religious beliefs and ethnic affiliation has to be reconsidered. A curriculum should be developed where these issues will be addressed. The curriculum could be drawn up in such a way that it includes part of fundamental subjects and courses that are taught in primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions. This should be made compulsory at schools. In this way, an awareness of how to build the nation-state can be inculcated.

#### 4.4.2.6 *Dignity of members*

According to Gyekye it is essential to respect and acknowledge the dignity of every individual member of the state. Acknowledging the dignity of members serves as an important step towards the achievement of nationhood. Every member ought to be treated with respect. Advancing his argument, Gyekye (1997:91) writes:

Every human being, irrespective of her cultural background or status in society, does entertain feelings of dignity and self-respect and expects members of the wider society to acknowledge and respect those feelings.

The moral undertone in relation to human dignity, according to Gyekye, is that every person without exception is a child of "God"<sup>41</sup>. According to Gyekye the concepts of human dignity and moral worth are attributed to every human person. His argument is that every human being is a creature of "God". Accordingly, everybody has to be treated equally.

Gyekye based his notion of human dignity on the idea that everybody is a child of "God". My questions are: what happens to human dignity if one does not believe in "God"? Does it mean that those persons who doubt the existence of God cannot be endowed with human dignity? Gyekye's idea of human dignity hangs in the air.

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<sup>41</sup> Gyekye does not explain what he means by "God". He also fails to explain why he writes the word "God" in capital letters. He takes for granted that all people believe in "God" and thus exposes himself to criticism.



Members could be treated equally if it is accepted that they share in human dignity. If members of the nation-state feel secured and accepted, they will be able to contribute positively towards the growth and development of the society. Individual values and interests must be respected. They should be encouraged and supported when it is necessary. To recognize that members are endowed with human dignity, it is essential to provide them with the basic material needs, such as shelter and food and moral needs, such as freedom of choice, emotional comfort, security, happiness, appreciation of their persons and the right not to be discriminated against. Both sides of the coin are equally vital. In this regard, Gyekye (1997:91) writes:

Members of a component group may be able, legally, to share in the economic benefits that accrue to the state; yet, if they have reason to feel that their dignity is constantly lacerated because of their membership in a particular ethnic or cultural group, the assault on their sense of dignity will derogate from their sentiments of fully belonging to or being part of the state.

One way in which members could feel secured and protected is by making basic material needs available to them. Material needs are thus important in the consideration of human dignity. The state, through various institutions, should develop policies through which provisions are made for its members who lack the basic needs, such as food, clothes and shelter. The state, through its policies, should also make provision for its members who are disadvantaged because of their 'ethnic' or

religious affiliation.

#### *4.4.2.7 Cultural and political equality*

In the context of Nigeria, the question of whether all the constituent ethno-cultural groups are equal and demand, therefore, equal treatment is just a rhetorical question because the empirical situation in Nigeria affirms substantive inequality. It is one thing to claim equality of cultures but it is quite another matter to treat cultures equally. There is always the tendency for members of one cultural group to claim cultural and political superiority and to look down on other cultures. Gyekye (1997:92) argues that:

the most daunting, intractable, and resilient problem in the attempt concretely to realize the concept of nationhood arises from the fact that any form of nation-building - any attempt towards nationhood - however well-intentioned, will unavoidably privilege one ethno cultural group or certain ethno cultural groups over others. This privileging will derive from, or rather will be connected with, the numerical, cultural, or political superiority or dominance of one group or certain groups.

Applying this to Nigeria, majority ethno-cultural groups, such as Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, claim political and cultural superiority over other cultural groups. Such domineering attitudes create socio-political tension among the various ethnic groups. For their 'assumed superiority', these three ethno-cultural groups are favoured economically and politically

more than others. In my view, the majority of ethno-cultural groups are often given undue preferential treatment. For example, when the constituent assembly was drafting the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, one of the issues that was deliberated upon was that the seat of presidency would be rotating among the Hausas, Yorubas and Igbos. Although the issue of rotating the seat of presidency among the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbos does not form part of the final Constitution, the empirical situation in Nigeria points to the fact that the three ethno-cultural groups enjoy political dominance. The privileging of few ethno-cultural communities will inevitably result in ethno-cultural conflicts and tensions.

My argument is that de-emphasizing ethnicity is essential for the achievement of national unity and for the sustenance of national growth and development. However, such a view does not entail that cultures of the various groups and their philosophies should be abandoned. Rather, cultures of the various groups should be maintained inasmuch as they help towards the realization of national growth. For instance, a particular cultural community that is known for its work of arts and crafts ought to be supported. Also individuals with talents, such as clay pot-crafting, need to be encouraged and sponsored because the output of their talents will eventually benefit the entire nation.

One of the major problems that confront multicultural communities in Africa, with particular reference to Nigeria, is how to realize a nationhood

that is all-encompassing. It is a big task to achieve the kind of nationhood that Gyekye proposes in a multicultural state, such as Nigeria. The composition of these communities is a complex one. To tackle this problem, Gyekye proposes a new form of nation-state, which would serve the benefit of all its members. Gyekye's new concept of nation-state points to the concept of metanationality which makes the achievement of nationhood realizable. In the remaining part of this chapter I will focus on this new concept of nation-state.

## **4.5 THE NATURE OF NATION-STATE**

### **4.5.1 Introduction**

In this section, I will consider Gyekye's views on the nature of the nation-state, as regards the concept of metanationality. It is necessary to point out, *ab initio*, that Gyekye's new form of nation-state, that is represented in his construct of metanational state, is considered an *ideal state*. It is a theoretical or hypothetical construct. I will assess the impact of the concept of ethnicity on nation-building, national unity and integration. In order to give a proper assessment of the impact of ethnicity on nationhood, I will give an analysis of the term ethnicity. I will examine Gyekye's theory of metanationality that maintains that individuals, not the various ethnic groups, form the integral unit in the composition of the multinational state. At the beginning of his deliberations on the new conception of the nature of the nation-state,

Gyekye (1997:96) comments:

Toward the attainment of nationhood, I wish also to put forward a new philosophy or conception of the nature of the multinational state. The background, as well as the impulse, to this new philosophy is sociological/historical as well as normative. With respect to the sociological/historical background, I intend to look closely at the notion of common ancestry, a notion that has been proposed as the basis of ethnicity: ethnic membership, identities, loyalties, and so forth. With respect to the normative, I argue that it is the individual, worthy of dignity and respect, not the ethnic group, who ought to be considered the fundamental or primary unit in the composition of the multinational state.

Considering Gyekye's line of thought, it could be inferred that the concept of the nation-state that Gyekye intends to develop is based on the notion that members of the nation-state are considered to be equal and that together they form the integral components of the nation-state. His views on the nation-state transcend, therefore, the notion of ethnicity.

#### **4.5.2 Ethnicity and its implications**

Gyekye points out that most social scientists and theorists, such as Max Weber, David Miller and George de Vos claim that members of an ethnic group share a common ancestry and can trace their lineage to one ancestor. Their understanding of the term ethnicity is influenced by the

assumption that ethnic group refers to a society constituted by people with a common descent. The essential element which underpins the theory of ethnicity is, therefore, a belief in a “common ancestry”.

The claim that ethnicity essentially involves a belief in a common ancestry and origin is misleading, obscure and incoherent. In order to show that the assertion that ethnicity is based on a common ancestry is distorted, I will consider the etymology of the term ethnicity, and its historical and social influences.

#### *4.5.2.1 Derivation of the term ethnicity*

The term ethnicity derives from the Greek word *ethnos* which literally means “a number of people living together, company, body of men; nation, people; class of men, cast, tribe” (H.G. Liddle et. al 1968:480). It is not explicitly spelt out that these people must share a common descent or be related to one another by blood for them to live together as a group. Neither does it, by implication, mean that the common ancestry is the only essential factor that underpins the term ethnicity.

People may come to live together due to other reasons, such as a shared history rather than biology or kinship. From the definition of ethnicity, as derived from the word *ethnos*, the term ethnicity does not denote the idea of a birth-group and thus of blood ties.<sup>42</sup> The definition of ethnicity,

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<sup>42</sup> It is important to note that Gyekye draws a distinction between the primary notion of nation and the term ethnicity. “Whereas “nation”...originally (etymologically) connotes the idea of a birth-group and thus of kinship or blood ties, ethnicity has no such connotation” (1997: 97). The term nation in its original sense is derived from the Greek word *genos* which refers to

certainly, connotes factors, such as kinship ties and ancestry descent but it does not, exclusively, denote these factors.

#### *4.5.2.2 Historical and social influences*

Assuming, for argument sake, that common ancestry and blood relatedness, exclusively, characterise the understanding of ethnicity among some social theorists, it could be said that such claim could only apply to the early descendants of an ancestor. Down the line, due to historical and social reasons, and commercial intercourse, other people whose ancestral lineages are traceable to different sources can join the early descendants of a particular group to constitute a wider group. Many factors, such as movement of people to safer communities in the event of war, enslavement of people as a result of wars and their consequent adoption and "inter-ethnic marriages" and cohabitation whereby children are born of parents or partners from different "ethnic groups" can implicate a claim that a group of people who constitute a community share a common ancestry. Based on history or sociological reasons, Gyekye (1997:97) writes:

... the concept of common ancestry cannot be regarded as simple, straightforward, well defined, and easily comprehensible; it is a complex concept. One can trace one's pedigree to some ancestral roots; but these roots may be so ramifying that it would hardly make sense - hardly be justifiable - to claim identity with a particular ethnic group

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kinship or biological ties.

and to give a firm allegiance to it.

It is problematic to claim that an individual belongs to a particular ethnic group based on consanguinity or common ancestral ties. Members of most ethnic communities, due to social and historical factors, do not share the same ancestral roots. It is more reasonable, in this context, to speak of a community of people bound by common objectives, values and aspirations which they share together as a group, rather than intrinsically ancestral ties. For the fact that a group of people are living together and sharing the common cause, they would come to share a sense of a common history and culture. "Considered on objective grounds (in this case, historically), therefore, an individual's historically complex ancestry strictly places him not within one specifiable ethnic group as such, but within several ethnic groups" (Gyekye 1997:98).

Gyekye (1997:100) considers ethnicity as an invention, constructed out of not-well-founded beliefs and assumptions that members of an "ethnic" group are related by kinship ties. Ethnicity essentially or entirely defined in terms of common kinship ties has no strong foundation in historical or genealogical reality. The invention of the term ethnicity is meant to make individual persons know that they share a common ancestry with many others and for this reason belong to a particular "ethnic community". Members of the same group consider themselves brothers and sisters by believing that they are related by blood. Accordingly, an individual person, as a member of an "ethnic" group, is meant to believe that he or she will not be able to choose with which group to identify.



#### 4.5.2.3 *Beyond ethnicity*

Basing ethnicity entirely on kinship ties or consanguinity is misleading and confusing. Historically and socially speaking, it does not make sense to base ethnicity on a common ancestry. A group of people who share the same culture and history may continue to live together because they share common goals and aspirations, rather than the belief that they are tied together by blood. In this way, a person will be able to identify with more than one group if he or she so desires. Also, his or her movement from one cultural group to another will become flexible. For Gyekye, the aim of going beyond ethnicity is to facilitate the pursuit of nationhood and transfer of ethnic affiliation to the larger political community - the multinational state. Then he writes:

Thus, the importance or effect of deconstructing ethnicity is that it lends great support to the efforts towards nation-building by diminishing, if not removing, a historically robust or significant barrier (Gyekye 1997:101).

The notion of a specific "ethnic" identity, where it refers to a large group of people who share a common ancestral bond, is misleading. Such a notion increases loyalties and commitments to particular "ethnic" groups. However, I do not dispute the fact that an individual person belongs to a community of individual human beings. Certainly, individuals do not have to share a common ancestral bond to qualify as members of a cultural community. According to Gyekye (1997:101-102), "(i)ndividuals,

even though they may not have a basis in a common descent, can be bound together by a sense of shared goals, values, and mutual sympathies and understanding". This point leads me to Gyekye's concept of metanationality by which he attempts to transcend the concept of ethnicity.

#### **4.5.3 The concept of metanationality**

Central to Gyekye's notion of the nature of the new nation-state is the concept of metanationality. His notion of metanationality is essential in the discussion of nation-state because it de-emphasizes ethnicity and ethnic affiliation, and focuses on individual human beings as the essential constituents of any community (whether cultural or political). For this reason, metanationality, in Gyekye's view, enhances nation-building and assists in the achievement of nationhood in a multinational state. Gyekye (1997:95) writes:

... the course of nationhood will, I have reason to believe, be very much advanced if the new conception of the nation-state I propose in the next section - based on a philosophy of "metanationality" - is accepted and becomes an integral part of the social and political consciousness and behavior of the citizens of the new state.

In an attempt to achieve nationhood and advance nation-building, a rework of the multinational state as constituted by diverse "ethnic" communities is necessary. The emphasis should shift from "ethnic"

communities to individual members as the essential constituents and the integral components of a nation-state. The conception of nation-state as an aggregate of "ethnic" communities should be discarded and substituted with the conception of the nation-state as a metanational entity<sup>43</sup>. "Nation", as it appears in the term "metanational", refers to an ethno-cultural community. The aim of using "entity" rather than "state" is to draw a distinction between the view that the nation-state is constituted by communocultural groups and the view that it is constituted, primarily, by individual human beings. The characteristic of multinational state as a metanational entity is that members should cooperate as individuals rather than as members of distinct groups. Attention is drawn to the need to appreciate the moral worth and dignity of others rather than the "ethnic" groups to which members belong. The effect of focussing on the individual members rather than on the various "ethnic" groups is that members can be expected to wean themselves totally from particularistic subloyalties and obligations. Also the rights of members not to be discriminated against as a result of their ethno-cultural groups will be combatted. The spirit of interdependence and coexistence is also encouraged. People will be able to live in harmony with one another as individual human beings. Opportunity is given to individuals based on merit rather than their "ethnic" group of origin.

According to Gyekye, metanationality in the context used here "requires

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<sup>43</sup> "By metanational conception of the modern nation-state", Gyekye refers to "a view of the nation-state constituted, not by communocultural groups (or, nations, in the original, first sense of  $N_1$ ), but primarily by individual human beings who happen to share certain cultural and historical experiences with some other human individuals in a given, well-defined territory" (Gyekye 1997:102).

that we consider every citizen of the nation-state, irrespective of the family, clan, or communocultural group into which she happens to have been born, as an individual of intrinsic moral worth and dignity, with a claim on others to respect her" (1997: 103). The dignity of an individual and his or her moral worth, rather than the ethno-cultural group to which he or she belongs, should determine the manner in which he or she is being treated by others.

Gyekye argues that our humanity, not our particular "ethnic" backgrounds, should constitute our fundamental identity. He maintains that this view underpins the conception of the metanational state. Since, as human beings, we do not choose which group to be born into, it is not reasonable for us to be judged based on the group in which we find ourselves. It is morally wrong for a person to be presumed unqualified for a particular job or office simply because he or she is, for example, from the Ogoni cultural group. Gyekye (1997:103) maintains:

Contingency has placed individual human beings into different families, clans, or communocultural groups, but this fact should not detract from the intrinsic moral value of the individual human beings; nor should it be presumed as bearing tags of inferiority, superiority, or special status in society.

This standpoint does not mean that Gyekye rejects the moral values and cultural heritage that underlie each of the groups. However, his aim, in his idea of metanationality, is to de-emphasize group solidarity that is

based on the idea of common ancestral ties. Rather, members should accept one another based on the fact that all of them belong to a common humanity. Relationships between members should be guided by respect for each other as individuals with moral worth.

#### *4.5.3.1 The meaning of metanationality*

In the first place, “(m)etanationality”, in Gyekye’s conception, means “a theory about the composition of the modern state in a culturally plural setting” (1997:103). In this sense, individuals should be considered as essential constituents of the nation-state rather than of diverse ethno-cultural groups. However, the aim is not to whittle down the notions of the common good, mutuality and common interests - which are the principles that underpin the idea of communitarianism. In Gyekye’s view, concentrating on members, instead of “ethnic” groups, as constituents of the state, enhances nation-building by giving each member his or her due and by so doing, promoting the good of the state.

In addition, Gyekye conceives metanationality as “a theory about the moral worth of the individual” (1997:103). But his construct of the moral worth of the individual should be distinguished from the liberal principle of individualism. In this regard Gyekye (1997:103) writes:

It (that is, Gyekye’s construct of moral worth) is to be distinguished from the metaphysical individualism, which sees individuals as self-sufficient beings, not dependent on social relationships for the

realization of their goals and potentials. It is to be distinguished also from moral individualism, the view that it is only the interests of individuals that should form the basis for designing socio-political institutions.

Gyekye's notion of 'rights', in relation to the composition of the modern state, differs from the liberal thinkers' ideas of 'rights'.<sup>44</sup> Gyekye clearly states that the metanational conception of the nation-state "does not deny the fact that the 'individual-self' is dependent on, and is partly constituted by, social relationships, and communal ties; nor does it affirm that only the interests of the individuals should count in designing socio-political institutions, to the detriment of communal interests and goals" (1997:103). This view forms the substance of Gyekye's communitarian ethics.

#### *4.5.3.2 The objective of metanationality*

Metanationality, as conceived by Gyekye, "insists on the just and equal recognition of the moral rights of all the individual members of the nation-state" (1997:103). The concept of metanationality promotes communal interest and goals. In an attempt to show the connection between his notion of equiprimordiality and the concept of metanationality, Gyekye (1997:103) writes:

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<sup>44</sup> Gyekye's aim for proposing moderate communitarianism is to bridge the gap between radical communitarianism and extreme individualism. He appreciates the importance of individual rights and the notion of individual moral worth in the composition of the modern state in a culturally plural setting. But he believes that this should not be done at the expense of communal values, such as a sense of shared goals, shared values and mutual sympathies and understanding which underlie the principle of communitarianism.

But, even though it recognizes the equal worth and dignity of every individual member of the community, metanationality does not necessarily hold that individual rights are invariably to be privileged over communal interests and goals.

However, all things being equal, the objective of metanationality is to create a nation-state where all members, irrespective of their individual “ethnic” groups, will be accepted and appreciated; and where all members will work towards the common good and welfare of the community. By so doing, Gyekye’s idea of “nation-building”, which describes the new concept of nation-state, could be realized.

#### *4.5.3.3 Metanationality and the idea of the common good*

An individual’s “ethnic” insignia is an accidental factor about him or her and accordingly, should not serve as a determining factor about the way he or she is to be treated by others. Rather, factors, such as individual moral worth, personal character and qualifications should influence people’s attitudes toward him or her. People should be given opportunities based on their ability and readiness to contribute toward the common good. A metanational conception of the state is thus essential to promote national integrity and cohesiveness. By so doing, metanationality advances the construction of a cohesive nation-state “in which the interests of one individual would not differ essentially from those of the other individuals” (Gyekye 1997:104).

The notion of metanationality creates structures of mutual understanding among members which are necessary for the integration of the nation-state. The concept of metanationality could then eliminate "ethnic" tensions and conflicts and reduce biases and stereotypes among members. Transfer of "ethnic" subloyalties and commitments to national goals could then become realizable. Members will be able to live together in the spirit of common 'brotherhood' and 'sisterhood'. However, if the terms 'brotherhood' and 'sisterhood' are given a strict interpretation, the preceding sentence becomes problematic in the sense that 'brotherhood' and 'sisterhood' could be explained in relation to blood relatedness. I used the terms 'brotherhood' and 'sisterhood' in their restricted sense to refer to a situation where members of the nation-state appreciate one another in the spirit of communitarianism.

The practical or normative ideal of metanationality<sup>45</sup> is achieved if individual members of the nation-state are able to recognize one another as beings with equal value who deserve equal dignity and respect. Claiming the normative ideal of metanationality Gyekye (1997:104) comments:

... I would claim that it is a normative ideal that is realizable if individuals only recognized that, as citizens of the multinational state, they share certain basic interests and that they have no moral rights

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<sup>45</sup> Gyekye (1997: 104) argues that metanationality is both a theoretical and normative ideal. It is a theoretical principle for the reason that it does not show the character of any contemporary multinational state. However, he maintains that it is also a normative ideal because of its possibility of being practised.



to deny other fellow citizens -who are of equal intrinsic moral worth - goods that they desire for themselves. To suppose that metanationality is impossible of practical realization is to imply that human beings are incapable of recognizing other human beings as of equal value and deserving of equal dignity and respect, and that they are incurably insensitive to the distress of others - implications that, most people would agree, are wrong.

The implication of turning our backs on the kind of nation-state that recognizes individual moral worth and equality of and respect for human dignity is that members will be treated according to non-essential factors, such as ethnicity. In the same vein, members of one group will not be free enough to exercise their capacity for moral virtue and to make important decisions while relating with individuals from other groups.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have shown that in order to achieve nationhood, Gyekye maintains that individual members, rather than ethnic groups, should be considered the essential constituents of the nation-state. Treatment shown to members of the nation-state might not be based on non-essential factors, such as ethnicity. Rather, the nature of treatment given to members would be based on the fact that they form the essential parts of the nation-state. Members would be given equal rights and opportunity.

To achieve nationhood, Gyekye argued for an open and democratic society where the interests of every citizen, irrespective of his or her ethno-cultural background, would be given equal attention; a society in which merit, achievement, and credentials, rather than ethno-cultural background, would be considered the basis for job opportunities; a society in which the idea of the equality of opportunity is appreciated by all; a society that insures the full equal rights of all its members.

I pointed out that according to Gyekye, it is the duty of every member of the nation-state to respect the dignity, the rights and legitimate interests of other members. This means that ethnicity should not be a barrier with respect to social interactions. In this way, members of the nation-state will be able to live in 'unity' and 'harmony' and in the 'spirit of common "brotherhood" and "sisterhood"'. By so doing, members will also be in the position to make positive contributions to the advancement, progress and well-being of the "political community". Gyekye contends that equal recognition of the principle of moral worth and human dignity is essential for the 'nation-state' to function as a "political community". However, the essential question remains: what should serve as the motivating factor(s) for people of different 'cultural backgrounds' to live together in 'peace and harmony'?

A national culture and identity are essential in order to achieve the kind of nationhood which Gyekye defends. A national culture could make it possible for members of the multicultural community to identify

themselves with the metanational state. In chapter five, I will consider how a national culture could be formed in a metanational state.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: ACHIEVING A NATIONAL<sup>46</sup>**

### **CULTURE IN A MULTI-CULTURAL COMMUNITY**

....the need for national integration, national cohesion, and solidarity; the need for having a common perspective on national problems and common approaches to their solution; the need for a people to appreciate the significance and meanings of events taking place in their society; and the need for providing an easily comprehensible interpretation of societal experiences and for eliciting shareable responses and reactions to those experiences. The needs or goals, which indeed are among the desiderata of nationhood, do give rise to the concern for evolving and promoting a national culture (Gyekye 1997:106).

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

For Gyekye, the need for a national culture and identity would be felt more in a multicultural society than in a homogenous society. This is because a multicultural community is constituted by a mixture of communocultural groups while a homogeneous society has a set of cultures that is homogeneous. In this chapter, I will examine Gyekye's view on national culture and identity, with particular reference to Nigeria. Firstly, I will introduce the cultural issues in Nigeria. Secondly, I will consider the following points: (1) the meaning of a national culture; (2) how to develop a national culture; (3) strong and weak sense of the idea

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<sup>46</sup> By the term "national", I mean "nation" in its secondary sense and not in its original sense. It refers to a state which comprises various ethno-cultural groups.

of a unified cultural life; and (4) national identity with particular reference to language.

## **5.2 CULTURAL ISSUES IN NIGERIA**

The issue of achieving a national culture in Nigeria is a challenging one considering the fact that Nigeria is constituted of many cultural groups. However, my view is that achieving a national culture is essential for the realization of national identity and unity. The integral part of a national culture and identity is language. Forming a national language is a *sine qua non* in the achievement of a national culture and identity. This is because I consider language as a vehicle or a medium through which any cultural values are being transmitted or expressed. The main concern is how to form a common national language.

Another issue is that the achievement of national integration and cohesiveness is problematic and difficult without a national culture. I consider a national culture as one of the essential factors that will motivate members of a metanational state into national patriotism instead of "ethnic" subloyalties and commitments. Forming part of the metanational state and taking part in its culture will influence members to work towards national development. By so doing national integration and cohesiveness could be achieved.

Nigeria is highly heterogeneous - culturally and linguistically speaking.

It consists of 350 "ethnic" groups and over 300 linguistic groups. Consequently, the level of "ethnic" affiliation is high. One of the implications of this is tension and division among "ethnic" groups, which continues even at the national level. Forming a national culture is desirable. A national culture and identity should promote and enhance the achievement of national development and common welfare.

Also discrimination against some members of the country (that is, Nigeria) based on their "ethnic" groups of origin and "religious groups" may occur, thereby infringing the rights of members not to be discriminated against. By religious groups, I refer to 'Christianity' and 'Islam'. In most cases, members are not treated equally. Job opportunities and chances of members taking up important offices at national level depend on their religious groups or their "ethnic" groups of origin rather than on merit and qualifications. Members, notwithstanding their religion or "ethnic" groups of origin, should feel accepted if they are given the opportunity to identify themselves with the socio-political and economic values and the culture of the metanational state. Allowing members to take part in a national heritage and to associate themselves with it could entail, though it does not necessarily mean so, giving them equal consideration and protection. Participation of members in the national affairs could enhance transfer of loyalties to the metanational state.

My contention is that transfer of loyalties and commitments could be

possible if awareness of the need for a national culture and heritage is created among members. By so doing, members could realize the need to identify with the culture of the new nation-state.

I wish to point out *ab initio* that Gyekye's aim for proposing a metanational state is not to oppose the necessity of a national culture. A metanational state could be regarded as a state which is constituted essentially by individuals instead of "ethnic" groups. A national culture, at the level of a metanational state, refers to a culture that is beyond the cultures of the various "ethnic" groups (this is what Gyekye refers to as 'nations' in the primary sense). However, a national culture should not necessarily exclude the various cultures. There is no doubt that individual members naturally belong to cultural communities. However, the fact that individual members belong to various cultural communities does not mean that they should be divided by "ethnicity". In fact "ethnic" communities do not mean the same as cultural communities. Accordingly, when I speak of cultural communities, I do not mean "ethnic" groups. For this reason, I maintain that a metanational state comprises a compendium of cultural values which may be attributed to the various groups.

Also, a national culture and identity should not be considered an antithesis of communocultural identities. Gyekye (1997:106) holds that in the metanational state, cultures of various groups might in fact coexist with the future national culture and identity. It means that a national culture and identity is not formed at the expense of

communocultural identities. The cultures of the various groups are not whittled down by the formation of the national culture. Accordingly, the formation of the national culture does not result in the disappearance of the cultures of the various groups.

Emphasizing a national culture and its needs will directly or indirectly lead to de-emphasizing communocultural identities. On the one hand, if the national policy of a metanational state concentrates strictly on how to achieve a national culture and identity, this can result in overlooking the existing cultures and how to develop them. On the other hand, if forming a national culture means incorporating the existing useful cultural values and practices, and developing them to form the essential parts of a national culture, then the realization of a national culture in this sense cannot necessarily amount to the disappearance of communocultural values.

### **5.3 WHAT IS A NATIONAL CULTURE?**

The first issue to be considered here is what makes a culture a national<sup>47</sup> one. In his attempt to define a national culture, Gyekye (1997:107) states:

A national culture, then, is a culture whose meanings have become homogenized and can, thus, be said to be generally shared by all the

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<sup>47</sup> In the context used here, I will use the term "national" to refer to a nation-state; that is, nation in its secondary sense.



citizens of a nation, one whose basic values are cherished by all the citizens and considered as constituting the social context within which the individual citizen perceives herself as an individual with goals, hopes, aspirations, and life projects.

Gyekye maintains that a national culture implies cultural values, practices and experiences which are commonly shared by members of a metanational state as a group. The basic idea is that members of a metanational state would be able to identify with the cultural values and heritage. They might acknowledge the essential elements of the culture and consider them as the products of the members as a group. In this way, members will be able to participate fully in the affairs of the state. By associating themselves with the values and shared meanings that underpin a national culture, members might be in the position to perceive how the society could assist them in achieving their goals and dreams.

A national culture, analysed within the context of metanationality, could be understood as a participatory culture. By this I mean that a national culture could make possible the horizontalization of meanings, outlooks, values, ideas and perspectives among members. By so doing, viable interaction among individual members is encouraged. A national culture, as a participatory culture, opens itself up for recognition and participation by members without exception. Through full participation, members would be able to identify and familiarize themselves with the content of a national culture. The implication of understanding or seeing

a national culture as a participatory culture is that members of the metanational state, irrespective of their communocultural groups of origin, would be able to participate in the development of the national culture. Encouraging members to take part in the development of the national culture is important. By so doing, an awareness of a national culture could be created among members. My view is that national integration and cohesiveness could be enhanced if members took part in the development and promotion of the national culture. Giving members the opportunity to take part in the creation and development of the national culture could result in cultural growth and makes provision for cultural diversity.

#### **5.4 CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

By cultural diversity I mean a manifestation of diverse elements in aspects of a national culture. Cultural diversity refers to a culture that is progressive and flexible. This, in effect, means that elements of those cultures that are elegant need to be developed and accepted as parts of the national culture. Concerning cultural diversity, Gyekye (1997:111) holds:

If ideas of art, science, philosophy, and literature are included - as indeed they are - in the phenomenon of culture, then diversities can hardly be eliminated from a national culture. Thus, it makes no sense to harp on the diversities in the culture of a people.

The only way through which the culture of the metanational state can develop is by improving the various aspects of a national culture through human inventiveness and creativity. Accordingly, the national culture should be dynamic. Individual members of the metanational state would be given the opportunity to improve the elements of the culture by developing new ideas, examining the old ideas and replacing them when necessary, and discarding any aspect of the culture that becomes obsolete. By so doing, the culture of the metanational state could become fruitful and "rich".

For Gyekye (1997:111), cultural diversity can be said to derive from cultural richness and as such has aesthetic merits. He maintains that the pursuit of the values of human inventiveness and creativity in the various areas of culture would invariably result in the emergence of diverse elements in aspects of a national culture. Human creativity and inventiveness are essential for the development of a national culture. Members of the metanational state 'should' feel free to contribute towards the enrichment of a national culture. In order to contribute towards the growth of a national culture, members should feel accepted. For example, in Nigeria individual members might be keen to invent and create new ideas on how to enrich the national culture if they are recognized and accepted irrespective of their "ethnic" groups of origin. They might deem it necessary to improve the elements of the national culture by way of creating new ideas.

It does not necessarily follow that for a national culture to bring about cohesiveness and national integration, it must be free of elements which are dissimilar and distinct. The fact that elements of the culture of a nation are diverse could mean that the culture accommodates the individual members and gives them opportunity to freely express their individual talents. If a culture consists of aspects that are rigid, members could find it difficult to express their personal endowments. The culture of a metanational state 'should', in effect, accommodate new ideas and innovation. Members could, while developing new ideas that possess aesthetic values, think and act independently, but still bearing in mind that their endowments are for the enhancement and development of the national culture. It is an error to hold that for a culture to be national it ought to be free of diverse elements. In this regard, Gyekye (1997:111-112) states:

There are some people, however, who think - erroneously - that the culture of a nation must be free of diverse elements, that for a culture to be national or to be the culture of a nation, the citizens of the nation must wear the same type of dress, cook the same way, eat the same type of food, dance the same way, and so on. It is the existence of same or unified features in the ways of life and thought of the individual citizens from the various communities of the nation that, in the view of such people, justifies the characterization of a set of cultural values and practices of a people as national. This way of characterizing a national culture is, to my mind, misguided and unwarranted.

Gyekye's argument is that a national culture does not necessarily mean cultural uniformity or conformity. If we insist on cultural uniformity, we shall forego a culture that is dynamic and flexible and this is not the object of a metanational state. The question, however, still remains: how is a national culture going to be developed?

## **5.5 HOW TO DEVELOP A NATIONAL CULTURE**

The creation and development of a national culture in a heterogeneous society is a big challenge. The nature of a heterogeneous community makes the achievement of a national culture a complex venture. I will consider two methods through which a national culture could be developed and nurtured. These two methods are: (1) nurturing the existing common elements of the component cultures and (2) developing a national culture that is neutral. I wish to point out that one method does not necessarily exclude the other. Language forms an important aspect of a culture. For this reason, I will also consider how a national language could be formed.

### **5.5.1 Nurturing the existing common elements of the component cultures**

All cultural communities, such as Ibibio, Tangale, Kanuri, Efik, Urhobo, Hausa, Gwari, Yoruba, Bangawa, Baruba, Gbahyi, Egba, Ile-Ife, Osun, Mada, Izon, Tiv, Igbo and Mumuye (all in Nigeria) subscribe to different cultural values, practices, ways of life and heritages. These comprise

material and immaterial aspects of culture. By material aspects of culture I mean cultural practices, such as music, crafts and painting, while immaterial aspects refer to those socio-political and moral values that characterize a cultural community.

A national culture is then achieved by developing the existing common elements of the component cultures. Gyekye (1997: 108) maintains that it is the elegant aspects of the component cultures that should be featured and developed at the national level and with which all the citizens of the nation can identify. Gyekye, in his views on national culture, does not explain the meaning of “elegant aspects of the various cultures”. He also does not explain properly the difference between ‘elegant’ and ‘non-elegant’ cultures.

In my opinion, elegant aspects of the component cultures refer to those parts of the culture that are worthy of respect and which can promote human life. There are various ways in which the elements of various cultures could promote the lives of members of the metanational state. Some aspects of culture can add value to the lives of members by creating cultural consciousness. My understanding of cultural consciousness, in the sense used here, differs from “ethno-cultural consciousness”. Members of the metanational state would then become aware of the national culture and they might willingly identify with it. They might be willing to identify with the national culture based on the fact that the national culture promotes and adds value to their lives.

Members might also like to identify with the national culture because it gives them a sense of belonging. Accordingly, this method of developing a national culture could result in cultural awareness and consciousness. Cultural awareness, in this context, does not promote ethnic affiliation. Rather, it goes beyond ethnicity. Cultural awareness is considered in relation to metanationality.

Also elements of cultures could add value to the economic lives of the people. The Binis, for instance, are known for their sculpturing and wooden hand crafts. This can attract tourists from all over the world. Their works could sell at high prices if they are well promoted and if the people receive adequate sponsorship. The people of Awka in the Anambra state are known for their hand crafts and traditional paintings. The Sulejes in the Niger state are well known for their clay-pot crafting. Many groups in Igbo land are known for their dancing and "story-telling". These aspects of the lives of members of the various groups are important elements of their cultures. The elements of the various cultures need to be preserved and promoted. Aspects of these cultures could be displayed for examination during national and international art exhibitions. Creating awareness of the aspects of the cultures and giving them serious attention could make members to develop interest in them. However, I propose that those aspects of cultures that do not add value to human life, for example the 'osu cast system', should be removed.

Gyekye recognises both the material and the non-material aspects of culture. However, he concerns himself with the material aspects of the

cultures of the various groups with regard to developing a national culture. He maintains that while developing the elegant aspects of diverse cultures to form parts of a national culture, we could “focus only on what may be referred to as the material aspects of cultures, such as music, dancing, sculpture, painting, and crafts” (1997:108). The reason why Gyekye maintains this view is that it is easier to identify the material aspects of diverse cultures than the non-material elements.

In response to Gyekye’s view, I maintain that both what may be referred to as the material and non-material elements of cultures of the various groups should be considered. In my opinion, the immaterial aspects of cultures are part and parcel of the essential elements of peoples’ ways of life. These include practices, such as spoken languages, which assist in characterizing a group of people. The immaterial elements of cultures need be accepted and developed if they should both add value to human life and advance the socio-economic well-being of members.

Since the emphasis is on promoting and developing the elegant parts of the component cultures, the question is: which parts of the cultures should be considered elegant and how can they be identified? It is necessary to distinguish between elegant and non-elegant features of the integral cultures. In order to make such distinction, it is vital to identify criteria that could serve as guiding principles. Gyekye points out that this “will not be an easy way because it will involve selection; and the problem that this procedure will raise relates to the criteria of selection that will be established” (1997:108).



According to me, it is not all aspects of the cultures that both promote human life and advance the social and economic well-being of the entire society. However, some parts of the cultures clearly do this. The expressions of the diverse cultures that promote the social and economic lives of the people should be considered worthy of respect, recognition, development, promotion and as essential and constitutive elements of a national culture. For instance, in Nigeria the people of Bini (originally from Bini Kingdom) are known for their crafts and sculptures. Their works of art have gained both national and international recognition. These are some of the aspects of the diverse cultures that 'should' be recognized and allowed to be featured and developed at the national level and with which all citizens of the metanational state could identify. As regards Bini art, I maintain that it is both the Bini art and cultural consciousness that need to be promoted. I will now consider the second approach to the issue of forming a national culture.

### **5.5.2 Developing a national culture that is neutral**

The second method of forming a national culture is to create and develop a culture that is neutral. This method could supplement the first method discussed above and should not be as an alternative method. It could be difficult to develop a national culture that does not bear traces of aspects of the cultures of the diverse groups. This could mean ignoring the history of the individual members of the metanational state. Consequently, it could have a negative impact on the identity of the

people.

A national culture could be formed and developed by building national institutions, formulating new values and ways of life, creating new symbols and history about the common past, advancing new attitudes, expectations and goals and encouraging interactions among the cultures of various groups. Forming a national culture is an ongoing process and the metanational state could play an essential role through its policies. Such policies and the application thereof might put into consideration the interests of all members and would transcend the local or regional orientations. Gyekye (1997:109) maintains that some of the objectives which are meant to be achieved in the second approach could be realized through formal education. In order to achieve these objectives, it is essential that appropriate curricula and educational policies are structured and designed. Awareness of the new national culture and its elements should be created among students starting at pre-high school education. The nature and elements of the culture which are taught at schools should neither be limited to a particular cultural group nor privilege only some groups. The curricula should concentrate on the importance of social interaction among members and should serve the interests of members. They should, also, concentrate on how to strengthen the relation between the nation-state and its members. By so doing, members of the metanational state might become familiar with the national cultural values and practices.

In order to achieve a national culture, thinkers and intellectuals of the metanational state could play vital roles. They could do this by generating new ideas and conceptions pertaining to the cultural practices and values of the metanational state. They could conduct inquiries and ask unbiased questions on the viability of some of the practices and cultural values that would form part of a national culture. The intellectuals might be able to influence the various aspects of cultures if they are in the position to consider them (that is, the aspects of cultures) without bias. By so doing, they could dispute aspects of various cultures that are unintelligible. They could also formulate and introduce ideas which they believe might favour all and not only the majority groups. Such ideas could be accepted by members of the metanational state based on the fact that the ideas are dynamic and neutral. In this way, such ideas could have substantial impact on the cultural life of the people. Thinkers and intellectuals, who are also members of the metanational state, can deliberate and debate on some of the new ideas. Consequently, they could advance ideas that are more acceptable, which will enhance the promotion of the cultural practices and values. Also, they can engage in arguments and debates on whether the existing practices, ways of life, manners of thought and classifications of values should continue to exist or whether they should be replaced with new ones. For example, the practice of the "osu cast system", where some people are regarded as outcasts because their forefathers were sacrificed to 'gods' is illogical and should be replaced with a practice where all members of the metanational state are given 'equal' acceptance and

protection.

Another issue that needs to be questioned is the attitude of members towards religion, with particular reference to 'Christianity' and 'Islam'. It is a common practice in Nigeria that people show strong loyalties towards and remain more committed to their religion than the "State". Religion, with particular reference to Christianity and Islam, is often considered an integral aspect of peoples' ways of life. In this sense, religion is seen as an aspect of culture that divides members of the metanational state, rather than unites them. For instance, the Hausas are meant to believe that being a committed Muslim is synonymous with being an authentic Hausa. Thus for most Muslims, defending the Islamic faith means defending their cultural heritage as Hausas. The same applies to the Igbos in relation to Christianity. Members of one religious group regard members of other religious groups as enemies. This attitude becomes clear when one considers the manner in which members of one religious group treat members of another religious group.

Tensions between the Hausas and the Igbos, in particular, are based on the belief that their 'cultures' are underpinned by different religious denominations and that these religious denominations are considered to be in opposition to each other. Members of these groups have experienced many bloody wars and serious conflicts as a result of religious differences. Through such wars and fights, many people have lost their lives and many are being rendered homeless. The issue of

group identity that is based on religion needs to be questioned critically. It has caused more harm than good. In fact, I maintain that the advent of Christianity and Islam and the manner in which some members of the various groups apply the teachings of these religions in their lives should be considered one of the serious factors that divide the people of Nigeria. Such an attitude towards religion permeates every aspect of life in Nigeria socially, economically, culturally and most especially politically. My argument is that the value of religion in Nigeria should be reconsidered. The manner in which these religions are received and interpreted should be questioned and revisited. People should be made to understand the harm these religions are causing. Intellectuals could play an important role here by engaging themselves in constant debates on what should be done. Where necessary, a new interpretation of religions should replace the old ones. People should be taught that being Muslim, for instance, is not synonymous with being Hausas. Awareness should be created among members and people should be liberated from what I call, the "destruction of humanity through religious beliefs". In order to develop a metanational state and achieve a national culture and identity, religion should be given a new meaning. This new approach could lead to a situation where the individual members of the metanational state would be able to coexist and work together for the development of the metanational state.

Intellectuals, as members of the metanational state, can contribute significantly towards the achievement of a national culture, which is neutral: they can transcend the limits of their culture and make an

unprejudiced, critical analysis of the system of values and practices, ways of life and beliefs of that culture. By so doing, they can advance conclusions that may either support existing values or suggest revision or amendment to them, or suggest their abandonment and replacement by new ones. In this regard Gyekye (1997:111) maintains:

In the development specifically of national culture, the intellectual or methodological possibility of transcending the limits of one's culture provides the grounds for the belief that the intellectual from a communcultural group would not necessarily anchor his intellectual exertions in his local cultural milieu, but that he<sup>48</sup> would be able to take an intellectual flight onto a higher cultural plateau - the level at which his focus or concerns will be the wider society, that is, the nation.

A national culture cannot be completed without a national language. A national language needs to be given special consideration because it serves as one of the media through which other aspects of the national culture are expressed.

### **5.5.3 Forming a national language**

Language, in its general sense, forms the central aspect of the culture of any group. Language, considered within the context of achieving cultural identity, plays a major role. Also, it depicts the relational or societal aspects of every individual. Speaking a language that is

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<sup>48</sup> Feminists and other schools of thought may accuse Gyekye of discriminating against women because he uses the pronoun "he" while referring to "the intellectual".

intelligible to everybody will enhance relationships among members of the metanational state. Members of any cultural group will be able to speak to one another in the language they will be able to understand. It may be misleading to hold that a cultural group can exist that does not have a particular language as a means of communication. In fact, the coming together of a group of people as members of a particular cultural group presupposes their ability to speak a common language of their own. Gyekye (1997:79) claims:

It is true beyond doubt that wherever a separate language is found there a separate nation exists which has the right to independent charge of its affairs and to govern itself.

Gyekye (1997:81) further argues that “the linguistic homogeneity of the members of the ethno cultural community is perhaps the most outstanding feature” of such community. It creates a sense of independence and autonomy in the minds of the members of a particular cultural group. In this way, members will be able to identify themselves with the community in question. In his attempt to clarify the role of the linguistic homogeneity among members of the “ethno-cultural” community, Gyekye (1997:81) asserts:

It facilitates and fosters interpersonal communication, understanding, and mutual recognition of close ties that generally exist among people who speak the same language. It also forms the basis of unity.

This shows that language plays a major role in realizing some values, such as communal welfare, common good and interrelatedness, which underlie the principle of communitarianism. As such, proper attention should be paid to language. The social character of any cultural community or any group, where a common language is recognised and accepted, is that it advances interpersonal communication, mutual recognition and understanding. I maintain, therefore, that proper attention should be paid to language.

According to Gyekye (1997:93):

(I)t would be necessary for the state to involve itself in deciding which language (or, languages) will be given official support. Giving official support to a language will insure its special status and survival. That language will become the official language of the schools, of the courts, of bureaucracy, of the army and police, of radio and television, and of other public services or organisations.

He maintains that the formation of a language policy, as it concerns a common language, is never an easy task. It is a difficult and challenging task when it comes to choosing a common language that will be used in a particular multicultural community. The question is: what criteria should be applied in deciding the language that will serve as the national language? One view could be that it is preferable to choose a language that is dynamic and accessible in relation to its use in 'literature'. This view appears very promising because it means that the



awareness concerning the language is already there. The issue is, however, that all the languages, in the past, did not receive equal chance and opportunity to develop. This implies that the “developed languages” become more developed, while the “undeveloped languages” remain undeveloped. This could result in a situation where the languages that do not form part of the official languages eventually disappear.

It could be argued that creating a new and “independent language”<sup>49</sup> would be more advantageous. This new language could have some of the elements of all the other languages. As such, it is given a neutral approach. Although this seems promising, it is going to be a difficult task to develop such a language. This does not mean, however, that the idea of creating a “new” national language is not possible. The issue is that it is problematic in the sense that it might result in a more complex situation.

The task of creating a “new” language that contains some of the elements of the various languages is demanding. It could be too expensive for the state to take up this kind of project. Also, developing a new language could be time consuming. Another argument I would like to advance is that it could be extremely difficult to create such a new language, especially where most of the languages spoken by the various cultural groups share no element of similarity in content, meaning and sound. A typical example is where most of the languages, such as Igbo,

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<sup>49</sup> By “independent language”, I mean a language that is autonomous. It is new in the sense that it is different from the existing languages.

Yoruba and Hausa are distinct in meaning, content and sound, and bear independent features.

Another option or suggestion is to create a "neutral language" that has nothing to do with any of the languages of the various cultural groups. It is important to point out that the term "neutral", as used in this context, should not be given a narrow interpretation. In the first place, it connotes a language that is strange or foreign to members of the various groups in relation to their socio-cultural identity. Secondly, it connotes a language that is generally spoken by all the members of the metanational state. Also one can interpret a "neutral" language, in the context used here, to mean a language of the colonizer. In this sense, there is a necessary connection between a "neutral" language and the concept of colonialism. A typical example here is where either English, French or Portuguese is used as an official language in the place of an indigenous language(s). This is the case in most of the "political communities" in Africa where any of those languages (i.e., English, French or Portuguese) serves as the language of the so called 'colonial masters'. I consider these languages important with regard to relationships among members of multicultural communities at the metanational state level. A "neutral" language, such as English can make communication among members of the multicultural community easy. The use of a "neutral" language could assist in achieving national integration if the latter is considered to mean a mere association of individuals. However, accepting a "neutral" language becomes

problematic when national integration and cohesiveness are given deeper consideration. This happens where, for instance, achievement of national integration and national unity, in relation to a national identity, are considered essential. Where a "neutral" language is used as a common national language, the question is: what effect will this kind of policy have on the development of the "indigenous knowledge" in general and the advancement of the aspects of the cultures that are elegant? Choosing a "neutral" language as a common national language could lead to laying more emphasis on the "neutral" language than on the indigenous languages. The latter could become less and less recognized and could eventually disappear.

Neutral languages, such as English, could play a critical role in a multicultural community because they make communication between members of the metanational state and people from other countries easier. The use of a neutral language as means of communication also enhances cordial relationships between members of a community and "outsiders". The use of a neutral language plays a crucial role at the level of international relations, with particular reference to international trade or transaction. Accordingly, those neutral languages could serve as the languages of trade at international level. At the national level, the neutral languages could also enhance relationships among members. For example, English could be used as a means of communication where people from different groups are gathered for the purpose of discussing some issues that concern the general public. However, employing a

neutral language as the *only* national language is problematic because it could hinder the development of national culture and identity. If language is considered a vehicle through which other aspects of a culture are being expressed, the indigenous languages should also be developed.

Although I appreciate the importance of using a neutral language in a multicultural context, this does not mean that less emphasis should be laid on the importance of indigenous languages. Preserving and promoting the indigenous languages is essential for the achievement of national culture and identity. Neglecting indigenous languages could result in the disappearance of important elements of cultures. Accordingly, the use of a neutral language in a metanational state must have a limit. In fact, it is debatable whether a neutral language should at all be considered a common national language. If a common national language is understood in the sense used in this work, then a neutral language will not be able to play the role of a common national language. The aim of forming a common national language is to promote national culture and identity. It is questionable whether a neutral language (that is, a foreign language), serving as a common national language, promotes national culture and identity. Thus, the fact that a neutral language is used in the metanational state does not necessarily imply that it should be considered a national language as regards to achieving national identity.

Forming a 'national identity' does not necessarily suggest that the elements of the cultures of the various groups should be ignored. This could happen if we insist on making a 'foreign language' a common national language. In such case, the 'foreign language' will have a domineering effect on the social and cultural life of the community in question. The test question is whether the 'foreign language' does in any way promote the socio-cultural life of the people concerned.

My argument is not that the languages of the so called 'colonial masters' should disappear. Most of these languages play critical roles in the international arena in relation to political relationships and business transactions. However, an indigenous *lingua franca* also needs to be developed and admitted at the national level. This is essential for guarding and developing indigenous knowledge.

Looking at the various options Gyekye considered in his work *Tradition and Modernity*, it is doubtful if any of them properly addresses the problems that confront Nigeria on how to choose or develop a common national language. Strictly speaking, applying some of the options Gyekye proposes for the Nigerian situation could result in an even more complex situation. In the section to follow, I will make proposals about the constitution of a national language in Nigeria. I will demonstrate why some existing languages could be selected as common national languages.

I propose that some of the indigenous languages must be selected as common national languages. My argument in this regard is based on the principle of assimilation. Based on this principle, some languages in Nigeria have been integrated with others. In the northern part of Nigeria, for example, most of the ethno-cultural groups use Hausa as a means of communication. This occurs, especially where such people are from different ethno-cultural groups and as such, deem it necessary to use a language that would serve their purposes, such as business transactions. Then, in the western part of the country, most of the cultural groups use Yoruba as a means of communication. In the Eastern part of Nigeria, communities generally use Igbo as a means of communication.

There are various reasons why the assimilation of languages occurred in the Nigerian context. Some of these languages, such as Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa are commonly used by the various cultural groups as languages of trade. There is a need for members of different groups to transact business among themselves. Most often, members could not communicate in their various native languages. The solution, then, is to use languages that are understood by most people. It becomes necessary for people from various cultural groups to learn these languages to enable them to carry out their trade.

'Urbanization' accelerates the process of assimilation as regards the use of languages in the Nigerian context. People from different cultural groups move to urban areas in search of "greener Pasture". Most often, movement of members of various groups to urban areas in the country could mean leaving one's cultural group and joining another one. Migrating from one place to another is, to an extent, a common phenomenon in Nigeria. In order to fit into such a place, it is a *sine qua non* for the person to understand the language that is commonly used there. For instance, people from various parts of Nigeria migrate to "Igbo land" where the biggest market in Nigeria is located. Also, often people from various groups move to the Lagos state, which is the biggest commercial city in Nigeria, in order to seek for job opportunities. The language that is commonly spoken in the Lagos state is Yoruba. It is also the language that is spoken on the street. It is, then, essential for the inhabitants of the Lagos state to communicate in Yoruba. Abuja is the current capital territory of Nigeria. There are also job opportunities in this area and consequently, many people tend to move to Abuja. Also Abuja is dominated by the Hausa speaking people. As such, many people who live in Abuja find it necessary to speak Hausa, which is the dominant language there.

In Nigeria, some languages are more developed than others. Some of the languages have different ways of expressing different events and various ways of analysing situations. These languages contain nouns, pronouns, phrases and the like for almost every object or description.

Through the process of adaptation and accommodation, these languages have improved a lot in the past years. Many works of literature have been written in these languages. And many works have been translated from other languages, such as English, into these languages and vice versa. For the reasons stated above, members of most cultural groups find it adequate and beneficial to use the developed languages.

I argue that, while selecting the national languages, it is necessary to select those languages that display some of the characteristics considered above. These languages should be regarded as the national common languages. As regards the government policy on education, the languages that are selected should be taught at schools. It is, however, necessary to point out that the option I propose should not be considered in isolation. It is necessary to allow the so called 'strange' or 'neutral' languages, such as English to continue to exist along with the native languages that are selected as the national common languages. Also, other indigenous languages that do not form part of the common national languages should still be considered part of the important cultural heritage that needs to be preserved.

Following from my discussion on metanationality, the use of indigenous languages should not be seen as a manifestation of ethnicity. Rather, I consider languages as elements of cultures in relation to cultural community and not ethnicity. I thus consider it relevant that indigenous languages, as elegant expressions of cultures, should be promoted and



developed at the national level to assist in creating a national culture and identity.

## **5.6 NATIONAL CULTURE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY**

In my opinion, the existence of diversities at a national culture level does not stand in the way of the formation of a cultural identity at a national level. On the one hand, members of the metanational state would be given the opportunity to express their individual desires and talents within the cultural structure. On the other hand, they would be expected, through their talents and ideas, to contribute towards and participate fully in the development of a national culture. In this way, members could be in the position to add value to the national culture. As such, both public and private aspects of a national culture are directed towards the attainment of common goals - that is, for the development of the metanational state.

Gyekye (1997:112) defines a national cultural identity as follows:

A national cultural identity is defined by a set of values, practices, and outlooks commonly shared by the citizens of the nation. This is the set of values, practices, and outlooks that individuates the culture and makes it the unique culture it is, that the users identify with and acknowledge as theirs, and that others outside the culture also acknowledge as the culture of a particular people.

Here Gyekye deals with the public aspect of a national culture which unifies and integrates the individual members as citizens of "one nation". National identity, in the context used here, "refers to the principles of collective belonging and to the set of characteristics by which a nation can collectively define itself and be distinctly recognized" (Gyekye 1997:113). For instance, the citizens of Nigeria could take part in social and political activities of the country. They could share in the common characteristics that justify their belonging to a single political community irrespective of their religious or "ethnic" groups of origin. Accordingly, they would feel accepted and stand a better ground to contribute positively towards the development of the country. They would also be in the position to transfer their individual loyalties to the metanational state. Emphasis would be on national patriotism instead of subloyalties and "ethnic" affiliation. The characteristics of a national cultural identity include:

...emotional and sedimented sentiments of loyalty and attachment, sentiments that derive from a sense of common history, of sharing a common territory and thus of belonging together, and of a common destiny, future, or goals. These characteristics constitute what is often known as "national character" and hold the citizens together (Gyekye 1997:113).

The idea of a national cultural identity could be considered in relation to the idea of a unified cultural life of members of the metanational state either in its strong sense or in its weak sense.

## **5.7 STRONG AND WEAK SENSE OF THE IDEA OF A UNIFIED CULTURAL LIFE**

In relation to a metanational state, a cultural life could be considered either in its strong sense or in its weak sense. In its strong sense, cultural unity could mean that members of a multicultural community would practice all elements of the culture. By this I mean that they would have common political, moral and religious beliefs, share the same way of dressing, enjoy the same system of values, act and think in the same way. Gyekye (1997:112) writes:

Thus, in terms of the strong sense, if people speak the same language but do not share common religious or political beliefs, they cannot be said to live a culturally unified life; similarly, people who speak the same language, eat the same food and wear the same clothing cannot be said to live a culturally unified life if their religious beliefs, for instance, are different; and so on.

If cultural unity and forming a national culture is understood in this sense, it could result in cultural rigidity and unnecessary uniformity. Then members would be expected to conform to all elements of the culture. If this takes place, it would destroy the object of the metanational state, viz forming and building a national culture that is dynamic. I maintain that the idea of cultural unity in its strict sense is both conceptually and empirically unrealizable. It is neither practical nor logical. Accordingly, I do not accept the idea of a culturally unified life

in a multicultural community.

In its weak sense, cultural unity “does not imply or suggest a monolithic cultural life for a people who live in what may be described as a shared cultural environment” (Gyekye 1997:113). This idea of cultural unity promotes a kind of culture that is dynamic and flexible. It achieves this by allowing individual members the opportunity to participate in developing the various aspects of the culture. It becomes possible for members to engage in the culture critically. Also individual members will be able to express their tastes, feelings, desires and aspirations within the cultural structure. For instance, in the case of Nigeria it does not follow to insist that members should think alike, eat the same kind of food, dress in a particular way, share the same religious, political and moral beliefs before a national culture could be said to exist.

For the idea of cultural unity in a “multicultural community”, such as Nigeria, to make sense, a distinction should be drawn between private and public aspects of the culture. At the public level, on the one hand, it is possible to argue for the homogenization of some aspects of the culture, such as economic, political, legal and social values and practices. However, homogenization in these areas of the culture can only be partial and never complete. This means that the public dimension of a national culture could reflect elements of diversities, though minimal. The public aspect of a culture will present a reliable and abiding support for national unity, cohesion and integration. At the

private level, on the other hand, diversities in the elements of a national culture are noticeable. According to Gyekye (1997:112), aesthetic perceptions, such as styles of dress, tastes in food, and forms of music and dance, would fall into the category of the private aspects of the culture.

Individual differences and individual ways of viewing things make it difficult for the metanational state to achieve a strong sense of cultural unity. Therefore, complete homogenization of all elements of a national culture is unrealistic. In this regard, Gyekye (1997:113) states:

Social stratification, occupational differences, and differences in individual talents, endowments, desires, and aesthetic perceptions insistently constrain the homogenization of particular forms of cultural life even in the same cultural milieu.

## **5.8 CONCLUSION**

I have shown that the development of a national culture is important for the realization of Gyekye's idea of a metanational state. Cultural unity, in its weak sense, is vital because it promotes national integration and cohesiveness. In its weak sense, individual members are given the opportunity to express their differences and contribute positively towards the growth and development of a national culture. My understanding of a national culture is a participatory one in which members participate fully. It is a kind of culture where all the members of the metanational

state can participate in, irrespective of their communocultural groups of origin. This makes transfer of loyalties to the metanational state possible.

I have also argued that language forms an integral part of any cultural community. A common national language is most essential for the formation of a sense of national culture and identity. The emphasis is not on the importance of an official language but on how such a common language will be formed. For instance, the role Kiswahili has played in the development of a national identity in Tanzania is noteworthy. Kiswahili is the language that is generally spoken all over Tanzania and Kenya, though not necessarily by all, as a common national language. My claim is that achieving such a common language is essential for the development of national integration. In comparison with Tanzania, forming a national language may appear more complex and problematic in a country like Nigeria. The question is whether it is really necessary for the members of the metanational state to speak the same language in order to share a common solidarity. Considering the fact that members of the metanational state may come from different cultural backgrounds, the question is: is it possible for members of the multicultural community to live together in peace and harmony without a common language? Some critics may argue that it is not necessary to consider a national language an indispensable factor for the achievement of a metanational state. The possible argument here is that the various languages which are commonly used by members of the metanational

state, by reason of evolution, should be allowed to exist at the national level as the common national languages. This does not necessarily mean that the indigenous languages which do not feature at the national level, on the one hand and the so called 'language of the colonizers', on the other, will disappear.

## 6 SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

In this dissertation, I have given a critical exposition of Gyekye's idea of communitarianism. I have shown how Gyekye's views on communitarianism could help in the understanding of the cultural and socio-political structures of multicultural communities in Africa, with particular reference to Nigeria. I have demonstrated how Gyekye's notion of communitarianism addresses the problems that confront Nigeria, as a multicultural community. I limited the scope of this dissertation to the aspects of Gyekye's views on communitarianism that deal with the realization of personhood, communitarian ethics, achievement of nationhood, the principle of metanationality, and a national culture and identity.

In chapter one, I examined the various socio-political and cultural problems confronting Nigeria. I gave reasons why I chose to give an analysis of Gyekye's views on communitarianism and why I decided to concentrate on Nigeria in particular. My contention was that Gyekye's views on communitarianism address the problems facing Nigeria.

In chapter two I considered Gyekye's views on the realization of personhood. If personhood is wholly defined by the community structure, the view that is defended by both Mbiti and Menkiti, the community will enjoy ontological primacy over its members. This view whittles down the individual's rights and interests. If the realization of personhood entirely



depends on the individual, he or she is then given absolute rights and freedom. This view whittles down the rights of the community. Gyekye, in his views on personhood, attempts to bridge the gap between the two extreme views, that is extreme communitarianism and absolute liberalism. For Gyekye, both the individual and the community play important roles in the realization of personhood. In his idea of equiprimordiality, therefore, Gyekye gives both the individual interests and the interests of the community equal moral standing. As opposed to Mbiti and Menkiti's views, Gyekye's view appreciates the role of individual rights in regulating relationships among members of the multicultural community. Transfer of loyalties and commitments to various "ethnic" groups to the metanational state becomes possible, since members are given the opportunity to make decisions.

In chapter three, I discussed the relationships between the cultural community and its members. I considered the ethical values underpinning Gyekye's idea of communitarian ethics. These values, which include the common good, community of mutuality, ethics of responsibility and inter-dependence among members, are seen as a manifestation of Gyekye's idea of moderate communitarianism. His idea of communitarianism makes it possible for members of a multicultural community to coexist and work towards the common interests. However, the kind of ethics which Gyekye defends in his work *Tradition and Modernity* could be achieved if there are factors that could motivate members of the various groups to live in unity and harmony. Some of

these motivating factors were considered in both chapters four and five.

Gyekye's views on how to achieve nationhood were considered in chapter four. In order to achieve the kind of nationhood where the interests of members of the various groups would be secured and protected, Gyekye proposes that the principle of metanationality should be introduced. In his concept of metanationality, emphasis was placed on individual members rather than "ethnic" groups. The idea of ethnicity was also considered critically. The principle of metanationality addresses the problem of "ethnic" and religious tensions and makes transfer of loyalties possible. The concept of metanationality enhances the relationship among members of the metanational state. Members could appreciate the fact that they form the essential constituents of the metanational state. Accordingly, members could remain committed to the affairs of the metanational state. The problem of discrimination based on factors, such as religion and "ethnicity" was addressed.

In chapter five, I considered how to achieve a national culture and identity. I considered various options. A national culture and identity would promote the relations among members of the metanational state. Members would be able to identify with the metanational state. Accordingly, members would no longer consider the state as an entity to which they have no obligation or duty.

In general, Gyekye's idea of communitarianism addressed the problems that confront Nigeria as a multicultural community. However, I have the

following remarks to make in relation to Gyekye's views. Gyekye's views on the principle of metanationality appear promising. However, these views seem too idealistic. Empirically speaking, it could be difficult to apply the ideas which he developed with regard to the achievement of nationhood in a multicultural community. In his discussions on the principle of metanationality, Gyekye was concerned with developing concepts that, though fascinating, prove problematic as regards a multicultural community, such as Nigeria. For instance, the reality of ethnicity is underestimated by Gyekye. He oversimplified ethnicity as regards his views on nation-building and how to achieve nationhood in multicultural communities.

In his view of communitarianism, Gyekye did not pay enough attention to the development of the economy of the community. The issue of economy, as far as I am concerned, is important when discussing relations among members of the community, on the one hand and the relations between the community and its members, on the other. The economic life of members of a metanational state is an important aspect of their lives and should receive more attention. The economic aspect of peoples' cultural lives should be incorporated into the idea of communitarianism.

In my opinion, Gyekye's solutions to the formation of a national culture, in general, are tenable. However, some of his views on how to form a national common language could be problematic when considered in relation to Nigeria. His views on languages could result in more complications. Gyekye's views on languages and how to form a national common language are not thorough. It seems, by implication, that he did not fully appreciate the importance of language in a metanational state. Too many aspects were taken for granted in his discussions on national language.

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