

## **Value Conflict as the Root Cause of Displacement in Ethiopia: Appropriating Interculturality in the Study of Internal Displacement**

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### **Abstract**

Being induced by both natural and manmade, political, economic, cultural and a host of other factors, internal displacement emerged as a major humanitarian and developmental challenge in the Ethiopian context. In efforts to address the impact of internal displacement there is only a focus on rehabilitation and physical displacement, failing to analyze that value conflict and the failure to evolve a common narrative among cultures are the major causes for internal displacement. Such a scenario presents a platform for revisiting philosophical categories of 'the same' and 'the Other' which are causes for value conflicts among cultures. Throughout history cultures evolved conceptual schemes in order to delineate the place of one's culture and alien cultures in the emblem of human existence. Here 'the same' refers to one's own culture that is qualitatively and primordially refined, whereas 'the other' refers to what is ontologically excluded from the realm of human discourse and everyday relations. One crucial element that needs to be explored with regard to internal displacement is the prospect of intercultural dialogue among different cultures. Such a quest helps to identify analogous structural patterns that could promote dialogue among different cultures and also exposes ethnocentric and centric tendencies that inhibit intercultural communication and hence cause value conflicts.

**Keywords:** Otherness, dialogue, interculturality

### **Introduction**

Recently there is a huge increase in the internal displacement that is taking place in different parts of the world. This had in return impacts on the social, political and economic life of individuals. Since internal displacement is confined within the boundaries of a particular state, attempts to find solutions must be considered within the internal political dynamics. Although the world of globalization is celebrated as the emergence of liberal markets, the dissemination of science and technology and information technology bringing radical transformation, still the same world is also characterized by wars, conflicts, migration and internal displacements in different parts of the world. Internal displacement is primarily characterized by the lack of feasible alternatives to ensuring one's wellbeing, forcing people to move from one area into another within a delimited area. Although it is the study of migration that dominates most intellectual discussions, there is also a need to analyze the causes and impacts of internal displacement from a normative perspective. It has a huge impact on societal life and communal coexistence, thereby "pitting in-migrants against their host populations; disrupting the reproductive cycle in affected populations" (Oucho, 1997, 113) <sup>[27]</sup>. Politically internal displacement upsets and disrupts the peace and tranquility of a state. It also destroys the material foundation of a society by bringing an end to the movement of basic goods and commercial relations. It as such, "tends to grind all forms of economic activity to a sudden halt" (Ibid, 114) <sup>[27]</sup>.

In the African continent, the number of those that are internally displaced largely increased primarily due to manmade causes. This shows that it is the failure to find

lasting political solutions that aggravates internal displacement within the African context. Lack of good governance, failure to institute democratic forms of governance and ethnic conflicts primarily serve as causes of internal displacement in Africa. Like most parts of Africa, internal displacement has always been a part of Ethiopian history. For Kidane, it is violent wars and a disregard for basic human rights that ultimately drive human displacement in Africa. There is a debate as to whether migrants or those who are internally displaced are more vulnerable. This further leads into the question, what type of institutional measures could be taken within the boundaries of a given state to address the impacts of internal displacement. Some contend that migrants need more protection since they have no state to protect them. Others argue that the internally displaced are in need of more help since their respective states might be agents of destruction on the life of the displaced. In between the two extremes, Kidane argues that, "it depends on the circumstances. It is possible that IDPs in certain circumstances may be at a greater danger than refugees who actually manage to escape the country" (Kidane, 2011, 42) <sup>[18]</sup>.

Particularly in the present scenario, large numbers of people are internally displaced in Ethiopia due to several factors. These include natural disasters, ethnic conflicts, search for a better life and lack of policies that answer the needs of the people. Attempts to address the needs of the internally displaced are overshadowed by several factors. First of all, there is much focus on the needs of migrants rather than the internally displaced. Because of this, the internally displaced are not properly integrated into policy frameworks. As a result

of this, serious governmental and non-governmental measures are not usually taken to find lasting solutions to the needs of the internally displaced. Secondly, attempts to find resolutions of the internally displaced are not aimed at either identifying root causes for internal displacement or aimed at finding durable solution. Thirdly, solutions to internal displacement primarily concentrate on the material needs of the internally displaced. There is the assumption that meeting physical needs and providing basic services is a lasting solution. This overlooks the fact that at the heart of internal displacement is the failure to find common values and normative frameworks. As such one needs to study the meeting of different cultures, processes of learning and tools of subjugation used by different cultures in such a process. This helps to promote learning between cultural relations, to broaden cultural boundaries in order to accommodate alien cultures and in the process engage in the reexamination of basic human values. Since one major cause of internal displacement is the value conflict among different cultures, one need to ponder issues such as, how could one integrate different voices into the dominant discourse and culture? What are the different ways in which cultures come into contact with one another? Upon such a contact that is unprecedented in its nature, what are the dominant ways in which one culture responds to another? Do such unprecedented contacts among cultures perpetuate more violence and relations of exclusion; does it furnish an ideal ground for the synthesis and intermixing of different cultures? How do normative presuppositions and views on the place of one's culture in the world of others, dictate the essence of cultural encounters brought forth by internal displacement? And upon the advent of a cultural contact, how is meaningful communication possible among different cultures? Reflecting on such possibilities, paves the way for introducing an exploration of cultural encounters in the study of internal displacement through the perspective of interculturality and intercultural philosophy.

In the first section of the paper, I will discuss some of the major causes of internal displacement and how internal displacement needs to be primarily approached from the perspective of the meeting of different cultures and ways of life (Krstić, 2014) [20]. This is followed by an analysis of the relations between the host and alien cultures being described in philosophical categories of the same and the other, in the second section. This is used to develop the argument that value conflict and lack of a common societal narrative is major cause for internal displacement in Ethiopia. Finally in the third section, I identify certain lessons from intercultural philosophy that could furnish an ideal ground for a mutual dialogue and enlightenment among different cultures.

### **Internal Displacement and the Confluence of Cultures**

Currently in the dynamics of migration, the number of internally displaced people outweighs those that migrate from one nation into another. This shows that internal displacement is a serious developmental and humanitarian challenge. What's problematic here is the fact that whereas intergovernmental institutions exist in order to protect the life of migrants, institutional regulation is lacking in the case of the internally displaced. As a result of this, internally displaced people, "often have to rely on ad hoc arrangements and those non state actors that are willing and are able to assist and, on occasion, protect them" (Weiss and Korn, 2006, xvii) [39]. One peculiar feature of internal displacement is the issue of vulnerability. Without having any protection or legal assistance, the internally displaced are forced to settle in new

areas. People are displaced from their places of habitation and they face troubles in trying to find a new place for settlement. Laws clearly dictating assistance to the internally displaced are missing and "whereas international law entitles refugees to physical security and human rights protection in addition to assistance to offset their other vulnerabilities, no such legal guarantees exist for those who participate in an "exodus within borders" (Ibid, 10) [39]. There is usually a conflict between attempts to help those who are deprived within the boundaries of a state and the need to uphold the sovereignty of the state. Recognizing the precarious conditions of those who are internally displaced, "it is now impossible to have a conversation about armed conflict and humanitarian action without thinking about the challenges posed by those victims who have not crossed an international border" (Ibid, 5) [39].

Internal displacement has serious impacts on a person's psychological well-being. As such its effects are not just limited to the material domain of life and allocation of resources. It leads to dissolution of one's family, causes psychological deprivation and "certainly means an uprooting from an individual's familiar surroundings and cultural environment, along with a loss of social safety-nets and close personal contacts" (Alberto, 1997, 490) [3]. One major factor for internal displacement is environmental destruction. Being particularly aggravated by how we treat our environment, such environmental cause tends to disrupt the natural order. The people cannot live in their original areas since it is not hospitable anymore and they are displaced, "due to natural disasters such as hurricanes, cyclones, and landslides, which render places uninhabitable" (Jayawardhan, 2017, 105) [12]. The internally displaced have a difficulty finding new areas to farm since their rights might be limited by ethnic conflict and the regional conflict in general. This demonstrates that, "the politically inspired inter-ethnic conflicts have triggered population displacements" (Tache and Oba, 2009, 411) [36].

The internally displaced who are settled in new areas, tend to disrupt existing usage of natural resources by over consuming the environment and also disrupting the natural balance between human needs and the ability of natural resources to regenerate over time. This shows that, "resettlement and restoration of economic activities may create intense pressure on natural resources that hosting communities previously depended upon and sustainably used and regenerated for years" (Achieng *et al*, 2014, 24) [1]. It could also create a ground for a conflict for natural resources among the host community and the internally displaced. Although sometimes host communities create conditions for the alien cultures to quickly adopt in new circumstances of life, in most cases relations between host and alien cultures are inhibited by existing cultural stereotypes. Under these conditions, "while some hosting-communities are able to "re-establish or re-align" themselves quickly and allow IDPs resettlement, social cohesion always remain elusive, fragile, tense and more often, marred with suspicion because of tenure insecurity" (Ibid, 27) [1].

Michael J. Schultheis contends that internal displacement existed as a consequence of war and conflict throughout the history of humanity. This testifies to the fact that internal displacement is neither a mere consequence of colonialism nor one of the consequences of processes of globalization. Basically, the internally displaced to Schultheis "are silent witnesses to a global political-economic crisis, manifest by political conflict, declining standards of living and widespread hunger" (Schultheis, 1989, 30) [32]. Internal displacement shows the failure of the government to provide a suitable and

friendly environment for its citizens. In Africa, some issues that complicate attempts to help the internally displaced include lack of institutional protection, conflict prone boundaries drawn by colonial powers and legal provisions not paying sufficient attention to, “groups who flee oppressive economic situations and a form of economic persecution” (Ibid, 9) [32].

Currently within the African context large numbers of people are internally displaced. Although a set of rules being inspired by universal agreements is developed, it still lacks a real power to be practically implemented. Because of this the issue of internal displacement is not formally inducted into the legal systems. “The *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* are widely recognized as the prevailing normative framework for IDPs and while these principles are drawn from binding international law, the Principles themselves are not a legally binding instrument” (Ferris, 2012, 1) [9]. For Ferris, although the needs of minorities and vulnerable groups are emphasized in attempts to address the needs of the internally displaced, even though it’s the genuine efforts of the government that are mostly important. As such, “Governments make a difference” (Ibid, 5) [9].

One regulatory framework for the internally displaced in Africa is *African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa*. The convention gives the mandate of protecting the internally displaced to respective governments. States have a responsibility to provide basic services to their citizens. The convention, “explicitly recognized the link between promoting peace, security, and development on the continent and the need to mitigate the plight of the displaced” (Solomon, 2010, 83) [33]. The states must comply with international laws and must practically institute relief and humanitarian programs. Still, this leads to the question, if the states themselves are responsible for the internally displaced, then how they could be involved in the attempts to find solutions.

For Mehari, lack of good governance and democracy is major cause for internal displacement. Because of this, “conflict, natural, and man-made disasters, or large-scale development projects is often linked to governance deficits” (Mehari, 2017, 9) [24]. Being aggravated by different factors, internal displacement features as a key part of Ethiopian history. Empires declined, cultures became intermixed and new borders were drawn as a result of it. Particularly, “accounts from ancient Ethiopian history reveal that “intense land pressure and more erratic rainfall, soil destruction and ecological degradation during the seventh and eighth centuries” caused the decline and fall of the Axum Empire in the ninth century” (Ibid, 13) [24]. Currently due to natural disasters, internal displacement has occurred in different parts of Ethiopia. Internal displacement is here also caused by the type of resource distribution which exists. One must affirm here the role of “socio-economic stressors that are related to livelihood sources and the delivery of public economic and social services” (Ibid, 17) [24].

Recently one sees an increase in rate of internal displacement in the Ethiopian context. This is particularly aggravated by the “conflict around the border areas of Oromia and Somali regions, since early September 2017” (OCHA, 2018, 1) [26]. There is a failure to find viable political resolutions to internal displacement in Ethiopia. This is clearly evident by the fact that, “there is no dedicated government agency or office or a focal point that is known to be dealing with conflict-induced displacement” (iDMC, 2006, 7) Partly in Ethiopia, the

construction of huge developmental projects serves as a cause of internal displacement. Particularly, sufficient attention has not been given to the consequences of huge dam projects on the life of existing communities. Bringing forth an intermixing of different cultures and identities, in internal displacement, “complexities arise as identities interact and move across space and time as they are displaced from “home” (Powell, 2012, 300) [28] with internal displacement and subsequent contact among cultures, new forms of life are formed. For Powell, rather than one way of life subsuming the other, synthesis of cultures occurs as a result of internal displacement. This shows that, “displacement is not an overtaking-that would suggest linear movement, a dialectic relationship among identities” (Ibid, 301) [28].

One of the consequences of internal displacement is cultural contact. A culture becomes a host to modalities of existence and ways of life that are radically different. Whereas previously we gaze at others from a distance, in the case of internal displacement, others become an element of our world. Still whereas geographically and spatio-temporally the Same (here treated as the home culture) and the Other (the internally displaced) are situated within a given space, normatively radical differences exist in terms of our conceptions of the individual self, nature of the universe and the part of alien cultures. How does this revolutionize relations of the same and the other? Does it lead into formation of new identities, does it perpetuate asymmetrical power relations, do the host and alien cultures build concentrated circles to exclude one another from meaningful interaction? What is required in order to promote a process of learning among the different cultures? Do we need to subsume others or identify their irreducibility and radical difference? How is a process of learning that doesn’t sacrifice cultural difference possible?

### **The Quest for a Common Narrative and Sources of Internal Displacement in Ethiopia**

Identifying cultural contact and interaction as one consequence of internal displacement, the possibility of intercultural dialogue and enlightenment among different cultures needs to be promoted. If there is a meeting among cultures as a result of internal displacement then the possibility of discovering common structural patterns that serve as a foundation for a mutual dialogue needs to be maintained. Some cultures have an absolutist metaphysical view of the world. This leads to the belief that only one culture is real, essential and fundamental and that the other cultures have no contribution to human civilization. All cultures must be seen as contending but non-hierarchical ways of looking at the world. As symbolic expressions they give us an insight into alternative forms of existence. Rather than positing ontological relations of superiority and inferiority, the quest of each and every culture for authenticity needs to be recognized.

Situating others in their cultural space is seen as one way of respecting others. Either subsuming others into one’s ways of life or simply treating them as different, cannot fully capture the dynamic relation among cultures. Rather than falsely positing the ontological difference of others or the existence of unique structural patterns among cultures, one needs to identify the role of power in cultural encounters and also the limits of mutual learning among cultures. The other is the self that is part of our identity, but is still excluded from the realm of human discourse. The other is the one upon whom guilt is projected, but is not appreciated for its unique essence. Particularly for, “Simmel, the other, "is the Stranger who is

beyond being far and near” (Kastoryano, 2010, 79) <sup>[15]</sup>. The other is a major challenge to the politics of recognition since it has an influence on the distribution of rights. Hence, “defining the other comes to attribute a different status-juridical, cultural, and social-than the majority” (Ibid, 81) <sup>[15]</sup>. One way of domesticating and respecting the other is found in the ideals of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism as an approach recognizes different voices and pictures the world as a stage or a plethora of cultures interact with one another. Still, multiculturalism is currently seen as a lost cause since nations that once were tolerant of cultural difference are nowadays trying to find ways to subsume cultural difference. One sees that, “the Other is defined before entry and tested with regard to his or her knowledge of the language, the moral and political values, the culture, and the history of the new chosen society” (Ibid, 93) <sup>[15]</sup>. We encounter the other in our daily existence. Only spirit of accommodation and difference could fully recognize the uniqueness of the other. One major obstacle to such an endeavor is the fact that humans naturally seek sameness, order and singularity than difference. This is rooted in the individual psyche which seeks uniformity rather than difference.

The same is seen as the proper, the subject and the essential whereas the other is conceived as the evil, the enemy and what is ontologically different. Here, “we understand “otherness” as a generalized idea deriving from the concept of “the other,” widely used in the literature on interculturality. The core meaning of the latter term is an outsider-someone that does not belong to the group” (Rozbicki and Ndege, 2012, 1) <sup>[30]</sup>. Different epistemic configurations and societal fabrics are said to exist between the same and the other. Such fabrics try to delineate the space for cultural relations thereby relegating some cultures into the position of inferiority. In today’s world of cultural differences, we must develop an openness to other forms of life and to this degree, “we must peek into another world and try to grasp what things *meant* to its inhabitants and then attempt to understand how they perceived their own encounters with foreignness” (Ibid, 2) <sup>[30]</sup>. Being a country endowed with cultural, linguistic and historical diversity, in Ethiopia federalism is seen as a solution to the challenge of accommodating different voices in the state. Instituting a federal state structure is also seen as a solution to the questions of identity revolving around the formation of the modern Ethiopian state. Federalism is as such seen as a way of both preserving the uniqueness of each and every culture and ethnic identity while at the same time maintain the strength of the state. It is assumed that without destroying our common identity, federalism mainly tries to capitalize on ethnic differences primarily expressed through different languages. Instituting a federal system is seen as the only way of affirming the needs of different ethnic groups and delineating powers to different levels of administration. There are still huge difficulties found in the federal experience and resolving them is an urgent task to promote better relations among cultures in Ethiopia.

In contemporary Ethiopia, there is a problem of political legitimacy which is found in failing to identify a common historical narrative that different ethnic identities identify with. As such, the very idea of Ethiopian identity and the part of different ethnic groups in the formation of the modern Ethiopian state is a highly contested issue. For Tekeste Negash, the only solution is for “any credible account ought to include the geographically expanded and culturally diversified reality of the current Ethiopian landscape” (Tekeste, 2008, 2) <sup>[37]</sup>. Particularly there is a dispute regarding

the role of orthodox religion and northern Ethiopian culture for the formation of the modern Ethiopian identity. Some assumes that a relation of center and periphery characterizes the modern Ethiopian state subsequently elevating the northern culture into a position of superiority (Aklilu, 2005). <sup>[2]</sup>.

The affirmation of cultural difference and existence of different modalities of existence is seen as the major factor behind the attempt to implement the federal state structure in many African nations. Once African states attained political independence, there was an attempt to realize economic development alongside introducing a state structure that recognizes cultural differences. As Kebede sees it, “In Africa, where ethnic and linguistic diversities are considerably high, there have been efforts to implement the project of ethnic federalism as in the case of Nigeria, South Africa, and Ethiopia” (Kebede, 2016, 24) <sup>[16]</sup>. There are several ways in which the nature of ethnicity and ethnic identity could be defined. The attempt to define ethnicity alongside primordial lines is not unique to Ethiopia. What’s special in Ethiopia is that whereas the cessations clause is avoided in other African countries, it serves as a major cornerstone in politics of identity in the Ethiopian context. Whereas other nations saw cessation as a possible consequence of ethnic identity that promotes disintegration, in Ethiopia it is seen as the recognition of each ethnic identity to stay in the polity so long as it consents with it (Epple and Thubauville, 2012) <sup>[8]</sup>.

The critics of ethnic federalism allege that cessation particularly destroys common structural patterns that serve as a source of societal solidarity and in return focuses on radical difference. Among others it’s argued that, “ethnicity becomes the most efficient base for political mobilization, and it gives enough ground for new local elites to compete for power on the basis of ethnicity” (Ibid, 26) <sup>[16]</sup>. There is also an argument that a strong power is required in order to deal with the challenge of diversity in a federal structure. Accordingly, whenever such an authority weakens, fragmentation and disintegration looms in the horizon. What will serve as common origin and narrative, if the age old values that hold the society together are now replaced by an emphasis on mere cultural difference?

Tekeste further maintains that beyond the challenges of attaining economic development, there are serious challenges that plague Ethiopia’s progress. First of all, there is a need to evolve a system of justice that is grounded in Ethiopia’s past while at the same time affirming and practically answering the quest of different ethnic identities for authenticity. This is a crucial task since it, “would necessarily bring forth pride and self-confidence-immateral values of crucial importance-in confronting and resolving challenges of all sorts” (Ibid, 18) <sup>[16]</sup>. Secondly, there is a need to introduce a system of education grounded on Ethiopian values and serves as a source of national consensus and pride. Even though ethnic federalism is seen as a solution to the quest of diverse ethnic groups in Ethiopia for political recognition, still it is not able to alleviate the multifaceted problems challenging the nation. This is evident in the different ethnic conflicts that occurred in different parts of the country in the past decades. Here, “the major post 1991 inter-ethnic conflicts observed in Ethiopia are: the Silte-Gurage conflict, the Wagagoda language conflict, the Sheko-Megengir conflict, the Anuak-Nuer conflict, the Berta-Gumuz conflict, and the Gedeo-Guji conflict, the Oromo-Amhara conflict, the Borana-Gerri conflict, the Afar-Issa conflict, and the Oromo-Somali conflict” (Lubo, 2012, 66) <sup>[21]</sup>. What drives such ethnic

conflict are a host of factors including questions over the distribution of power, allocation of resources and affirmation of one's cultural values.

For Edmond J. Keller, the challenges that Ethiopia is facing as a nation in realizing a democratic form of governance are caused by several factors. First of all, even though Ethiopia is not colonized still the same question of asymmetrical power relations and question of identity is also found within the Ethiopian soil. Secondly, it was brute force rather than a mature style of leadership and governance that dominated Ethiopian political culture. Thirdly, one also sees that, "in spite of the dominance of a feudal mode of production, by the mid-20th century, Ethiopia was integrated into the world capitalist system" (Keller, 1981, 523) [17]. Alemseged Abbay believes that Ethiopia's long history and unique status as a nation that was never colonized presents both prospects and challenges. While such historical past can boost the morale of Ethiopians and serve as a foundation of Ethiopia's glory, at the same time "the rich past has been a burden for the country, because its political entrepreneurs have been vying to claim it for their own manipulative purposes" (Alemseged, 2004, 596) [4].

The solution to the political demands of Ethiopians resides in instituting a government that that is modeled after the needs of diverse ethnic groups. Such an effort would usher in a new era ethnic diversity is the foundation of the Ethiopian nation. This demonstrates that, "any attempt to move from authoritarian rule to democracy requires a careful examination of the value of transplanting a new system onto the old one, and a determination of the extent to which such change would help bring about peace in a multi-ethnic state like Ethiopia" (Walle, 1993, 32) [38]. Theoretically despite federalism being the only solution to a diverse polity like Ethiopia, still the practical implementation of federalism in Ethiopia is limited by different factors. One sees for instance that the regional governments have citizens from other ethnic groups although it is proclaimed that the regions are established along ethnic lines. Walle remarks, "when a Kilel is designated as Amhara or Oromo, other population groups who live in such regions but are known by names different from Amhara or Oromo are likely to be frozen out from geographic identification and ethnic definition" (Ibid, 38) Added to this is the fact that ethnic federalism is more prone to conflicts arising from diverging political interests and the struggle for political supremacy.

Ethiopia's political turmoil for Christopher Clapham arises both from the internal dynamics which is characterized by a fierce power rivalry as well as the politics of the horn that is characterized by huge political instability. Accordingly, "crises of governance in Ethiopia are embedded in the long uneven history of the Ethiopian state itself, and its place within a highly conflictual regional political arena" (Clapham, 2009, 181) [7]. The fact that ethnicity has been taken as an organizing factor for political participation in Ethiopia is quote anomalous according to Alem Habtu. Whereas other nations are recognizing the role of ethnicity in fueling conflicts, Ethiopia on the contrary is embracing ethnic identity as a foundation of federal state structure. This shows that, "since the beginning of the 1990s, today's Ethiopia, on the one hand, and most other African countries, on the other, are using diametrically opposed ways of looking at ethnicity" (Alem, 2004, 91) [5]. The issue is further complicated by the fact that culturally Ethiopians are mixed along different ethnic lines and many Ethiopians have diverse ethnic lines which they use to make sense of their identities. The federal

establishment fails to recognize that, "millions of Ethiopians have multiple ethnic genealogies as they have intermarried and intermingled freely over centuries" (Ibid, 108) [5].

Mesfin Gebremichael argues that, the roots of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia arose from the fact that the process of state formation is highly contested and problematic in its nature. Questions like what is the genesis of the modern Ethiopian state, was the modern Ethiopian state assimilationist or inclusive and is the state only dominated by northern culture are highly contested issues. There are different ways of understanding the development of modern Ethiopian state, ranging from the thesis of cultural assimilation to the argument that it was not a particular group but elite group that was dominant in the modern Ethiopian state. Mesfin argues, "like other independent African countries, the centralisation of power and control of power and resources by one politically dominant ethnic group became a factor in the low levels of integration between the country's ethnic groups during the 20th century" (2011, 48) [25]. What further makes the Ethiopian state formation anomalous compared to the African one is the fact that the state traces its genesis not to the colonial era and modern Europe but classical Ethiopian history. Furthermore, the way in which different ethnic groups were incorporate into the modern Ethiopian state is an issue for contention. Finally "the state formation was done in competition with the European colonisers during the scramble for the African continent" (Ibid, 880) [25].

John Markakis sees a failure to recognize the questions of ethnic groups throughout Ethiopian history. This serves as a major cause for the current ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia. Among others this is evident in the fact that, "the long wars waged throughout the 1960s were rarely mentioned publicly, and then only as operations against bandits" (1989, 121) [22]. Although politically the Derg pursued the same process of centralization laid down by the different rulers of the modern Ethiopian state, Markakis believes that culturally the Derg presents a difference since "it departed from the policy of the ancien regime. From the beginning, it had promised cryptically to abolish 'certain traditional customs which may hamper the unity and progress of Ethiopia'" (Ibid, 123)

John Young contends that the Derg earlier on displayed an openness to entertain cultural difference within the state structure. Nevertheless, this didn't result in a process of democratization, since there was no transfer of power from the state to the masses. In reality, "the Derg fought to maintain a strong central state, refused to share power with either the politically conscious middle classes or the emerging regional and ethnic elites" (1998, 193) [41]. Also within the FDRE constitution, rather than genuinely accommodating differences or negotiating with others who are also struggling for recognition "constitution-making under the EPRDF has little in common with the bargaining, trade-offs, and compromises that usually typify such processes; rather it reflects the weakness of the country's democratic institutions, the political objectives of the governing party, and its position of dominance within a state where serious opposition had been crushed or marginalized" (Ibid, 195) [41].

For Svensson and Brounéus, the major solution for avoiding cultural conflicts is building a culture of trust among the members of a society. The cultivation of trust and symmetrical relations among the members of a community destroys grounds for dispute and conflict. This demonstrates that, "Trust and dialogue are essential aspects of group relationships in the contexts of group based-tension" (2013, 563) [35]. It is not modern forms of conflict resolution but

traditional and indigenous ones that eased cultural tensions and served as a platform for a common discourse. Drawing on such indigenous knowledge “many multi-ethnic communities have been able to resist elites’ provocations, efforts to radicalize followers, and attempts to mobilize support against ‘the other side’” (Ibid, 565) <sup>[35]</sup>.

Following the arguments of Harff and Gurr (2014), Habtamu Wondimu emphasizes the role key virtues in solving ethnic conflicts. These include the need to uphold and protect the interest of the minority group, equal distribution of power and the need to empower different groups who are struggling to affirm their uniqueness. There is also a need to, “Use of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peaceful settlement of emerging conflict, mediation and arbitration” (Habtamu, 2013, 14) <sup>[11]</sup>. Habtamu also emphasizes other requirements that must be met for the realization of a more inclusive democratic culture and symmetrical relations among cultures. These include practically implementing the constitutional principle that every identity have a voice in the Ethiopian state, critique of ethnocentric attitudes and also the fact that, “serious efforts have to be made in the integration of the modern/constitutional strategies with traditional methods in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts” (Ibid, 17) <sup>[11]</sup>.

### **Intercultural Relations and the Need for a Mutual Dialogue**

Upon the advent of cultural encounters in the aftermath of internal displacement, the spirit of interculturality must be engrained in the minds of individuals. Such a capability is holistic and multidimensional in its nature. In such a process of learning one sees a “transformation of learning and a growth process where an individual’s existing, often implicit, knowledge is diversified to inter-cultural knowledge, attitude, and behavior” (Mekonnen, 2013, 127) <sup>[23]</sup>. We need to affirm the uniqueness of the other interculturality. We must also pay attention to their peculiar forms of expression. We are also required to become self-reflexive and identify our ethnocentric tendencies which are found in, “an unusually high regard for one’s own ethnic, religious, cultural group” (Ibid, 130) <sup>[23]</sup>.

To promote intercultural dialogue among individuals, three criteria must be fulfilled according to Michael Rabinder James. We must embrace other forms of life, dialogical encounters must take place and a position of symmetry needs to be assumed among the partners in dialogue. This validates the point that, “the criterion of intercultural understanding suggests that one cannot validly criticize cultural practices or beliefs until one understands them” (James, 1999, 590) <sup>[13]</sup>. We are not interacting with others since we are sympathetic towards them but because we do live in a shared world of contested claims. There must be also a dynamic element to dialogues since the terms, “must remain revisable as the participants and circumstances change” (Ibid, 591) <sup>[13]</sup>.

The foundation of the social and natural sciences is in enlightenment thinking and the project of modernity. Such thinking is dichotomous in separating the whole world into modernity and tradition, western and non-western, the same and the Other (Gurevitch, 1988) <sup>[10]</sup>. Our attempts to promote intercultural understanding must go beyond such a system of bifurcation. Such a biased system, “while privileging and valorizing the authority and autonomy of reason for allegedly human (material) progress and emancipation, it marginalizes, disenfranchises, and denigrates the (reason’s) other whether it be

- i) Body,
- ii) Woman,
- iii) Nature, or
- iv) Non-West” (Jung, 2011, 4) <sup>[14]</sup>.

Rather than looking for similarities that are not there or manufacturing false difference just for the sake of degrading other cultures, one must promote a “heteronomy, which cultivates difference and plurality rather than identity and homogeneity on the one hand and ambiguity rather than clarity on the other” (Ibid) <sup>[14]</sup>.

One of the proponents of intercultural philosophy, Wimmer has used the concept of centrism to identify the spirit of cultural relations. Centrism here signifies the value of a given culture and the place of other alien cultures in a given culture. Wimmer identified expansive centrism to describe the view of certain cultures that only one culture is superior and that it should be imitated by other cultures even by using force as a medium of conversion. Secondly there is integrative centrism which assumes that others who are inferior will imitate one culture realizing that it is qualitatively superior. It assumes that, “one’s own way could be thought to be attractive in such degree that it would be sufficient in itself to attract and to integrate others” (Wimmer, 2007, 2) <sup>[40]</sup>. Thirdly, separative centrism assumes that cultures of the world are so radically polarized that there is no process of learning whatsoever among them. Finally, transitory centrism which intercultural philosophy embraces “both the conviction of being right, and openness to basically different views of others, which are equally convinced of being right” (Ibid, 4) <sup>[40]</sup>. Transitory centrism looks for genuine similarities among cultures and seeks a process of learning among different cultures rather than multiplying difference. Only this could serve as the foundation of mutual learning among cultures for it recognizes the equal importance of all cultures.

The way in which different cultures make sense of their environment, other cultures and the universe in general is essentially different (Krippendorff, 2009) <sup>[19]</sup>. Overcoming ethnocentric tendencies that prioritize one culture on the expense of others, “one has to sharpen the awareness of differences in the historical presentation of one’s own collective identity” (Rüsen, 2004, 119) <sup>[31]</sup>. In most cultural outlooks, difference and separation comes at the expense of identifying analogical patterns. Such a narrow horizon is one in which “separation is prior to integration and which does not have cultural elements going across differences” (Ibid, 120). <sup>[31]</sup> as human beings, we live in shared horizons. Finding common spaces, normative ideals and practical arrangements is a major quest. This shows that, “living together peacefully has become a moral, social and political imperative” (Stavenhagen, 2008, 161) <sup>[34]</sup>. Each culture has a right to preserve its own way of life. There is a right to difference, although, “this does not necessarily mean that cultures should be considered as self-contained isolated units” (Ibid, 162) Even international institutions are stressing the need for envisaging communal learning and an interdisciplinary learning that accumulates different insights. What is needed is a “curriculum that reflects cultural differences, includes indigenous languages and contemplates the use of alternative teaching methods” (Ibid, 168) <sup>[34]</sup>.

In our encounter with other cultures, we go out of our natural settings conceptually. While daily we are immersed in a set of structural relations that define our conduct, in intercultural encounters we go out of our conventional boundaries. This also happens during travelling where, “we regularly have

another experience, proximity or distance that is agreeable or unacceptable; that it can have in different cultures; friendship, love, hate, corporal codes” (Rouchy, 2002, 209) <sup>[29]</sup>. In intercultural explorations, what is communally shared among different ways of life is emphasized, whereas in trans-cultural efforts, universality is seen as the goal of all human interaction. It as such looks towards, “new shared limits that is, towards a unity presenting merged aspects and a feeling of universality” (Ibid, 213) <sup>[29]</sup>.

### Conclusion

Internal displacement is a major force that brings forth transformations in the physical and symbolic worlds. Whereas physically it leads to the movement of people within a delimited border, symbolically it leads to the intermixing, confluence and conflict among different cultures. As such attempt to find solutions to internal displacement must not only focus on its material dimension but also the normative order within which the interaction among different cultures is to take place. Cultures are in part the sources for conflict among different communities. They also hold immense potentials for a process of mutual learning and enlightenment. Using an intercultural approach, efforts must be made to identify commonalities among different cultures. A process of conceptual translation is required in order to identify common structural patterns among cultures. Still, the limits of translation in such a process must be identified. There is a need to situate others in their own space. Benefits of such an exercise include building conceptual bridges to develop relations among different cultures and also exposing biases that inhibit intercultural learning. Assistance to the internally displaced should not only be material but also value oriented in its nature. As much as there is physical displacement in internal displacement, there is also a value crisis and a conflict among different normative presuppositions. Developing a critique of cultures, we should simultaneously focus on identifying analogous structural patterns.

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