Analysis of the text:

What follows below is a brief analysis of Bewaji’s text. Please read this together with the text itself. The essay is easy and straight-forward.

Bewaji begins his essay by pointing out the significance of a code of morality in all societies. He asserts that any code of moral norms is intended for “the adjustment of interests among individuals for attaining the general well-being of the community” (page 54). But he also accounts for what makes African and non-African moral systems different. Then he announces the purpose of his essay, namely, an analysis of the foundations of African morality.

Main points of the essay:

Bewaji debunks the common fallacies about African morality. He mentions them as follows:

- Moral obligations in African morality are social rather than individual.
- Morality in Africa has a religious foundation. This is based on the view that Africans are religious in all things.

Then he makes two very important points in relation to African morality:

- The first one is that the basis of morality in Africa is human welfare, and not to earn reward from some divine or metaphysical being. However, he hastens to point out that there is a relationship between religion and morality in Africa. They both play a social cohesion role and also bring order in society. Thus, even religion has humanistic interests.
- The second is that ethics permeates all spheres of life in African societies. In fact even the gods and ancestors are expected to be ethical in their conduct.

The last part of the essay discusses ethical concepts in the Yoruba philosophy and culture. However, this discussion is preceded by enlisting of virtues of a morally upright person. Bewaji is also emphatic in pointing out that such virtues are rewarded by society. For instance, a virtuous person is respected by all in society.

Among the many moral concepts in the Yoruba culture, only the following are discussed:

- Ese: infractions against the Supreme Being, deities, ancestors as well as other people (Bewaji 2004:58).
- Eewe: things that are prohibited by the Supreme Being, which could lead to sanctions (Bewaji 2004:58).

- Abuku: the “blemish” acquired when acting against moral expectations (Bewaji 2004:58).

- Aimo: the lack of knowledge (in the epistemic sense), also, ignorance as a liability (in the moral sense) (Bewaji 2004:58).

- Egbin: caution against moral decadence (Bewaji 2004:58).

Bewaji concludes the essay by highlighting important issues discussed in the body of the essay.