AKЏNAUCHE, PERSONHOOD AND SOCIAL ORDER IN CONTEMPORARY IGBO CULTURE

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to *Chineke* (God), the creator, bringer of joy and the source of my life, in whose grace I live and move.

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ABSTRACT

Ak[nauche, an ontological and intelligent component of the human person capable of mediating and unifying the individual's facets of existence, is central in maintaining social order in Igbo culture. Existing studies have addressed the idea of *ak[nauche* mainly from scientific and aesthetic perspectives, without adequate analysis of the concept in relation to the unity of the individual as a being of many parts, significant to the attainment of social order. This study, therefore, investigates a*k[nauche* with a view to identifying the ontological roles it plays in mediating between the individual and the community in ensuring social order.

The study adopted Strawson's theory on persons. Six relevant texts in Metaphysics; Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy (MFP), Collins' Selfless Person (SP), Kim's Supervenience and Mind (SM). Eight texts in African Philosophy, such as Mbiti's African Religions and Philosophy ARP). Menkiti's On the Normative Conception of a Person (NCP), Ikuenobe's The Idea of Personhood in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (CATFA) and Animalu's Ucheakolam: A way of Life in Modern Scientific Age (WLMSA), were purposively selected. Hence they addressed the issues of *ak[nauche*, personhood and social order. Conceptual analysis and reconstruction were deployed.

Texts in Metaphysics reveal that human persons are in control of their well-being, do not consider the community as very significant in their explanations, and under-explore the connection between a person and the community (MFP and SM). Texts in African Philosophy show that the individual is bound to behave in certain ways laid down by the community, thereby inhibiting complete individual autonomy (ARP, NCP and CATFA). Igbo proverbs like, *nwata kw[zie aka, o soro okenye, rie nri* (outstanding achievement is acknowledged and rewarded) not only affirms that *ak[nauche* is paramount in a person's relationships in the community, but also emphasises a person's creativity (WLMSA). Critical reflection reveals that the person is creatively intelligent and that the human will is autonomous because each individual has a*k[nauche* which supervenes actions and thoughts in a way that enhances social order. The Igbo proverb, *eruru si na [bu uche[ma ka ha jiri t[pu osisi ngw[, ma na, otu-otu ka ha bi* (Though we live individually, it is in harmony that we accomplish great feats), emphasises the synchronisation of personal and communal worth in achieving social order.

Ak[nauche, an ontological component of a person, demonstrates that the human person is both a metaphysical and social being with creative intelligence. Therefore, *ak[nauche* in Igbo culture plays both creative and mediating roles in the relationship between the individual and the community in which social order is guaranteed.

Keywords: *Ak[nauche*. Personhood, Igbo culture, Social order

Word count: 418

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Introduction

One of the central problems of metaphysics is what it means to be a person. Scholars from various fields of endeavour have described one ascribable quality as that which underlines and determines who and what a person is. Boethius, for instance, "gives the definition of person as an individual substance of a rational nature (*Naturce rationalis individual substantia*)[1]. Peter Singer similarly defines a person "as a conscious, thinking being, which knows that it is a person (self-awareness).[2]

Basically, there are two schools of thought-the Cartesian and the physicalist - on the debate of what a person is and how personhood is attained[3]. According to Descartes, the term may designate any human (or non-human) agent which possesses continuous consciousness over time; and who is therefore capable of framing representations about the world, formulating plans and acting on them[4]. Descartes further states that, when we speak of a person, we are really referring to one or both of two distinct substances of different types, each of which has its own appropriate types of states and properties, states of consciousness belong to one of these substances and not to the other[5]. This position of Descartes has been rejected and criticized by Charles Taylor and Frederick Strawson. According to Taylor, "the problem with the Cartesian view is that it depends solely on a performance criterion to determine what an agent is. Thus, other things (e.g. machines or animals) that exhibit similarly complex adaptive behaviour could not be distinguished from persons[6].Taylor, "instead proposes a significance-based view of personhood: What is crucial about agents is that things matter to them. We thus cannot

simply identify agents by a performance criterion, nor assimilate animals to machines...

[likewise] there are matters of significance for human beings which are peculiarly human,

and have no analogue with animals[7]. It is important to note that what is common within

some Western scholars on what is a person is, is not only their emphases that the notion

of person is static and individualistic, also, the idea that a person is more of a performing

being with a dual attribute. Both Descartes and Taylor have looked away on the

metaphysical constituents of personal identity and the role of community in the social

identity of a person.

However, Strawson seems to differ from Descartes and Taylor on what a person is. He

argues that,

> it is a necessary condition for ascribing any states of
> consciouness, experiences etc to oneself, that one should
> also ascribe them to others. Ascribing to others is not
> possible if we accept the Cartesian ego as the subject of all
> experiences or states of consciousness. For, to be the
> subject of a predication, something must be identified.
> Identification as we saw presupposes location in space-
> time. Cartesian Egos can't be located in space-time; only
> bodies can be located spatiotemporally. So predicating a
> state of consciousness to an Ego presupposes that the state
> must be predicated to a subject, which is a material body[8]

His position seems to give support to the physicalists. The physicalists would hold the

view that the real world is nothing more than the physical world. They would argue that

what constitutes a person is matter. In this case, what a person is conscious of is always

understood in an experiential form. Strawson, in his metaphysics, has also tried to

reconcile this mind-body dichotomy. For him, persons are primitive concepts and do not

require further analysis[9]. According to him,

the concept of person as primitive is a concept that cannot be analysed further in a certain way or another. That means: the concept of a person is the concept of a type of entity, such that both predicates ascribing state of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation, and are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type. Persons cannot be defined as a union of mind and body because the possession of mental properties as well as physical properties presuppose that the owner is a person. In other words, it is like committing the fallacy of begging the question if we go on to argue over supremacy and superiority on the mind-body debate since a person is a composition of both[10].

However, the position of Strawson, though commendable, has not demonstrated how and what distinguishes persons from other beings (animate and inanimate).This is because, for instance, animals too possess conscious properties and are occupants of space. Most importantly, and that is where this work goes beyond Strawsonism, what is the distinguishing factor that streamlines the differences between personal identity, social identity and ethical obligations of a person? However, in Ayer's view, the mind is the idea of the body, and therefore, this debate should be put to rest[11]. Our contention with Ayer is that he had paid more attention on the problem of duality and supremacy but did not answer the question of what a person is.

These opinions have attempted and accounted for the central phenomena of personhood: rationality, command of language, self-consciousness, control or agency, and moral worth or title to respect, as amongst the salient characteristics that have been thought to distinguish persons from other forms of life[12], but in comparison with other forms of beings. According to Locke, person is a term, applying for moral reasons (to agents capable of a law, and happiness and misery)[13]. Note that contrary to this Eurocentric individual- based understanding of a person, the African understanding (traditionally) is

that a person is meaningful because of that person's community. This communitarian perspective to the question of what a person is has been criticized by some contemporary African scholars. One of the criticisms is that the communitarians have ended up describing how a person should behave and interact with neighbors in the community, but have not identified or defined what a person is.

The measures for the attainment of personhood or what a person is have been a perennial discourse in both Africa and non African philosophy or culture. According to some theorists (ontologists) once human beings are born, personhood is considered automatic. Some consider adult legal capacity to be a criterion for personhood in certain contexts, such as the American Constitution, where one must have adult capacity to exercise the rights (an infant cannot engage in free assembly, for example). Some others have argued that personhood could also extend to fetuses and human embryos, depending on what theory one subscribes to (metapyhsicists). With respect to abortion, personhood is the status of a human being having individual human rights[14]. The debate, as to when personhood begins, is not peculiar to Western thought. Indeed, most African scholars have also agreed and disagreed on this dilemma. Some African scholars believe that the beginning of personhood or personal identity starts with adulthood and determined by his/her community. But this position is contestable, normative and communitarian because questions on what a person is deals with personal identity and not social identity and is therefore, metaphysical. Bernard seems to agree with our claim that the metaphysical constituents of a person are very significant in matters of personal identity. He argues that

> we know that persons are born with certain attributes. We know that these attributes are not issued by society but are inherently identifiable with the identity of persons everywhere. We know that there is something that makes a person a person; and we know that whatever that attributes could be it is not something that is acquired or lost in one's respective community.[15]

In most traditional African societies, there are certain essential factors that determine how and why personhood is acquired and attained. What is very common within these African scholars' views is the attention on how a person should behave and why a person, as a social being behaves in that manner. We should note that the question, what is a person demands for those personal constitutive elements that define and are present in defining personhood, however, questions on how and why a person behaves in a certain manner deals with social identity. Menkiti, for instance, asserts that,

> the various societies found in traditional Africa routinely accept this fact that personhood is the sort of thing which has to be attained, and is attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of the various obligations defined by one's stations. It is the carrying out of these obligations that transforms one from the it-status of early childhood, marked by an absence of moral function, into the person-status of later years, marked by a widened maturity of ethical sense—an ethical maturity without which personhood is conceived as eluding one[16].

Corroborating the opinion of Menkiti on how personhood is attained, Eze, quoting Higgins, says, "man means nothing less than the fact that man is a moral being[17]. Our contention with Menkiti is that he characterizes the reality of the community as more important than that of the individual. His position is informed by his failure not only to recognize the importance of the distinctiveness of individuality, but, also the reality of the fact that any communal structure is contingent. The community is not a construct that is ordained from the beginning of creation but a set of conventions deliberately created by individuals to serve the social needs of those individuals[18]. Again, to ascribe socio-ethical considerations to the entity of strict identity is erroneous. While it is not controversial at

all to claim that morality and moral status is important to a person, we need to be careful in limiting what that importance is exactly suppose to be. We should note that many things are important for persons, about persons and in persons; but not all things are important for the identity of persons. According to Bernard,

> we cannot take things that are important for persons as living beings that have conscience and a moral sense and make these things important for persons as subjects that can be distinctly identified as such. Socio-ethical descriptions of what persons do or what persons are supposed to do are not markers of what person's are[19].

The African communitarians would think that the metaphysics of social identity could constitute the metaphysics of personal identity.

According to Wiredu,

> this dual meaning reflects an important conceptual distinction between a human—a biological entity—and a person—an entity with special moral and metaphysical qualities. Status as a human is not susceptible to degrees, nor is such status conferred on an individual as a 'reward' for her efforts. One is either a human or one is not—there is no such thing as becoming a human. In contrast, personhood is something for a human to become to different degrees through individual achievement. An individual's human status, then, is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for personhood[20].

Still on who becomes or attains personhood, Menkiti asserts: since personhood is not something one is born with, but rather something one must attain over time, it follows that one becomes more of a person the older one gets than as a child. With age comes not only wisdom, but other qualities related to personhood[21].

Menkiti characterizes this as ontological progression, meaning that the individual is growing ontologically and is different from the time he/she was a baby to the time that

she is an adult with all required excellencies. We may need to note that the use of it does not serve any ontological function or as evidence of ontological difference. In Igbo cosmology, for instance, children are recognized and by birth enjoin the attributes of personhood. This is why the Igbo say, *nwata kwozie aka, o soro okenye rie nri*- that a child that washes his/her hands neatly dines with the elderly. This though might sound literal, but philosophically, it is significant in matters of personal identity because a child shares same metaphysical components of personal identity with the elderly. Ordinary or ontological usage of the word "it' does not lend credence to that idea which denies children their relevance in matters of personal identity. Supporting our view, Gyekye says, "a human person is thus metaphysically conceived as more than just a material or physical object…., a person must be held as intrinsically valuable.[22]

Even though social organization and identity are important aspects of who a person ought to be, but more importantly, is that the ontology of that social person lies in his/her metaphysical components which must be seen before one is said to be a person. If we are correct then, an infant is a person because he/she enjoins such attributes.

In Igbo culture and some other traditional African societies, the attainment of personhood has been discussed based on social identity and moral obligations (Menkiti and Ikunobe) with little emphasis on the role of *akonauche* and *onwe* as the basis of the metaphysical elements in matters of personal identity. *Akonauche* is an Igbo term for creative intelligence. *Akonauche* is the faculty of the human person that is part of the metaphysical components in matters of personal identity. In Igbo world view, a person is an entity with some ontological constituents. A person is seen as *mmadu* and *mmuo* — *ndu*. The next sub-section is devoted to conceptual clarification. In Igbo society, a person

can be moral or immoral without any denial of his characteristics as a person. This, therefore, exonerates Unoka, in *Things Fall Apart*, who is seen by some scholars, like, Ikunobe, as a clear affirmation of one who the society thought was unable to meet up with social reality and identity. A proper understanding of what personhood is in relation to personal identity would agree with the fact that Unoka, even though did not meet the expectations of his community, still retained his personal identity.

In other words, Ikuenobe[23], who described Unoka, in *Things Fall Apart*, as a clear affirmation of one whom the society referred to as one who did not attain personhood confused social identity with personal identity. Ikuenobe fails to appreciate the dynamic interplay between the community as a metaphysically constitutive entity and the normative as an expression of the lived out realization of the metaphysical demands of persons[24]. The point here is that, to become a person, one must possess those attributes and characteristics of personhood. However, the ability to make the attributes or qualities of personhood worth emulated, depends on one's ability to define his/her worth in the society.

Conceptual clarification

According to Nwala, the traditional Igbo believe that man or a person is both spirit and non-spirit. Man possesses two main parts- *mmuo* (spirit) and *ahu* (body). *Mmuo*- this is the spiritual part of man and it incorporates the elements of spirit, intelligence, feeling, emotion, conscience[25]. There are also other ontological characteristics of a person which are recognized in every personal identity. They are present in every person before you are described as a person. We have *Obi* or *mkpuruobi* which is located in the heart and is the seat of the life-giving force, *ndu*. *Ndu* is understood as a life giving force, with an

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existence in which a person still functions in his or her natural mode. Most importantly is the *onwe* as the basic unit of autonomy. At this stage, the social realities and identity is not made reference to because these metaphysical constituents can exist without the social identity. It is important to note that among Igbo scholars, *mmadu* (person) is seen as both material and immaterial (*mmuo*). In the words of Nze,

> among the Igbo, in whose culture, the person Mmadu is conceived as integrally composed of a material element Ahu- the body and immaterial spiritual element mmuo, nkpurobi, obi- the heart which is often spoken of as a tripartite or could be casually and interchangeably labeled obi, the heart, nkpuruobi, the seed and mmuo, the spirit. , we are not going into this ontological or metaphysical aspect of man in Igbo perspective[26].

Nze is not alone in this line of thought. Madu agrees with Nze and Nwala that the latter sense speaks of *mmadu* as being (*ndu*) the activating principle sustaining all existence[27]. If we analyze these claims closely, we shall see that it is a case that any notion that qualifies as metaphysical ought to be free of communal considerations as primary constituents of the nature of person. It has to articulate the notion from a constitutive elements perspective that is non social. Although all persons can be said to be social by nature; what makes them persons is the mere possession of these key metaphysical elements as opposed to sociality of any form. Naturally, a key question that arises is whether these elements are sufficient for the constitution of persons without bringing in moral considerations. We seek to show that it is possible to articulate such a concept without violating any cardinal principle of African identity. In our view, most communitarians are content with articulating their communitarian position without paying attention to the metaphysical implications of their statements.

However, these metaphysical constitutive elements of a person cut across most African conceptual schemes. For instance, the Yoruba has similar concepts ascribable to a person in matters of personal identity. Gbadegesin states that;

> There are two meanings attached to the Yoruba concept of personhood, eniyan. There is a sense in which eniyan is seen as normative and one in which it is seen as having an ordinary meaning. The normative aspect is one in keeping with communitarian interpretation of what a person is and the ordinary meaning would restrict itself to the structural components of a person. Greater emphasis, Gbadegesin says, is put on the normative meaning[28]

Similarly, Brown says, in Yoruba thought personhood begins with the infusion of a spirit into a foetus and the emergent composite accepting a destiny for its life[29]. Our focus here is not on destiny because for the Yoruba, destiny is seen as a pathway leading the individual to self-actualization. Rather our aim is to see if the Yoruba have these ontological structural constituent of personhood. Gdadegesin identifies four crucial elements as *ara, okan, emi*, and ori[30]. *Ara* is the physico-material part of the human being, just like *ahu* (body) in Igbo. *Okan*, which has dual character is first seen as the physical organ that is responsible for the physical circulation of blood in the individual's body. It is also seen as the source of psychic and emotional reactions. According Gdadegesin, *okan* has yet another function as it is also the source of thought[31]. It is interesting to note here that the *okan* of Yoruba can be likened to the *akonauche* in Igbo conceptual scheme. This is so because both are seen as the source of thought which is not mere obedience to rules and logical sequence. Reacting to the question of what the brain does since it is the source of thought? He says that, in short, *opolo* seems to be recognized as the source of logical reasoning, while *okan* is the source of all consciousness and emotional responses[32]. The *emi* is construed as the active principle of

life, just like *ndu* (life), the life giving element put in place by the deity. It is also construed as part of the divine breath. The final element is or, which is the physical head. It is seen as having dual character, first, it is vital as a physical characteristic, and secondly, it is equally vital in its role as the seat of the brain. It is in its second sense that it is seen as a bearer of a person's destiny as well as determinant of that individual's personality. Oyeshile, Oladipo, Adeofe, and Brown agree with Gbadegesin that these ontological components can be grouped into two; mainly physico-material and mental-spiritual. *Ara* belongs to the former, while *emi* to the latter, and on and *okan* have physical and mental aspects. The *okan* is postulated in mentalistic terms so as to account for thought and *ori* is postulated in a spiritualistic way so as to account for destiny. While in Igbo conceptual scheme, we talk about *mkpuruobi, obi, ahu, mmuo, ndu*, and *onwe* the Yoruba talks about *ara, emi, okan*, and *ori*. As Brown rightly points out about the *Yoruba* that personhood starts from conception and these ontological components are what is necessary and sufficient in matters of personal identity.

However, this does not conflate with the social realities or identity of a person since we are social beings. Another interesting point is that while the Igbo recognize *akonauche* in *onwe* as a physical and mental source of thought, the Yoruba sees *okan* also as the source of thought. Gbadegesin, however, ends on a moral note when he argues that personhood is only rendered meaningful by appealing to destiny and the reality of the community[33]. His position seems to be taking social identity as the only true identity of a person. Here we differ with Gbadegesin because in matters of personal identity, recourse is not made to the social realities. Wiredu and Appiah seem to agree that among the *Akan*, the constitution of a person is made of *nipadua* (a body) and a combination of the following

entities conceived as spiritual substances: *okra* (soul), that whose departure from a man means death, *sunsum*, that which gives rise to a man,s character, *ntoro*, something passed on from the father which is the basis of inherited characteristics and, finally *mogya,* something passed on from the mother which determines a man's clan identity and which at death becomes the *saman* (ghost). On the issue of whether *okra* is equivalent with the idea of the soul in the West seem to be unresolved between Wiredu and Gyekye. While Wiredu sees *okra* as quasi-physical, Gyekye sees *okra* as immaterial.

We have two significant differences between Wiredu and Gyekye's interpretation of personhood from the *Akan* perspective, if we take Wiredu and Gyekye's communitarian view that the sole defining attribute of personhood is the community and that the community can abrogate one's rights if in contrast with the community's, we see that Gyekye chooses to defend the moderate version while Wiredu seeks to defend the radical version. From a metaphysical view, Gyekye claims that the *okra* constitutes the equivalent of a soul among the *Akans* whereas Wiredu argues that the same substance should not be interpreted as an equivalent of a soul. These mental features, we must note, are not made by the community but are only discovered and nurtured by the community. This means that the community has only a partial role to play in the formation of the individual. In other words, if personhood was to be fully defined by the community it could have harmful implications for individual rights. It is clear that communitariaism will not allow free flow of ideas. Ideas are by their nature not given to control, banishment or other punitive measures. Ideas by their nature thrive whether the communal structures encourage them to emerge or not. Even in deliberate repressive societies people do not stop coming up with different and interesting ideas that seek to

challenge the status quo[34]. The history of mankind is one that is characterized not only by free flow of ideas but also change that has been brought by ideas that have been conceived in very oppressive and tyrannical societies[35]. Our point here is that even if communal structures were deliberately set to curb the emergence of ideas or at the very least to discourage the emergence of such ideas, that society would register very little success since ideas by their nature will emerge with or without the help of social structures. This is where and why the Igbo culture recognizes the significance of *akonauche* and *onwe* which are eminent in every person young or old.

According to Animalu,

> The use of creative intelligence (ako-na-uche) ought to be applied to our entire cultural matrix- world view, religion, politics, economics, military and so forth- as a way of life, in order to find our way forward in the modern scientific age that contains space travel, television, computers, energy crisis, atomic destruction, and drug addiction, among other societal ills[36].

There are Igbo adages that support our view that *akonauche* is part of the metaphysical constituent of a person and useful in matters of social order and harmony. They are, *nwaayo*, *nwaayo ka eji na eji aga-na ogwu-* (a snail crawls through a thorny path slowly and intelligently). *Eji ako kpara usu, o dika abaraba* (with intelligence, poverty can be curtailed). *Eruru si na o bu uche oma ka ha jiri tutu o ngwo, ma na otu -otu ka ha bi* (we brought down the palm wine tree together and in harmony but we live in it individually).

Personhood is associated with intelligence and preparedness. Collaborating these adages, Nwoga contends that,

> intelligence, cleverness, quickness of wit are aspects of what the Igbo person needs for adjusting himself to, and thereby manipulating changing circumstances- and — circumstances are always changing. This change is not only the progression of different situations and events. It equally also involves ontological status of things, since things are not always what they seem or what they were. The Igbo person is supposed to be regularly conscious of the difference between appearance and reality and to react to the potentials deception before it takes place[37]

We should note that there is a difference between rationality and intelligence as an ontological constituent of personal identity. The difference is that while rationality must be understood in terms of human activities, mathematical and logical sequence, creative intelligence is the ontological capacity to know and the application in understanding realities in its challenges and complexities of life. A situation where a person resolves conflicts created as a result of his/her communal demands and that of his personal identity so as to forestall harmony and social order between him/herself and that of the community.

The Igbo idea of personhood recognizes onwe as the sole entity that determines what the owner is and would want to be. Okere agrees with Nwoga that the *onwe* is one basic entity that defines the person. It is the basic unit of other experience. Yet it is indefinable but known through *akonauche*. In this regard, Okere says,

> It is not easy to figure out the complex relationship between these elements and the *Onwe*, or with each other. Cumulatively, however, they make up not *Onwe* itself, but the sum total of all the functions and actions attributed to *Onwe*. And if any new functions or activities are ever found, they will still be attributable to *Onwe*. This goes to point out that *Onwe* is perhaps neither defined nor definable, but remains essentially the ultimate subject of all attributions. One can distinguish, but cannot separate, these functions, qualities and actions from their subject of

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> attribution. Neither can this subject be reduced to any one of them or any combination of them. The self/*Onwe* is neither this nor that attribution, but is rather the sovereign and ultimate proprietor of all attributions of the individual[38].

The Igbo idea of onwe can be likened to the understanding of the origin of person. According to Augustine and the late patristic theology, the three persons that exist in God are in their nature relations. They are, therefore, not substances that stand next to each other, but they are real existing relations, and nothing besides. This understanding of person could be found in Ratzinger's theory of the origin of persons. For him, in God, person means relation. Relation, being related, is not something superadded to the person, but it is the person itself. In its nature, the person exists only as relation. Hence, the *onwe* is not just *onwe* of nothing, it is *onwe* of something. The Igbo say, *onwe m*, at this point, becomes epistemological. The knowledge of the *onwe* about its functions and existence is arrived at and informed by its *akonauche*. The *onwe* is not alone; it is in relation with its immediate material/non- material constituents, also in relation with the community and the society at large.

In this study, therefore, we argued that the community rights and reality of community taking precedence over the individual is not to be taken as an influence or reference to personal identity. It is to be taken as a communal and social reference of the many aspects that the individual person is able to live out. When we speak of the essence of a person or what really constitutes a person we strictly refer to the metaphysical and communal schemes. In Igbo metaphysical scheme, *akonauche* is that faculty that enables a person to live out appropriately ways that should allow for growth, change, harmony and order between him/her and the society. The implication is that to become a person

requires those ontological/metaphysical constituents which are quasi-physical (though immaterial) as soon as one is born, and are requirements for the acceptance of a person into his/her community.

Endnotes

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Chapter One: The Idea of personhood

1.0 Introduction

In this chapter we have looked at the different categories of the discussion of the nature of personhood. We seek to mention here that there are two plausible ways of discussing the nature of personhood that generally best represent how the notion is understood on the continent and in most literatures. As suggested, the concept of person is one that is given different interpretations and meanings as it invokes different notions to different people.

To us, there are two levels at which we can debate anything under the rubric of persons. The first level refers to the differences in interpretation between different authors in the same school. This means that, for example, there could be a difference between different thinkers in their understanding of the communitarian view. Some might think that the community is an overarching reality that overshadows all other realities. Yet others might think that there is room for the cognition of certain individual attributes and rights. The second level refers to the different themes that exist in respect of defining personhood. While communitarians differ in their interpretation, we can still treat them as falling under one theme. However, there are other thinkers who do not primarily use the categories that are employed by communitarians in arriving at this notion. It might use radically different categories in their explication of the notion. Some thinkers might use certain individualistic traits such as the brain or heart. Hence we could have different people talking about the same notion but doing it in ways that can be categorized

differently. Here we could talk of the nature of the debate with reference to different schools.

It is from this characterisation that we seek to show that the notion can be characterised as both metaphysical and communitarian. We further seek to show that, if our characterisation is correct, then it is possible to develop a comprehensive notion of personhood. We will argue, in chapter five, that this comprehensive notion takes into account the communal nature of personhood as well as the individuality of personhood. We characterise this new concept in the Igbo metaphysical term *akonauche* in which we have established a kind of relational interpretation of personhood, in terms of personal/ social values**.**

1.1 The idea of personhood in Western conceptual scheme

According to Appiah, "every society has at least one collection of ideas that I am going to call a theory of the person[1]. A theory of a person is a collection of views about what makes human beings work and what constitutes or makes a person-person. These will include views about why people do things. For instance, in America we speak of fear, hope, belief, intention, desire, envy, lust, and kindness when we are trying to explain behavior. But it will also include views about what people need for survival:food,air or light or family, and friends[2]. All these put together account for the way and involves of the relations between the events inside people that make them act and the bodies that do the acting.

Westerns currently do this in terms of talk about minds and brains on one side and bodies on the other side. For instance, Cartesian dualist claims that body and soul are the two

ontological irreducible constituents of a person with the soul being the essence of the person[3]. Since for the dualist the soul is the person, the issue of persistence or personal identity is concerned with tracing the soul. Where the soul is, there goes the person. But surprisingly, neither of the two main theories of persistence expresses this dominant view of most people. The more plausible the Cartesian theory seems, the less plausible either theory of persistence. According to Adeofe,

> notwithstanding degrees of psychological and physical continuities involved, if persons are ensouled, it is the soul that underlies persistence. The soul by itself escapes tracing, but so much the worse for personal identity theories, the dualist would claim[4].

Scientifically minded philosophers, as most Western philosophers are in their professional lives, would claim that the Cartesian notion is not as plausible as its competing materialist views[5]. What Descartes teaches, they will argue, is the important of our occurrent and dispositional mentation in personhood, which is encapsulated in the various psychological continuity theories[6]. Materialists are right that psychological continuity theories make clear our inclination and willingness to define ourselves by our mental lives. In that sense, then, the theories encapsulate the Cartesian insight that a person is a thinking thing that doubts, understands, and denies. Of course, materialists are not all agreed on what psychological continuity theories consist in. According to Parfit, the informational content of our mentation is all that matters, irrespective of how that sameness of information is secured, either by brain, computer chips, or whatever[7]. Similarly, Shoemaker argues that, sameness of information is valuable in persistence to the extent that there is sameness of brain or a functionally analogous entity[8].

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The problem with the Western persistence theories is the first person perspective. The assumption is that the continuities and, supposedly, personal identity, are objectively and, hence, third-person verifiable. Yet concern about personal identity is about one as originally ontological and would expect personal identity discussions to reflect this subjective aspect of the issue. There is nothing personal about personal identity without the person. According to Adeofe,

> if there is no epistemic gap, so to speak, between a first-person judgment and the person, then the judgment is the correct determination of identity, irrespective of any contradicting third-person judgment. Thus, we cannot neglect the first-person perspective; it is central to personal identity[9].

1.2 Strawsonism and the limits of Western thought on personhood

To his main work, *Individuals*, Strawson gave the subtitle: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics. Descriptive metaphysics is content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world[10]. It is to be contrasted with revisionary metaphysics, which is concerned to produce a better structure. According to Strawson, the general features of our conceptual structure lie submerged under the surface of language and therefore descriptive metaphysics has to go beyond the examination of the actual use of words and expose this general structure[11].

He further says that,

> there are categories and concepts, which in their most fundamental character, do not change at all. They are not technical concepts of special sciences, but commonplaces of the least refined thinking. It is with these concepts and categories,

their interconnections and the structure they form, that the descriptive metaphysics is primarily concerned[12].

In Strawson's metaphysical world, there are two categories of entities, viz, particulars and universal. Among the particulars, the material objects are basic particulars, in the sense that it is ultimately by making an identifying reference to particulars of these kinds, that we are able in general, to individuate and identify terms of other kinds, such as events. To identify any entity means to locate it in space-time, and material objects are the only entities, which constitute space-time-system. A particular is said to be identified, when the speaker makes an identifying reference to it and the hearer identifies it on the strength of the speaker's reference.

Persons are those basic particulars to which we ascribe consciousness. Thus in Strawson's ontology of particulars, both the mental bodies and persons share equal status[13]. Persons constitute a fundamental and irreducible kind of being.

Persons are credited with physical characteristics, designating location, attitude, and relatively enduring characteristics like height, coloring, shape and weight on the one hand and various states of consciousness like thinking, remembering, seeing, deciding, and feeling emotions on the other. How these two sorts of attributes to the very same thing, are the two questions Strawson discusses in the third chapter of the Individuals.

Two possible attempts to meet these problems, according to Strawson, are Cartesianism and what he calls No-Ownership doctrine of the self. Strawson examines and rejects both of them and proposes to acknowledge the concept of person as primitive.

According to Cartesianism,

> when we speak of a person we are really referring to one or both of two distinct substances of different types, each of which has its own appropriate types of states and properties. States of consciousness belong to one of these substances and not to the other[14].

Strawson rejects this theory because for him,

> the concept of the pure individual consciousness-the pure ego-is a concept that cannot exist; or at least, cannot exist as a primary concept in terms of which the concept of a person can be explained or analysed. It can exist only, if at all, as a secondary, non-primitive concept, which itself is to be explained, analysed in terms of a person**[15]**.

His argument is that, it is a necessary condition for ascribing any state of consciousness, experiences to oneself, that one should also ascribe them to others. Ascribing to others is not possible if we accept the Cartesian ego as the subject of all experiences or states of consciousness. For, to be the subject of a predication, something must be identified. Identification as we saw presupposes location in space-time. Cartesian egos can't be located in space-time. Only bodies can be located spatio-temporally. So predicating a state of consciousness to an Ego, presupposes that the same must be predicated to a subject, which is a material body.

Hence, in our day-to-day speech we use expressions, like 'I am in pain…. These expressions somehow suggest that I am the owner of this particular experience of having pain. According to the no-ownership theorist, experiences can be said to have an owner only in the sense of their causal dependence upon the state of some particular body. This causal dependence is sufficient to ascribe one's experience to some particular, individual thing. But this causal dependence is not contingent or logically transferable matter. We can own something only if its ownership is logically transferable. Thus, experiences are

not owned by anything except in the dubious sense of being causally dependent on the state of a particular body.

This theory, according to Strawson is incoherent. He says, the theorist denies the existence of the sense of possession but he is forced to make use of it when he tries to deny its existence. He argues that any attempt to eliminate the 'my' experience or my headache would yield something that is not a contingent fact at all. It is simply wrong to state that all experiences are causally dependent on the state of a single body. But the theorist cannot consistently argue that all experience of person P means the same thing as all experiences of a certain body 'B", for then the proposition would not be contingent, as his theory requires, but analytic[16].

He further says,

> with "my experience" he means a certain class of experience and this class of experiences are the experiences of a person. It is the sense of this "my" and of that he requires to deny. He cannot successfully deny that, because being "my experience in question-no contingent matter but necessary. That my headache is my headache is-for the headache-no contingent matter[17].

To get out of these difficulties, Strawson suggests acknowledging the concept of person as primitive. That is, as a concept that cannot be further analysed in a certain way or another. This means that the concept of a person is the concept of a type of entity, such that both predicate ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type[18].

Strawson names the predicates ascribing corporeal physical characteristics, M-predicates and those ascribing states of consciousness, P-predicates. All P-predicates may

not be said to be ascribing states of consciousness on the part of that to which they are ascribed.P-predicates are essentially both self-ascribable and others-ascribable. One ascribe P-predicate to others on the strength of observation of their behavior, but to oneself, not on the behavior criteria. It is because of the special nature of the P-predicates, or of a class of P-predicates. To learn their use is to learn both the aspects of their use. We speak of 'behaving in a depressed way' and of 'feeling depressed'. Feeling can only be felt not observed and behavior can only be observed not felt.

> But to have the concept like 'X's depression, the concept must cover both what is felt by X and what is observed by others. "It is not that these predicates have two kinds of meaning. Rather, it is essential to the single kind of meaning that they do have, that both ways of ascribing them should be perfectly in order[19].

1.3 Appreciation and criticism of Strawson's theory

Strawson makes an attempt to show that the concept of person is primitive or simple in the sense that it cannot be further analyzed. The whole argument is based on a group of central P-predicate which are other ascribable. Persons cannot be defined as a union of mind and body because the possession of mental properties as well as physical properties presupposes that the owner is a person. His subtle point is that the criteria of application of any particular psychological state or property are indistinguishable from the criteria of application of physical properties unless the subject has already been identified as a person.

However, we think that one must call to mind that Strawson's theory of person does not meet at least some important aspects of the mind-body problem, although he explicitly

pretends to deal with it. His attempt, we think, has resulted not in solving the problem, but in escaping it or explaining it away.

What he does is only to suggest that there is no problem with the concept of person, so as to say, 'if you consider it like this', that is to say, if you consider the concept in a non-Cartesian and non- physicalistic way, the problem vanishes. In other words, his suggestion to consider the concept of person as primitive does not solve the traditional problem of the relation between mind and body, ontologically considered. So, he offered only a conceptual solution to a real problem with which philosophers of mind deal with, especially under the influence of modern neurosciences. For instance, Strawson's conceptual analysis cannot cover problems in the context of questions concerning mental causation. How should we explain the causal relevance of mental states in the physical world in a Strawsonian way?

In addition to the above-mentioned general semantic problem, we believe in particular that it is simply not the case that the concept of person, as we have it even in our ordinary language, cannot be subjected to further analysis. According to Alakkalkunnel and Kanzian,

> as long we can conceptually distinguish between M-predicate and P-predicates of persons, we are now analysing people? As long as we speak of persons as, for instance, having intentions or making experiences, and of persons as having physical properties like weight or shape or something like that, are we not analysing them[20]?

Furthermore, the key idea of ascription of M-predicates and P-predicates are, as we think, to be reconsidered. To ascribe is to consider as belonging to. Belonging to can be understood at least in two senses. In the first sense, as we think Strawson does, M-

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predicates and P-predicate are ascribed to persons, as a kind of underlying substratum of these predicates. In the second sense, one might take it in a more 'Russelian' or 'tropist' way, i.e. persons, so to say, as made of M-predicates and P-predicates or properties. In the first Aristotelean sense, persons are real subjects of properties; in the second sense, persons are a kind of sum total or bundle of properties. We cannot deal here with the second alternative. But we want to point out that Strawson, as a theorist following the first way, must presuppose, that there is, necessarily, something that exists, before you ascribe M- or P-predicate to it. But, if the concept of person has to be primitive, as Strawson's theory requires, it should not be able to refer to something which exists, at least conceptually, without M-predicates. The issue takes us back to the first person perspective.

Another aspect of criticism may be that Strawson's criteria can be applied to other level beings like animals (perhaps to plants and trees) too, without any modifications. At least a big class of P-predicates can be applied to any sort of animals. No doubt, animals also have experience; they too feel pain and so on. Even the behavior of plants can be interpreted in a vocabulary using P-predicates. If this is the case, how does Strawson distinguish between animals and plants on the one hand and human persons on the other, if at all he distinguishes[21]? Or does he intend to raise animals and plants to the level of human beings and to credit them too with personhood? How to argue for this rather radical thesis? These and some similar questions are left open from Strawson's treatment of the concept of persons.

One has to admit that Strawson actually does not discuss this question whether animals can be ascribed the status of persons at all. Of course, he shouldn't be accused of what he doesn't deal with. But doing systematic philosophy we think we are to point it out.

In this context, it is also worth mentioning that it is difficult to distinguish between Strawson's concept of a person and the concept of a human being, understood as the concept of a member of a biological species. Obviously the concept of a human being can also be analyzed in terms of M- and P-predicates. Is Strawson of the opinion that there should not be such a distinction at all? Then he is confronted with all the problems concerning the traditional concept of persons, which takes person as synonymous with member of the species of human beings. We just want to call to mind arguments from authors in the field of artificial intelligence research, who regards it as a kind of racism to exclude all sorts of computers or robots from personhood because of conceptual reasons.

Again, according to some theories, (ontologists) once human beings are born, personhood is considered automatic. Some consider adult legal capacity to be a criterion for personhood in certain contexts, such as the American Constitution, where one must have adult capacity to exercise the rights (an infant cannot engage in free assembly, for example). Some have argued that personhood could also extend to fetuses and human embryos, depending on what theory one subscribes to (metaphysicists). With respect to abortion, 'personhood' is the status of a human being having individual human rights[22]

Strawson's theory and other western theories may be seen as a conclusive theory of the concept "person". Nevertheless they cannot solve the main problems of a philosophy of personality or personhood as they are discussed nowadays in philosophy, especially in matters of personal identity and social order. That is, what is a person, how should a person be determined, are persons metaphysical or communitarian ontologically? At any rate we can come to the conclusion that it is short-handed to be applied to a modern theory of personality without more detailed considerations. The debate, as to when personhood begins, is not peculiar to Western thought. Indeed, most African scholars have also agreed and disagreed on this same dilemma.

1.4 The *Akan* Conception of Personhood

According to Appiah, in order to make sense of the *Akan* theory of person, *onipa*, it is important to start by saying something about the *Asante* social organisation. The reason for this, is that Appiah believes that it is hard to isolate a theory of person from people's general views of the world. Appiah states that, "the Asante are a matrilineal clan. The family is taken as a subgroup of matriclan usually consisting of a group with a common ancestress in their grandmother or great-grandmother[23]. This group is referred to as the "*abusua*", meaning clan.

The head of the family is a maternal uncle, but it may be a great uncle, nephew or brother, who holds property on behalf of the matriclan. Appiah says all of the *Asante* are divided into seven or eight *abusua*. Each person belongs to a particular *abusua* and it is this belongingness that determines key functioning which is normally restricted to fellow clanfolk. People of the same clan, for example, will share in the same taboos on food utterances. Membership of this maternal group is held to flow from the fact that a person's body (*nipadua*) is made from the blood of the mother the (*mogya*) hence the

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abusua is sometimes called the *bogya*[24]. The other two components of a person are the *sunsum* (individual spirit) and the *okra* of which the former— the *sunsum* derives from the father at conception, and the latter, a sort of life force, is sent to a person at birth from Nyame, the high god, and departs the body only at the person's last breath[25].

From this it is quite clear that the *Akans* have a tripartite conception of the ontological make-up of a person. The body, *nipadua*, the *sunsum*, which Appiah calls an individual spirit and the *okra*, which is seen as a life force that is given by the creator to every individual when he/she is born. These three elements combine to give a conception of person. Although descent is maternal Appiah also holds that the

> *Asante* people also belong to a paternal clan, called the *ntoro*, which also has its associated taboos. These taboos are seen as arising out of the fact that the members of the *ntoro* have souls that share a common source, and similarity between father and son are held to derive from this inherited *sunsum*[26].

Wiredu agrees with Appiah when he states that

> among the *Akan*. the constitution of a person is made of "*nipadua* (a body) and a combination of the following entities conceived as spiritual substances: (I) *okra* (soul, approximately), that whose departure from a man means death, (2) *sunsum*, that which gives rise to a man's character, (3) *ntoro*, something passed on from the father which is the basis of inherited characteristics and, finally (4) *mogya*, something passed on from the mother which determines a man's clan identity and which at death becomes the *saman* (ghost)[27].

He says *mogya* means blood and this entity is very close to the material characteristic of a person.

Elsewhere he holds that the *Akan* conception of a person is the result of the union of three elements, not necessarily sharply disparate ontologically, though each is different from the other. There is the life principle (okra), the blood principle (*mogya*), and what might he called the

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personality principle (*sunsum*)[28]. He explains the *okra* as an entity that directly proceeds from God. It is a real speck of God that he gives to the individual together with the gift of life and destiny. W.E. Abraham actually traces the identities of the individual to the okra, arguing that a person does not retain individualized identity[29] His argument is that since okra is the principle of life, it therefore means that it is a general component of every individual, and as such cannot be individuated. He might not sustain this position because in matters of personal identity, recourse is not made to *okra* again. It is now the issue before the individual and his *okra*. The Igbo say, *otu nne muru*, *ma na, obughi otu agbara nwe*- that you may be born of the same mother, but with different existential vicissitudes. Wiredu agrees with Appiah that the *sunsum* originates from the father. However, Wiredu holds that it does not come in a direct way but through the father's contribution of *ntoro*, semen. This *ntoro* combines with the blood from the mother to constitute the human frame which would be the human being that would come in time. Wiredu holds that both parents contribute to the characteristics of the individual but the father is taken to particularly contribute to the characteristic of personal presence exhibited by the individual.

In his discussion of the Akan concept of the mind, he holds that a person is constituted by the *nipadua*, *okra*, *sunsum*,as well as the *mogya* and the *ntoro*. If we take the *mogya* and the *ntoro* as the originators of the human being as suggested by Wiredu earlier, then, it is correct to conclude that these are the three crucial elements that constitute persons. Gy ekye is in agreement with this identification also holding the three characteristics as the constitutive elements of personhood. Further, he holds that the *Akans* distinguish, in the make-up of the individual, the *mogya* and the *ntoro* as endowed by human beings from the *sunsum* and the okra which are divine[30]. He agrees with Wiredu that both the *ntoro* and the *mogya* issue inherited genetic factors which then become the basis of an individual's characteristics.

However, Wiredu says that in dealing with these notions there is need to exercise caution particularly when translating the *okra*:

> The *Akan* term is often translated into English as 'soul'. This is quite definitely wrong. The soul is supposed in Western philosophy to be a purely immaterial entity that somehow inhabits the body. The okra, by contrast, is quasi physical. It is not of course, supposed to be straightforwardly physical as it is believed not to be fully subject to spatial constraints. Nor is it perceivable to the naked eye. Nevertheless, in some ways it seems to be credited with para-physical properties. "For example, highly developed medicine men are claimed to be able to enter into communication with an *okra*, and those that have eyes with medicinally heightened perception are said to be capable of seeing such things[31].

Wiredu claims that some *okra* are said to be allergic to certain foods while other okra are not allergic to those foods. If, for some reason, an *okra* is offended it has to be pacified through offerings. He also states that the okra is taken as a person's double in that it is seen as having a separate role from the person. Hence when a person finds herself in trouble it is said that her *okra* has failed to guide her.

It is evident that these kinds of things cannot be said about the soul from a Western perspective. But by far the most significant difference between the *okra* and the soul is that while the *okra* is very distinctly, indeed categorically, different from *adwene* (mind), the soul seems to be regarded as being the same as mind[32]. For Wiredu in the Western conception the soul and the mind are taken as identical entities in as far as they perform the same functions. This is what makes them stand out as one and the same entity. On the contrary, the *Akans* do not think that mind and the *okra* perform the same functions. They actually conceive these two as strictly distinct from each other[33].

Gyekye's account of the *okra* is similar to Wiredu's in one respect and differs in yet another respect. Gyekye like Wiredu, claims the "*okra* is the embodiment and the transmitter of the

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individual's destiny (fate:*nkrabea*). It is explained as a spark of the Supreme Being (*Onyame*) in man. It is thus described as divine and as having an antemundane existence with the Supreme Being[34]. Like Wiredu, Gvekye holds that it for this reason that all are considered to be children of God. In contrast toWiredu, Gyekye then moves to conclude that: So conceived, the okra can be considered as the equivalent of the concept of the soul in other metaphysical systems. Hence it is correct to translate the *okra* into English as soul[35]. While Wiredu urges caution in viewing the *okra* as soul Gyckye embraces that view.

It appears as if the kind of problem that Gyekye has run himself into is simply one of being caught in two disparate metaphysical schemes. He wants to retain Cartesian dualism and see its traces in the *Akan* scheme, yet at the same time he feels obliged that he must do the *Akan* scheme full justice by outlining it as truly as is possible. As a result he simply, with abundant convenience, rejects the idea that it is sensible for the *Akans* to hold that essentially the spiritual component of persons can and do make physical appearances. He rejects this idea precisely because it does not fit with his dualist scheme, for that scheme must retain clear distinction between physical and non-physical characteristics.

However, Gyekye argues that a logical distinction must be maintained between the *okra* and the *sunsum*. He suggests three reasons why they should not be seen as the same entity.

> First in dreaming it is the *sunsum* and not the okra that leaves the body. If the okra were to leave the body that would mean death of the individual. Secondly, moral references are made to the *sunsum* as opposed to the *okra*. Thirdly, the okra is seen as an embodiment and transmitter of One's destiny, while the *sunsum* is seen as the source of personality and disposition. Gyekye holds that "the *sunsum* is not identical with the brain but that it can act on the brain[36].

It is his articulation of the relation between the *okra* and *honam* (body) that Gyekye reiterates the dualistic nature of the *Akan* conception of persons. He claims that: Such a dualistic conception

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does not necessarily imply a belief in a causal relation or interaction between the two parts, the soul and the body[37]. He holds that the *Akans* are interactionists as both the body and soul have dual influences on each other.

Wiredu, on the other hand, seeks to draw a communalistic conclusion from this metaphysical view. On the relational aspect he notes: Through the possession of an *okra*, *rnogya* and *sunsum* a person is situated in a network of kinship relations that generate a system of rights and obligations[38].

 Like Appiah he holds that the chief basis of lineage is the matrilineal clan. He says that when an individual is born he/she has a right to be nursed and with time this right is transformed into a duty. He claims that another part of nurturing a human being is the art of instructing the individual into becoming a being that is capable of leading a gainful life. This function is primarily fulfilled by the father of a newborn. The father has to train and educate the child into becoming a person with character. All this points to the sociality of the human being which begins from conception hence lie writes: To the *Akans* a human being is already social at conception, for the union of the principle and the personality principle already defines a social identity[39]. In a further sense, he claims that a human being is a social being in that when she is born she descends into an environment that is ready populated by people. It is for this reason that he suggests that a human being should be seen as having a wider frame of rights and responsibilities that extend to embrace the whole of humanity.

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The possession of *okra*, that spark of God, links all humans together as one family. This statement is true but does not mean that when Mr A experiences headache, Mr B should at the same time be in pain as a result of headache. We shall return to this argument when we are discussing the differences between personal and social identities. According to Weridu, in one sense the Akan word *onipa* translates into the English word person in the sense of a human being the possessor of *okra*, *mogya*, and *sunsum*. In this sense everyone is born a person. an *onipa*. This is the descriptive sense of the word. But there is a further sense of the word *onipa* in which to call an individual a person is to commend him /her: it implies the recognition that s/he has attained a certain status in the community. Specifically, it implies that s/ he has demonstrated an ability through hard work and sober thinking to sustain a household and make contributions to the communal welfare[40].

He argues that if the individual meets all these ends through positive contributions s/he will be deemed to be qualified to hold the title of *onipa*. If an individual is consistently failing at living up to these expectations, then, one is placed at a distance from the term. He clearly states that he agrees with Menkiti's construal of the nature of personhood on the continent wherein he claims that personhood is the sort of thing that one can fail at since it is not automatically granted at birth but progressively acquired as one gets along in society. Wiredu says personhood is subject to degrees and in order to attain it one has to subject himself to the determinants of those varying degrees which can only be attained if one is consistently seen as successful in her endeavors as an individual, as well as a social being who is in good stead in as far as fulfilling her obligations to the household and to the community are concerned. For him, the *Akans* see a human as essentially dependent, so he writes:

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> From this point of view, human society is seen as a necessary framework for mutual aid for survival and, beyond that, for the attainment of reasonable levels of well-being. "A number of *Akan* sayings testify to this conception, which is at the root of *Akan* communalism. One is to the effect that a human being is not a palm tree so as to be sufficient unto himself[41].

What Wiredu is doing here is in keeping with the dominant view on the continent that sees most concepts as founded on communitarianism, including the concept of person. Wiredu clearly aligns himself with the radical version of communitarianism whereas his fellow clansman, Gyekye, attacks this position as unsustainable. Since Wiredu endorses Menkiti, Gyekye would brand him a radical comniunitarian and Gyekye would particularly dispute Wiredu's claim that such a radical communitarianism is based on the *Akan* understanding since Gyekye claims the *Akan* tradition provides evidence for moderate communitarianism.

We have two significant differences between Wiredu and Gyekye's interpretation of personhood from the *Akan* perspective. If we take Wiredu and Gyekye communitarian view, we see that Gyekye chooses to defend the moderate version while Wiredu seeks to defend the radical version. Wiredu argues that the same substance should not be interpreted as an equivalent of a soul. We think that these differences are significant to a degree that they merit an interpretation.

Gyekye notes that the *Akans* believe that a person is a communal being but they also hold that s/he is other things as well. The things that s/he has in mind are will, memory, and rationality. By virtue of possessing these things the individual is not to be seen as shackled by the communal constraints at the expense of his/her own individual inventiveness[42]. S/he is distinct in many ways from other members of society and still s/he will seek to follow her own distinct presence and manner of behavior.

We might remind ourselves that each individual inherits key characteristics from her parents, particularly from the father through the *ntoro* which then leads to a particular construction of the *sunsum*. The *sunsum* is taken as giving a total effect of certain key characteristics that an individual is identified with. These key characteristics are not communal hence they give an individual her/his own separate identity that must not be subservient to the reality of the community. This does not mean that the community must be dismissed altogether as having and serving no function in the individual's make-up. As Gyekye argues,

> the community has a role to play but that role must be seen as moderate as opposed to radical. We may state that the major success is to put that we do not make a serious ontological distinction between those who fail morally and those who succeed. Whatever distinction can be made between those who are morally worthy and those who are not, we cannot say that elderly people who are known to be wicked are not persons in a serious constitutive sense[43].

Although Gyekye fails to take the difference between the community and the individual seriously in his articulation of moderate communitarianism, we should still credit him for pointing out some serious errors that radical communitarians are committed to. We also think that he has outlined the *Akan* scheme in a manner that shows that it is highly likely that they hold a moderate view as opposed to Menkiti and Wiredu's radical view.

There is also a serious problem that is posed by Wiredu's commitment to radical communitarianism through his support for Menkiti's position. Gyekye has correctly pointed out that Menkiti's position and any other position for that matter that sympathises with it, rides roughshod over the individual's right. Menkiti himself claims that whatever rights individual might have, these are secondary to the reality of the community since the community takes precedence over the individual. For Menkiti, unequivocally, individual rights play second fiddle to the all important communal rights[44]. But the question is, has community rights which are not

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made for human well being? At what point does the dignity of a person subsumed by the rights of his community? Can a community get certain issues about reality and life wrong? Gyekye also seems to support this idea when he says that whatever individual rights a person may have, the community will not hesitate to abrogate them in favor of those policies that promote social harmony. We have found this part problematic for Gyekye's moderate communitarianism. We also find this aspect of communitarianism problematic for Wiredu. While we acknowledge that it is possible for moderate communitarianism as stated by Gyekye to make amends by dropping the clauses that are offensive to respecting human rights and dignity that are ontological, it is not possible for radical communitarians to make such a move. Since Wiredu has clearly aligned himself with radical communitarians it means that he takes it to be the case that individual rights play a second fiddle to communal aspirations. For in the radical view it is not, probably, permissible for individuals to express their own opinions as freely as Wiredu makes to be the case for traditional *Akan* society. What is prioritised would not be logical rigour but the rigour of abiding by communal dictates. For such communal structure prioritises the safety of maintaining the status quo over ideas that individuals might have. Contrary to the Igbo attitude to the beginning and end of personhood, whereas emphases is made on the need for social order, individual's right, dignity, and creative intelligence is very paramount in matters of personal/social identities.

1.5 Personhood in Yoruba Thought System

Segun Gbadegesin states that there are two meanings attached to the Yoruba concept of personhood, *eniyan*[45]. There is a sense in which *eniyan* is seen as normative and one in which it is seen as having an ordinary meaning. The normative aspect is one that is in keeping with communitarian interpretations of what a person is and the ordinary meaning would restrict itself

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to the structural components of a person. Greater emphasis, Ghadegesin says, Is put on the normative meaning[46].

According to Brown, in Yoruba thought personhood begins with the infusion of a spirit into a foetus and the emergent composite accepting a destiny for its life[47]. Our focus here is not on destiny because for the Yoruba, destiny is seen as a pathway leading the individual to self-actualization. Rather our aim is to see if the Yoruba have these ontological structural constituent of personhood. Gdadegesin

> identifies four crucial elements as *ara*, *okan*, *emi*, and *ori*. *Ara* is the physico-material part of the human being, just like *ahu* (body) in Igbo. *Okan*, which has dual character is first seen as the physical organ that is responsible for the physical circulation of blood in the individual's body. It is also seen as the source of psychic and emotional reactions. According to Gdadegesin, "*okan* has yet another function as it is also the source of thought[48].

It is interesting to note here that the *okan* of Yoruba can be likened to the *akonauche* in Igbo conceptual scheme. This is so because both are seen as the source of thought which is not mere obedience to rules and logical sequence. Reacting to the question of what the brain does since it is the source of thought? He says that, in short, *opolo* seems to be recognized as the source of logical reasoning, while *okan* is the source of all consciousness and emotional responses[49]. The *emi* is construed as the active principle of life, just like *ndu* (life), the life giving element put in place by the deity. It is also construed as part of the divine breath. The final element is *ori*, which is the physical head. It is seen as having dual character, first, it is vital as a physical characteristic, and secondly, it is equally vital in its role as the seat of the brain. It is in its second sense that it is seen as a bearer of a person's destiny as well as determinant of that individual's personality. Oyeshile, Oladipo, Adeofe, and Brown agree with Gbadegesin that these ontological components can be grouped into two; mainly physico-material and mental-spiritual. *Ara* belongs

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to the former, while *emi* to the latter, and *ori* and *okan* have physical and mental aspects. The *okan* is postulated in mentalistic terms so as to account for thought and *ori* is postulated in a spiritualistic way so as to account for destiny. While in Igbo conceptual scheme, we talk about *mkpuruobi*, *obi, ahu, mmuo, ndu*, the Yoruba talks about *ara, emi, okan, and ori.* Like Brown rightly points out about the Yoruba that personhood starts from conception and these ontological components are what is necessary and sufficient in matters of personal identity. However, this does not conflate with the social realities or identity of a person since we are social beings. Another interesting point is that while the Igbo recognize *akonauche* as a physical and mental attribute of thought, the Yoruba sees *okan* also as an attribute of thought. Gbadegesin, however, ends on a moral note when he argues that personhood is only rendered meaningful by appealing to destiny and the reality of the community[50]. His position seems to be taking social identity as the only true identity of a person. Here we differ with Gbadegesin because in matters of personal identity recourse is not made to the social realities.

1.6 Personhood in Igbo Thought System

The *onwe* is for the Igbo anthroplogists, the basic unit of personhood. We shall dwell more on the idea of the *onwe* in our chapter five. According to Nwala, "the traditional Igbo believe that man or a person is both spirit and non-spirit. A person possesses two main parts- *mmuo* (spirit) and *ahu* (body) *Mmuo*- this is the spiritual part of man and it incorporates the elements of spirit, intelligence, feeling, emotion, conscience[51] There are also other ontological characteristics of a person which are recognized in every personal identity. They are present in every person before you are described as a person. We have *Obi* or *mkpuruobi* which is located in the heart not just biologically, but as part of the invisible constitutive elements of the person and is the seat of the life-giving force, *ndu*. *Ndu* is understood as a life giving force, with an existence in which a

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person still functions in his or her natural mode. At this stage, the social realities and identity is not made reference to because these metaphysical constituents can exist without the social identity. It is important to note that among Igbo scholars, *mmadu* (person) is seen as both material and immaterial (*mmuo*) In the words of Nze,

> among the Igbo, in whose culture, the person *Mmadu* is conceived as integrally composed of a material element *Ahu-* the body and immaterial spiritual element *mmuo*, *nkpurobi*, *obi-* the heart which is often spoken of as a tripartite or could be casually and interchangeably labeled obi, the heart *nkpuruobi*, the seed and *mmuo*, the spirit. ……, we are not going into this ontological or metaphysical aspect of man in Igbo perspective[52].

Nze is not alone in this thought. Madu agrees with Nze and Nwala that the latter sense speaks of *mmadu* as being (*ndu*) the activating principle sustaining all existence[53]. If we analyze these claims closely, we shall see that it is a case that any notion that qualifies as metaphysical ought to be free of communal considerations as primary constituents of the nature of person. It has to articulate the notion from a constitutive elements perspective that is non social. Although all persons can be said to be social by nature; what makes them persons is the mere possession of these key metaphysical elements as opposed to sociality of any form. Naturally, a key question that arises is whether these elements are sufficient for the constitution of persons without bringing in moral considerations. We seek to show that it is possible to articulate such a concept without violating any cardinal principle of African identity. In our view, most communitarians are content with articulating their communitarian position without paying attention to the metaphysical implications of their statements.

In Igbo cosmology for instance, children are recognized and by birth enjoins the metaphysics of personal identity. This is why the Igbo say, *nwata kwozie aka, osoro okenye re nri-* that a child

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that washes his/her hands neatly and who is hard working, dines with the elderly. This though might sound literary, but philosophically, it is significant in matters of personal identity because a child shares same metaphysical components of personal identity with the elderly. Ordinary or ontological usage of the word "it' does not lend credence to that idea which denies children of their relevance in matters of personal identity.

However, even though most Igbo scholars would agree that the idea of personhood can be summed-up in two categories, *ahu* (body) and *mmuo* (spirit), we should note that this dualism is different from the Cartesian or same in Western categories. This according to Agulanna suggests that within the gamut of Igbo traditional thought system, there is a belief in some kind of dualism in the conception of the human person-a dualism that has both epistemological as well as metaphysical implications[54]. This difference lies in the way most empiricist philosophers would present a person as *tabularasa* at conception. The Igbo duality sees these components as ontologically imbedded with knowledge. There is this believe among the Igbo, says Nwala that,

> man is not only regarded as the most important aspect of creation, he is also regarded as being superior in natural intelligence to other beings, even the spirits (except *Chukwu* himself who knows everything). The spirits are more powerful than men but like human beings they can exhibit some foolish attitude and calousness[55].

According to Agulanna,

> what this desiderata of personhood above shows is that to the Igbo '*ahu'* and '*mmuo'* are the major divisions of the person. However, when the Igbo talk of '*ahu'*, they mean by it not just the bodily frame of a person but also included in the notion is the whole of the material constituents of a person. On its part, '*mmuo'* (spirit) is that aspect of a person that is reborn into the world. But it does more than this- it is also able to live on in the spiritual world after the disintegration of the body at death[56].

We need to now reiterate on some points made earlier in this chapter. First is that the Igbo believe in the duality of the human person in which the *onwe* is the fundamental element. It is important to note that while the *ahu* (body) comprises of all the physical and quasi-physical components of the ontological elements of a person, the *mmuo* (spirit) or *onwe* is the immaterial, yet ontologically linked with the physical constitutive elements of a person. Again, we should note that contrary to the Western understanding or notion of the duality and individuality of the ontological person, the Igbo recognizes the community as part of the social aspects of the person that helps in the actualization and existence of the person. But again, contrary to the communitarians view that the community determines the dignity of the person, however, contemporary experience has shown the community as very useful in the attainment of personhood in matters of social reality. This is because they believe that communal rules are made by man and for man's harmony in the sociality and not man made for these rules. Personhood therefore starts from conception. A person enjoins and is accorded some respect as soon as s/he is born. According to Anumihe, in a lecture he delivered at the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, he says, … that the rebranding project must start as a personal thing, an individual conviction and decision that will influence others and impact positively on the society[57]. Therefore, in matters of personal identity, it is the creative, intelligent, ontological individual that recourse is made to and not the community.

1.7 *Mmadu* as the beauty of creation: The Igbo worldview

Etymologically the word *mma-ndu* as prefix became *mmadu*-meaning the dignifying beauty of life. *Mmadu* (person) is the highest of all creatures. Nwoga confirms this point to the primacy of *mmadu* in the centre of economy. For the Igbo, there is a basic concept of humanity. Man has first to be a human being[58]. This is the meaning of the Igbo *mmaduka* (man is greater). The same

idea is conveyed when the Igbo say *mmadubuisi* (man is first and foremost or man matters). Here the person is seen as the master of other achievements and beings. Philosophically, s/he is seen as *isi* (head) to explain its primacy over all other parts of the body. Here Madu argues that this latter sense speaks of *mmadu* as being *ndu* (life)[59] the activitating principle sustaining all existence. This is the reason for Igbo names like, *Ndukauba-* life worth more than achievements, *Manuemelula onweya* do not be responsible of your miserable life.

The points to be drawn from these examples show that personhood is primarily linked with life. The Igbo see *ndu* (life) as prior to other achievements. Achievements are values which help life to flourish and attain certain social status. But it is not the determinant or the basis on which life must thrive or built. This is because the Igbo believe that *omemaoji ka onye ohi mma-* s/he who does not trade so as to cheat his neighbor is worthy of living than a cheat that parades her/his wealth. Even though the acquisition of wealth is good, but it does not prevent one from challenges of personal identity and crisis. For the Igbo therefore, a king's wealth does not prevent his death.

1.8 Reincarnation, Immortality and Destiny in Igbo philosophy; Contradictions and Challenges

It is interesting to note from the outset that the Igbo belief in *ilo-uwa* and the doctrine of reincarnation is different and not the same. Most often, one might subjectively think that il*o-uwa* and reincarnation is one and the same thing. In our mind, the consequence of this belief is simple- on whatever ground in which the belief in reincarnation is rejected, then, *ilo-uwa* should equally be rejected. The implication of that conclusion is that the Christian religion must not see anything positive in *ilo-uwa* because it is completely against Christian doctrine and thus should

not even be discussed by a Christian doctrine and thus should not even be discussed by a Christian scholar.

However, a lot has been written about reincarnation. Robillard has shown that the beliefs and the theories of reincarnation can be found throughout the world. He says

> The doctrine of the transmigration of souls is not exclusive to India. It can be found throughout the world; there are many who believe in it today. Classical Greece knew the doctrine and proclaimed it from the housetops. Plato believed in it; Pindar did too; Pythagoras made it a fundamental dogma of his school[60].

Even though throughout the belief in reincarnation is found almost in all cultures of the world, one can approach the discussion in two ways. 1) Reincarnation among Asia cultures with India as representative.

2) Western type of reincarnation especially the European views;

> Before we relate our two ways to *ilo-uwa,* it would be right to say what actually make the described as the belief in the autonomy of the human soul, which passes out from a dead person in to another body different from the original body, whether this body is a man, an animal, a vegetative or mineral being, this belief has many forms and may be as old as mankind. Etymologically reincarnation means 'embody again or enflesh or again in fresh or again in another body[61].

The autonomy of the human soul which survives death; the original body; the new body or successive bodies. We shall need these three elements again during the comparison with *ilo-uwa.* In India, all the indigenous traditions, Hinduism ,Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism, as well as the originally foreign Zoroastrianism, believe in reincarnation, even if the conceptual support depend on the theories which may be at variance if not in contradiction with each other.

This statement that the notions of reincarnation which is found in India are fraught with contradictions. This is because there seems to be nothing in their nature which can help one to

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undertake a logical study of them. What can be done here is to isolate from them from the three notions, which can acts as points of dialogue with the Igbo belief in *ilo-uwa*. The principal points of dialogue are god, the soul and the world. It is noted that in Hinduism for instance, there is no defined relationship between God, the soul, and the world. This is because they lack a doctrine of creation. This absence of the god who is the creator and judge of the living and the dead separates Indian reincarnation from the Igbo *ilo-uwa.* In Igbo, God is called *Chineke* (God the creation) and on this idea of god depend on the relationship between God and the traditional beliefs of the Igbo including the belief in *ilo-uwa*. What these other religious have done is to substitute creation with emanation, which assumes that nothing is distinct from God who becomes merely cosmic energy or some kind of world soul. The second point of description between Indian reincarnation and the Igbo is the notion of the soul is that Igbo anthropology has no room for any dualistic theory. For the Indian religions, God is not necessary for the condition of the soul. The soul undergoes a cyclic birth and, unlike the Igbo. There is for the Indian the desire to end the "endless cycle of birth either through *Knowledge* (The Upanishads Gnosticism), or through the magical power of Yoga. It is believed says Robillard that through this *gosis*, the soul can be liberated from the seeds of future reincarnation and thus, can enter into nirvana, that is to say, can melt into the *All* or universal Self, and having become itself impersonal, is liberated from its destiny[62].

The third point is the *law of Karma*. Here also the difference with the Igbo is clear. Although the Igbo say: *ebe onye dara ka Chi ya kwaturuya* (where a man falls there his *Chi* pushed him down), it is more of providence than fatalism. In Indian conception on the other hand, the cosmos is regulated entirely by the law of *Karma*, according to which there is an irrevocable course of the order of things. Thus in the moral order, the soul must be reincarnated to be

rewarded or punished in accordance with this previous births. Unlike Igbo religion which has priests, sacrifice and absolution, as playing mediatory in this system, no priests, no sacrifice, no absolution could notify the fatal order of events and time.

The modern European view of reincarnation (Western) views reincarnation as an event that explains new positive occasion of achievements.

According to Robillard,

> those who hold to it believe that it guarantees a new positive occasion for achievement, since one life is too short; that it gives room for one to correct the is takes of the previous existence; that, unlike the Indian belief, which tries to get out of it, the modern theory desires it, and for some of these proponents, it is an antidote to the crises of life[63].

Suffice to say that, etymologically, *ilo-uwa* means return to the world:, or welcome to the world[64]. For the Igbo, this belief generally implies that the qualified deceased or, living persons can *return* to the earth through birth in their children, grandchildren, great grandchildren or the children of their relatives within the extended *family circle* as a sign of love and fellowship. This world will be using the word '*return* for *ilo-uwa* in certain cases. This is derived from the etymology of the world as seen above. One can explain more what *ilo-uwa* is in practice. Three things can help one to analyze *ilo-uwa* in its comparison with the definition of the term reincarnation given above.

1) Reincarnation proposes a dualism of body and soul or soul and matter. Igbo anthropology on the other hand abhors any form of dualism. The Igbo do not talk about soul but person. Man is a spiritual person and the living-dead are also spiritual persons and are superior to humans. Ikenga-Metuh puts it clearly this way:

> Hence it is the full individual persons not a part of him or his soul which survives after death. Similarly at conception, a new individual person is created by God. This is so I spite of beliefs about reincarnation. What reincarnates… is not the personhood of the ancestor but an aspect of his self[65].

The above quotation indicates that the Igbo distinguish between the individual person from the ancestor of which he is the 'reincarnation'. *Ilo-uwa* is thus impossible within a dualistic anthropological system or belief.

Reincarnation proposes that all the dead can be reincarnated, but in *ilo-uwa*, only the qualified persons can return. By qualified persons the Igbo mean a deceased good person who has been accepted by the ancestors. Wicked people are excluded because they lack the relevant qualifications. We should note that, a common man, in a strict sense of common, can reincarnate because he or she was not wicked but in conformity with the communal ethos.

Reincarnation proposes that there is an original body and a new body while in the Igbo *ilo-uwa*, both the original body and the new body are considered side by side. Actually the most distinctive proofs of *ilo-uwa* are based on visible or sensible resemblance; the reappearance of marks on the body, the 'relacking; of a lacking part of the body, the facial and physical resemblance, the vocal and oratorical resemblance, behavioural resemblance, intellectual and humorous resemblance.

However, it could seem as if that, *ilo-uwa* in Igbo thought contradicts the idea of immortality. The idea of immortality in Igbo belief is not strictly seen from the Christian perspective. What the Igbo believe in is that the memories of a good dead person could be remembered and wished in another living, perhaps newly born person. In traditional Igbo setting, people who are adjudged to have lived a good life on earth are believed even though dead, but have gone to join the ancestor from where they will be protecting and appealing for their family members.

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Even though the idea of immortality is found among Igbo thought system, it is not the same with its Christian perspective. While the former sees immortality as acts of memory of the deceased being replicated by his clan and family members, the latter conceive of immortality as a reward for those who loved God and have come to be part of his unchangeable being. This is the reason while *ilo-uwa* is not for the Igbo a total rebirth of the deceased, but as part of the deceased character and some biological traits found in some members of the deceased family or lineage.

It will seen contradictory if we see immortality of the soul real and still expect the deceased to come to the physical realm as a whole person. This would raise questions as to whether the soul that is immortal has come back to earth. Or does the owner of the body different from the soul s/he carries? Or could there be two different souls in one body? These are some of the question that seem contradictory and challenging to the doctrine of reincarnation and immortality of the soul.

The differences between reincarnation and the doctrine of immortality of the soul have its remote effect with destiny. The Yoruba would find some pockets of fatalism in their conception of human destiny. What the Yoruba would say is that a person's *Ori* brings one's destiny from birth and becomes part of the person's ontological make-up. Though Oyeshile, Gbdegasin had given a soft deterministic interpretation of the idea of destiny and the role of *Ori* in Yoruba conception of personhood, the puzzle yet seems unresolved since the idea of *Ori* still counts in the ontological components of a person.

Similarly, some Igbo scholars would think that the notion of *Chi* in Igbo thought system would suggest that the Igbo world-view on personhood is fatalistic. This is because traditionally the idea of *Chi* was described as an entity responsible for people's successes and wellbeing. We had

argued in my M.Phil Desertation that holding tenaciously such a view would amount to a fatalistic interpretation of the nature of personhood. Thus, if we take the idea of *Chi* to be responsible for people's success and failure, why do we blame and punish those who break the laws of the society? Again, can one's *Chi* be transferred to another? What happens to *Chi* when its bearer dies? Who is the idea of *Chi* representing in Igbo cosmology and cosmogony, is it the person or *Chiukwu* (supreme being) Our findings revealed that what the idea Chi represent in the ontological elements of a person is what the Igbo call *akonauche*. We shall however leave this particular point for extensive treatment in the next chapter. The idea of Chi therefore is stereotypic and not referential.

1.9 Summary

We may need to quickly reiterate on some salient points earlier made in this chapter. First, in the West a distinction is made between body, soul and mind while the Yoruba, Akan and Igbo do not make such a parallel distinction. Thus in both the Yoruba, Akan and Igbo, a human being, that is a person, is a composite of body (ahu,ara, nipadua) and spirit (mind),(mmuo,sunsum, emi) and without either, there is no corresponding person.

It is also worthwhile to point out that there is a difference on what Africans take to be the core of personhood. Comnuinitarians point to the primacy of the community that imposes moral obligations on the individual while metaphysicists do not necessarily take this route. Instead, metaphysicists point to some key ontological elements that are required to work in combination, in constituting personhood. The issue between African metaphysicists and Western views of personhood can be seen as a difference in the importance that can be allowed to be accorded to one or more ontological elements in the determination of personhood. Some Westerners, at least,

believe that there is one key element that makes persons. African metaphysicists hold that all ontological elements are equally important in the attainment of the state of personhood.

From what has been said thus far, the following seem clear. First, these components may be grouped into two: physico-material and mental—spiritual. The physical death, the body dies, but the individual that is responsible for giving rise to personhood may survive that death to become an ancestor.

We find this identification quite interesting for two reasons. Firstly, it appears as if the two categories, which are the physical and non physical (mental/spiritual), are accorded equal importance in the construal of persons. What we present can be interpreted as a holistic or comprehensive account which is opposed to an essentialist rendering of persons.

We think this suggestion is attractive, not only for its holistic approach but for its ability to explain human experiences in a physical and non physical sense. This is in keeping with our intuitions of who a human person essentially is. We think that persons largely experience themselves as physical entities but in reference to its non –physical being.

A person whose existence and personality is dependent on the community is expected in turn to contribute to the continued existence of the community. This is the normative dimension of the concept of *mmadu* as a social being. The crown of personal life is to be useful to oneself as well as the community. The meaning of one's life is therefore measured by one's commitment to social ideals and communal existence. To achieve all these social goals and yet retain his/her personal identity lies in the inevitability of creative intelligence. What then is creative intelligence (*akonauche*) in Igbo concept of personhood and social order?

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Chapter Two: The concept of *Akonauche*

2.0 Introduction

A methodological question which must be posed and answered at this initial stage in order to avoid misdirection is whether the proposed world view is a synthesis articulated by the people being presented, or it is that of the presenter. In other words, when we say that 'A' is part of the world view of the Igbo, do we mean that 'A' is what the Igbo articulate as what they think, or do we mean that 'A' is what we configure that the Igbo think? Is the explorer looking for the theoretical explanations by the people of their experience or is s/he formulating the conceptions of agency which he considers as lying behind the patterns of behaviour of the people? Does s/he seek their explanatory categories or their effective agencies[1]?

What we are about to analyse here then is a discourse which we have derived from experience, research and interpretation; of the Igbo understanding of the structure of reality of personhood and this affects the operations of man both in society and within the inner recesses of the individual person. We hope that the analysis we are going to present is such that gives rationality and consistency to the understanding of the Igbo as a people.

In discussing the world view of the Igbo, one is trying to synthesize into one the meaning of life to a people living in a wide territory and in quite distinct zones and units. One has to retain a consciousness of variations in patterns of behaviour. This raises the question of identity. Can one really talk of the Igbo world view? Are there not enough linguistic and cultural differences between Agbor and Arochukwu, between Nsukka and Ikwere, to make nonsense of any proposition that claims to be descriptive of all Igbo? Can any consistency be attached to the modes of thought and behaviour of a people with such varied origins and environment? Such a

situation, rather than invalidate the effort, challenges us to seek out what is central to the Igbo world view while retaining a consciousness of how modifications have been created by time and distances.

One significant thing about Igbo traditional societies is the absence of an all-embracing social and political system with the result that many writers and investigations have wondered in what degree one could reasonably talk of the Igbo as a unit? Answering the question, in what sense are the Igbo or Igbo-speaking people regarded as a unit, Green says,

> they occupy a common territory, speak a common language though with many dialectical variations, despite countless variations in custom, there are a number of cultural factors which are common to all Igbo areas, such as, kingship structure, cult-symbols (like *ofo* and ancestral cults) which are widely spread[2].

The belief in the ancestral world serves the purpose of a watch-dog to the behaviour and thought of a person. To become an ancestor is to live in harmony within a person and his/her community. According to Animalu, by examining the Igbo way of life, we hope to be able to guide our thoughts (*akonauche*) and co-ordinate our deeds in the wider world, so as to stay on the path of honour and humanity[3]. What then is *akonauche* in the understanding of a person in Igbo world-view and how does it mediate in the thoughts and actions of a person (s)?

2.1 *Akonauche* as a metaphysical term

Akonauche, noun, or its verb form *Ucheakonam* or in English language, creative intelligence[4] the latin root of the word intelligence is intelligere which carries the meaning of to gather between or colloquially, to read between the lines and creative intelligence refers to the dynamic and creative act of gathering between lines or perception through the mind. Through the action of creative intelligence, every thing may assume a new meaning.

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By making use of the abstract dimension of thought (*ako na uche)* it is possible to show that the Igbo world view leads to the inner curves which are shown in Figures 3a and 3b. In order not to bore you (our reader) with unintelligible mathematics, though philosophical, we have relegated the analysis of motion from the Igbo world view to drive home our points on how akonauche supervenes the individual's actions and thoughts in a way that social order is guaranteed. The result of the analysis is, however, easy to appreciate from a knowledge of the elementary fact that any plane curve can be described in two (dual or reciprocal) ways, either as the motion of points or as the motion of tangent lines drawn at each point of the curve. Moreover, at each point on the curve, one can draw a line perpendicular to the tangent, which is called the normal to the curve, and the envelopes of the normals is called the involute of the curve[5]. The involutes of the parabola and the ellipse are the inner curves indicated in Figures 3a and b.

Here we would want to sum up the idea of *akonauche* as a metaphysical term using the Igbo principle of causality and duality. The Igbo proverb that says, "Wherever something (e.g. an ellipse) stands, something else (in particular, its involute) will stand beside it is an indication that a person is not just a physical entity but also a metaphysical/spiritual entity. This means that there is no one way of looking at reality. If there is Newton's law of motion which leads to the elliptic orbit shown in Figure 3b, there is also a second point of view – another law of motion-which is no less fundamental than Newton's law of motion is the basis of the recurrent motif in various forms of Igbo and African artistic expressions, as indicated in Figures 4a and b. In Figure 4a, we see that the four-cusped hypocycloid which is the involute of an ellipse is the shape of the *uli* (body art) motif for the head of the kolanut *(oji)* which adorns the *ikenga* motif of the Ahiajoku medallion and the Imo seal as well as the seal of the Njikoka Local Government Fair in 1989; and in Figure 4b, we see the same archetype on the African fabric design of Igbo origin

exhibited by C.S. Okeke at the museum of the National Centre of Afro-American Artists in the United States of America. We do not believe that the recurrence of this motif is a mere accident. Rather, it is probably the basis of the motif on the bronze altar in Thurstan Shwa's account of archeological discoveries at Igbo-Ukwu, shown in Figure 5, whose carbon dating is 800 A.D[6]. It also appears in the *nsibidi* writing collated by D. I. Nwoga. Figure 6 is an artists's impression of the precarious position of man, or should we say a woman, in the hypocycloid archetype which may be viewed, as indicated in Figures 7a-c, as the buoyancy locus of an elliptic ship of fate.
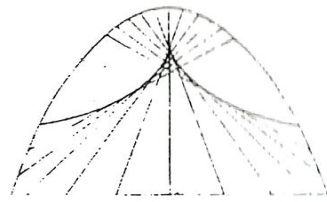
Figure 3a: Envelope of normals to a parabola in Galileo's analysis of parabolic motion of projectiles.
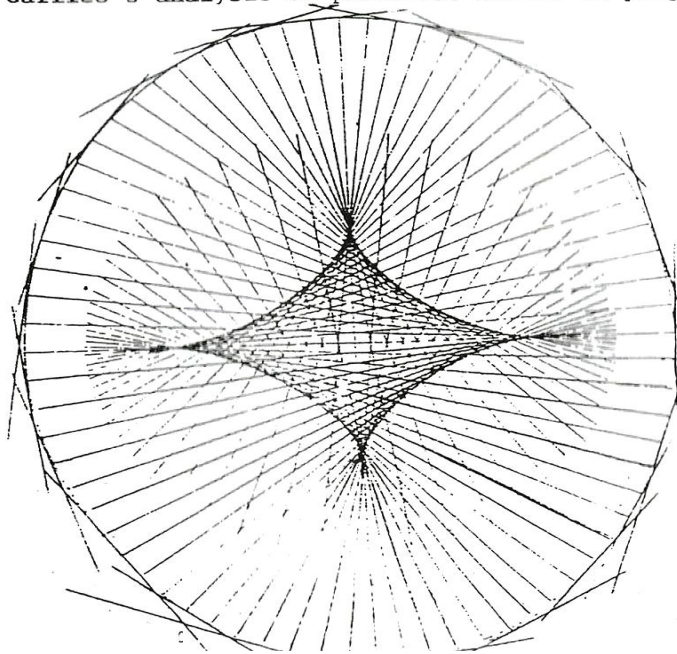
Fig. 3b shows the ontological and causal web of connection of a person. At the centre is the inner awareness of a person in his communal and religious exigencies.
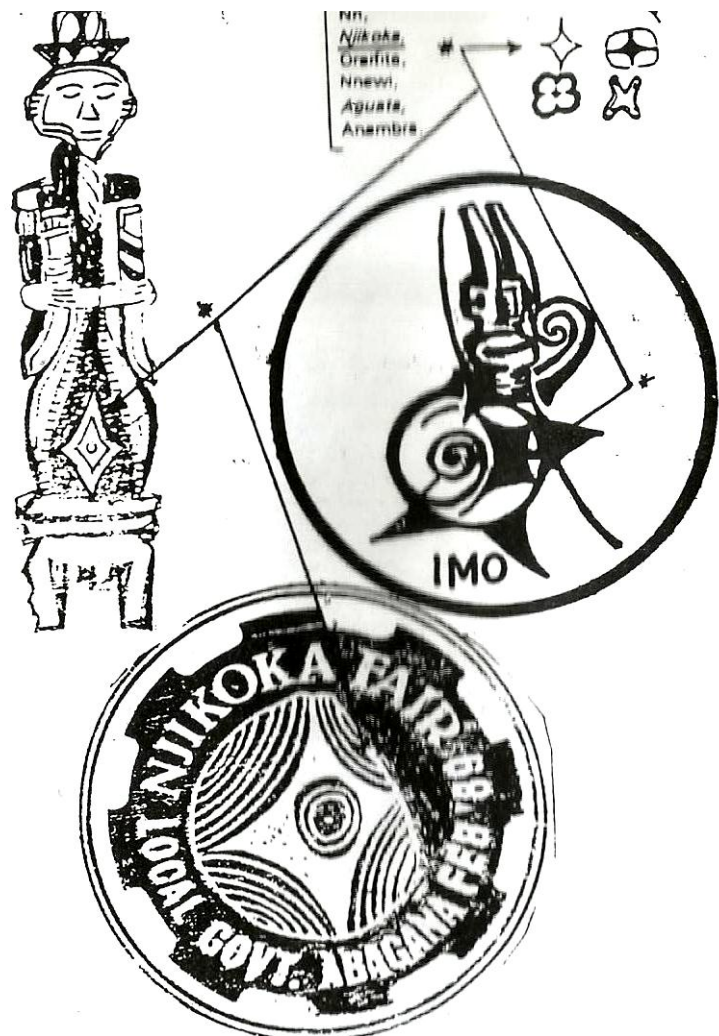
Figure 4a: Occurrence of an archetype representing the head of four-lobbed kolanut in the *uli* motif (after Elizabeth A Willis, 1987), on the *Ikenga*

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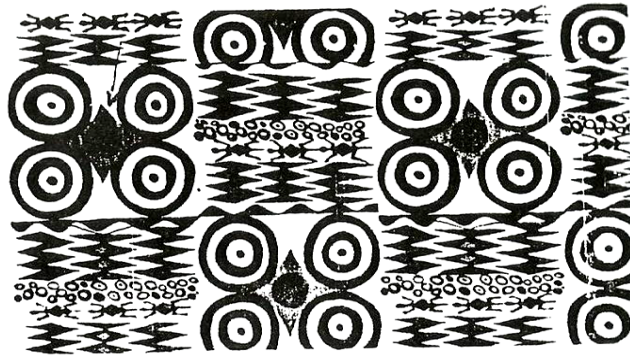
Figure 4b:

From

AFRICAN OUTLOOK
Recent Fabric Designs
by
Chukwuanugo S. Okeke

An Exhibition at the

Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists
300 Walnut Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02119

IGBO-UKWU

An account of archaeological discoveries
in eastern Nigeria

by

THURSTAN SHAW
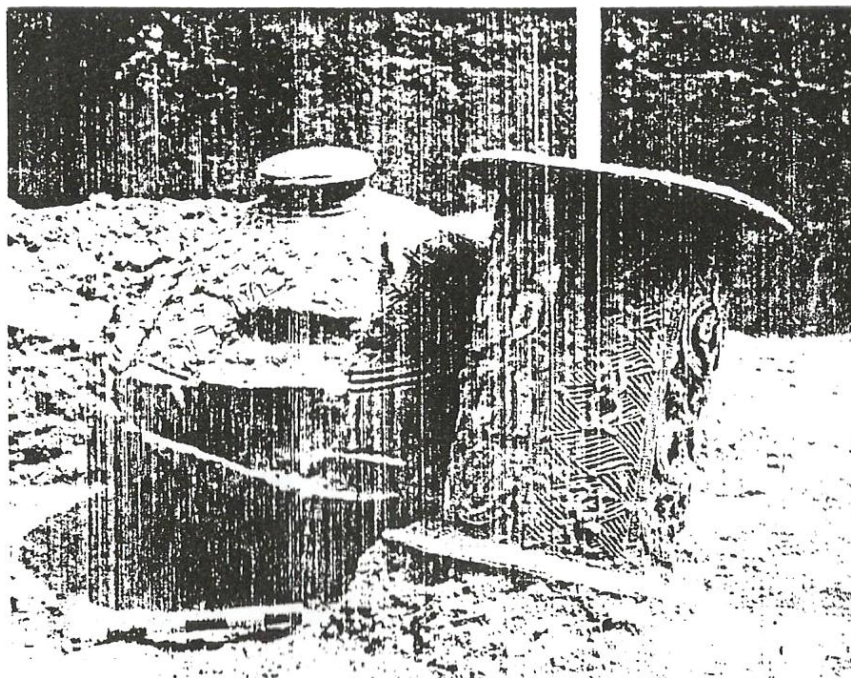
Plate 36. Igbo Isaiah: Bronze altar stand showing its tilted
position. Scale in inches

(Figure 5)
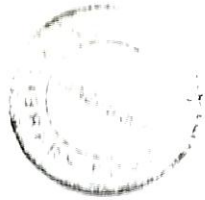
Figure 6: Artist's impression of the relation of man/woman to the archetype

(a)

(b)

(c)
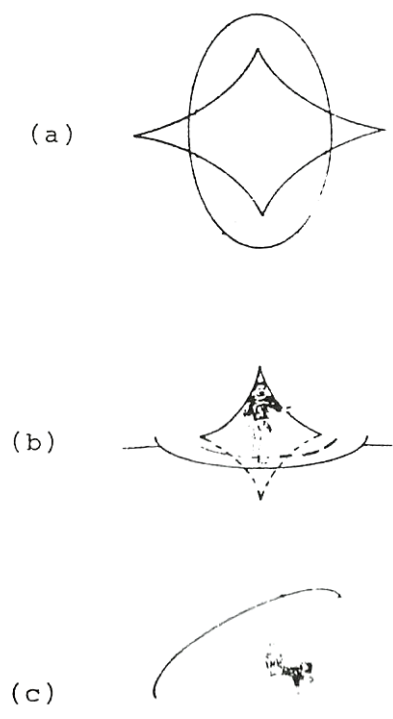
Figure 7: (a) Representation of the bouy-
ancy locus of an elliptic ship ;
(b) Position of stability of a man inside
the ship; (c) Toppling of the man when the
ship's centre of gravity lies outside the
metacentric locus. (After T. Poston and I.
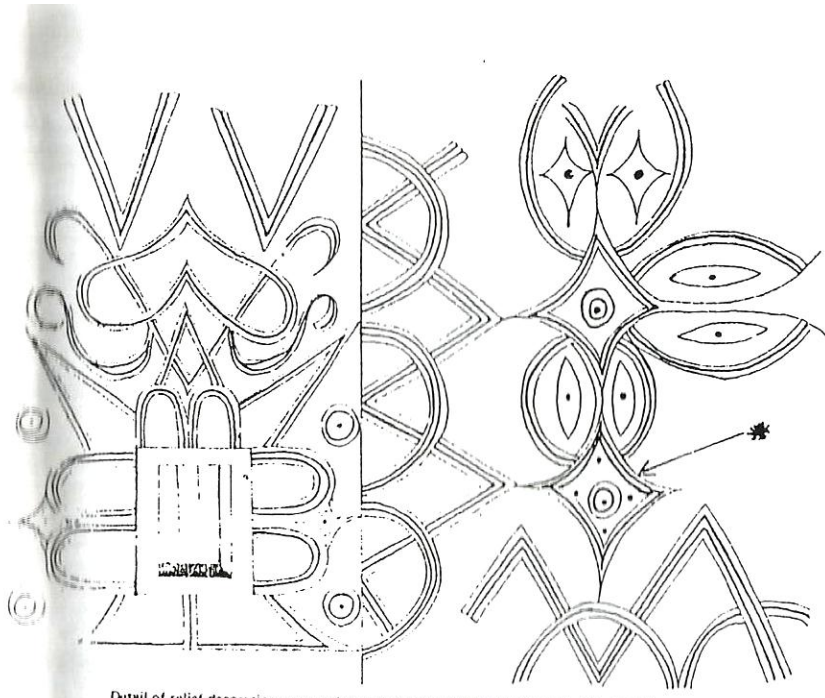
Detail of relief decoration on exterior wall of house (Northern Nigeria), about 1960.

(Figure 8a)
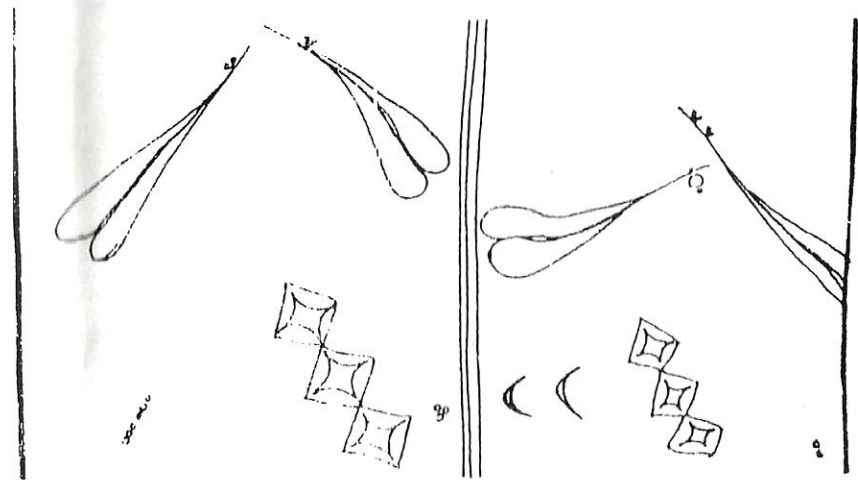
Figure 8b: Decoration on the wall of a shrine at Eke-Uke
(after Obiora Udechukwu, 1989).
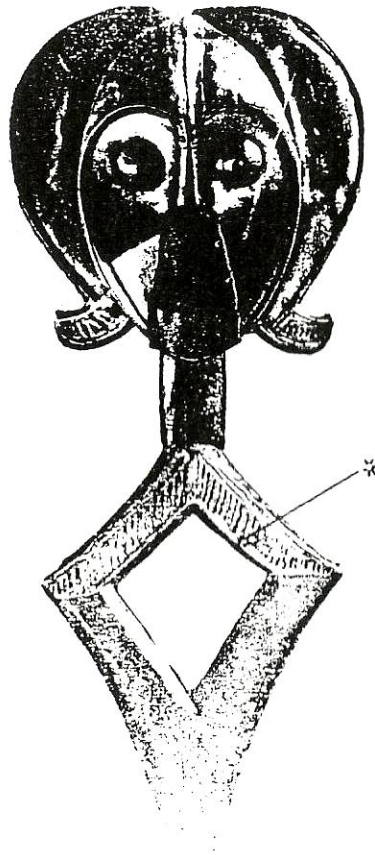
Figure 9: Gabonese guardian figure in
an ancestral shrine, showing the four-
cusped hypocycloid archetype (from
   FESTAC'77, <u>The Black and African
World</u>).

The position of stability of man in relation with his environment is captured inside such a ship as defined by the buoyancy locus, and the titling of the ship's centre of gravity outside this locus leads, as it were, to a catastrophic toppling of man into the sea by fate.

The fact that the hypocycloid archetype is shared by other peoples of Nigeria and Africa is demonstrated in Figures 8 and 9. Figure 8a is the relief decoration on the exterior walls of a house in Northern Nigeria and Figure 8b is the relief decoration on the exterior wall of a shrine at Eke-Ukwu in Anambra State[7] while Figure 9 is a Gbaonese guardian figure in an ancestral shrine. Technically, the hypocycloid archetype represents the dual solution of the equation of option of a planet round the Sun generated by the envelopes of the lines of gravitational force and is the type of orbit envisaged in the Ptolemy wheel-within-wheel model of the Universe which was abandoned during the Renaissance in favour of the Coopernican model. It is as if the Igbo and African artists had an intuitive knowledge of Newton's law of gravity.

The foregoing analysis leads to the crucial question raised by Professor Willy Umezinwa in his epoch-making article entitled, *A Semiotic Theory of Curvilinear Form in the African Novel* which was the basis of the 1988 Interdisciplinary Conference on African System of Thought organized by the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPPS) at Kuru: Does there exist an African system of thought, and if so, is it symbolized by a curvilinear form[8]? If we may paraphrase his answer to this question, it is that just as the Caudwellian man (by which he meant the white races of man) engages in a struggle with nature, so also does an African man… question nature, and in a bionic process engage in a mimetic reproduction of nature's characteristics of growth[9]. Thus, he continued.

> Growth in Nature and growth in the Africa but fall into the same
> paradigmatic class. One is the evocation of the other. The round

and conical shape of the hut is not an accident; it is an intuitive dialogue, the mimesis or the transposition of natural growth as exemplified by the breast and womb of woman. Some African populations, as if to consummate a one-to-one resemblance between the breast, the womb (and the vaginal entrance) and the hut cover the apex of the hut with a cooking pot. In this way, the nipple and the navel of the woman, each correspond to the geometrical shape of the reversed cooking pot; and the vaginal entrance to the womb corresponds to the door to the hut [10].

The significance of Professor Umezinwa's insight has been confirmed by the result of an experiment conducted by an arts reader in the United States of America. The arts teacher asked the children in her class to make four points on a sheet of paper and connect the points any way they liked. The children, all of whom were brought up in the Western culture, connected the point with straight lines leading to the rectangle. Hardly any children connected the points into the curvilinear forms. This goes to show that the eternal order of the Renaissance is *linear*, whereas the "eternal order" of the psyche of African children is, according to Umezinwa, *curvilinear,* the former following a principle of *minimal* distance, or if we wish, a principle of *rhythm*. The latter agrees with the view which Fritjof Capra, a distinguished Chinese high-energy physicist, states in his book, *The Tao of Physics.,* In his words.

> The natural world…. Is one of infinite varieties and complexities, a multidimensional world which contains no straight lines or completely regular shapes, where things to not happen in sequences, but all together, a world where- as modern physics tells us – even empty space is curved.[11]

.It should by now be clear that the use of creative intelligence *(ako na uche)* which was called for at the beginning of this chapter ought to be applied to our entire

> cultural matrix- world view, religion, politics, economics, military and so forth- as a way of life, in order to find our way forward in the modern scientific age that contains space travel, television, computers, energy crisis, atomic destruction, and drug addiction, among other societal ills[12]

We do not think that the use of creative intelligence (*akonauche*) calls for any specific recommendations in the sense of a detailed programme for how such creative intelligence is to be inculcated in the nature of personhood. The important thing is that it should help us to guard against certain assumptions we have been making in certain emotional outbursts about what a person is and how the idea of *akonauche* became active in the ontological nature of persons. The idea is that the Igbo way of life, including our concept of persons, time, and ritual symbols, are indicative of an intuitive dialogue with nature, in a relational way, and are not only rational but are shared by other African and pre-Renaissance European cultures. However, when we formulate a new philosophic paradigm from the Igbo/African world view based on a creation axiom of immortal regenerative cycles of birth, death and rebirth derived from the *Ufiejoku* cult, we obtain an African system of thought that is as different from the Western World's imperial and capitalist system of thought as modern wave mechanics is different from Newtonian forum. Anya's call for

> an accelerated transformation of (our) cosmological framework within the traditional African thought system (as) an essential preliminary step to the development of a scientific outlook and culture in the general population…[13]

Our belief in endorsing this is that technological development does not exist in a cultural vacuum – it is culture supported; and scientific discovery favours the prepared mind- a mind prepared by a culture.

We hope that we have not given you the impression that the holistic (Igbo/African) paradigm on the idea of personhood that is anchored on *akonauche* is superior or inferior to the atomistic (European) paradigm. Such a value judgment lies outside the methodology and focus of this

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work. This method has helped us transpose into philosophy the peculiarity of personhood in Igbo world view that emphases the principle of duality or reciprocity and the relationality of the *Ufiejoku* cult; but it means that we ourselves should also behave like light, or as one puts it in biblical terms, we must be like "children of life:, creative and intelligent, holistic and atomistic, spiritual and human, in all aspects of our lives. It is this significance of *akonauche* that we attach to the archetype representing the head of four-lobbed kolanut in the *uli* motif on the *ikenga,* which symbolizes the "new order of personhood.

2.2 *Akonauche* as epistemic

We do not here pursue the problems of logic and epistemology which predominate in contemporary philosophical discussions. In fact, what we intend to expose here is the ways by which Igbo thought patterns are derived and established. We agree with kekes when he defined philosophy as the rational construction and justification of world view[14]. We do construct and present a world view here but we do not define it except in so far as we show a preference for an open mind to a world view different from what is predominant now in the so-called developed world.

A proper understanding of a people's attitudes to and expectations from the various aspects and areas of life depends on an appreciation of their general conception of reality. In seeking to understand like: what concepts appear to govern practice in the areas of religion, social organization and other areas of living? Into what categories do the Igbo group their perception and experiences of reality? To what phenomena do the Igbo attribute reality? The great scholar and humanist, the late J. Bronowski, opened a valuable way for these questions when he declared that:

> The structure of reality is not self – evident . . .No, we have to tease out the structure from the observational sentences when we make them abstract sentences. How do we do that? Well, we do it essentially by treating nature as, in Leibnitz's phrase, a gigantic cryptogram, a gigantic series of coded messages. And we seek to decode it in such a way that entities emerge which are conserved under various changes and transformations[15].

How has the Igbo decoded the world in which they live? By what processes do they represent and react to this reality? What realities do they take into account in their thinking processes, in their activities and in their relationships?

The Igbo, like every other people, have observed their environment and interacted with it. They have embedded their observations and reactions in their customs, (*omenala/omenani*) language and literature, in their patterns of organizations and relationships. According to Udefi, the Igbo man believe that the external world is given to him and that he is not its maker. In other words, the world is not his construction. In this world, he is daily confronted with certain events, natural and empirical, which they attempt to grapple with[16]. It is from these that we now attempt to derive the Igbo conception of the nature of reality.

The Igbo have had to live in very close proximity and intimacy with nature. They have had to observe in very close detail the things that have impinged most on their lives. This can be deciphered from the detailed differentiations they have made in the categorization of those things. It is surprising when one begins to look into it, how much our people know about the characteristics and uses of the shrubs and plants and insects of our bushes. They know intimate details about the animals of our forests and hunt them with expertise. A villager's vocabulary of rats can be quite impressive: in one session, it can be called *ofoke, agu oke, obosokoro, okotoko, ohio, odu, oguru/oginya/ogini, oke ogwe, oke okwe, oke nkwu, oke nkwakpo, aduwa, wise, wa ota korokoro*. One has only to listen to proverbs sometimes to know how intimately our people

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know the characteristic behavior of the elements in the environment. For instance, the Igbo say, *onye ochunta ma ka asusu anuohia di-* is only a hunter that understands the language of the animals. Whatever the meaning of the proverb in context, it is clear that it required intimate observation of the *oke nkwu* that is called aduwa for somebody to formulate the proverb that *Aduwa siri n'elu nkwu daa si ya gbawa oso mgbe faa; si ya amaghi ihe onye gbufuru ya na nkwu vu n' obi*. (Aduwa the palm rat fell from the palm tree and started running at once, saying that he could not trust the intentions of the man that cut down the bunch that brought him down)[17].

The Igbo then made detailed observations of the elements of their environment and they used this knowledge and lived by it. It is necessary however to distinguish for our purposes here two kinds of observations. During the process of clearing a piece of land a few years ago, I heard one villager exclaim with some enthusiasm: "So this kind of plant is still here!" He described the plant as very useful to farmers who might accidentally cut themselves when they are working in the farm. If any twig or leaf of this shrub was broken off, a chalky juice came out of it which when put on a cut, immediately stopped the bleeding and sealed up the wound.

The name of the shrub appropriately, was *anya so obara* (literally, the eyes detest blood)[18]. Beside this shrub there was a tall grass, about which a companion exclaimed, look at this, too. During those days when we used to wrestle in competition, if you obtained the long stalk from the centre of this grass, tied it in a knot, and bound it under some cloth on the upper part of your left arm, the legs of your opponent would soon twist under him and you were sure to win the bout. Whereas our first reaction to the first information was the excitement of discovery (*ako*), our reaction to the second information with a certainty that he was ignorant and superstitious. But to the villagers the same levels of credibility are attached to both statements.

According to Udefi, perception or what is essentially observable constitutes one of the ways of verifying knowledge by Igbo people[19].

I was told a story one day by a raffia palm wine tapper to the effect that "*Ngwo ji anu nti* (the raffia palm has ears and hears). He had planted a raffia palm tree at his farm boundary. When it matured and he started tapping it, his neighbor came and started disputing ownership, claiming that his dead brother had told him that it was his raffia palm. They could not settle the matter by swearing, since local tradition did not allow swearing over property at farm boundaries or over raffia palms. In both cases, it is too easy to make mistakes and the Igbo Community usually prevents its members from killing themselves unnecessarily. What usually happens in the case of disputed raffia palms is that each of the claimants in turn makes his claim and pours libation of palm wine on the ground. The tree hears the claim and on the day of the person who actually owns the tree, it fills the gourd while wasting itself or not producing on the day of the person who does not own it.

The naration above is also about palm – wine tapper who produces very sweet palm wine. He explained his use of *ogwu ngwo* (the medicine for palm wine). He had to go and learn it from Ikeduru and it consists of eight leaves are ready for use, they are placed at the point where the tapping incision was made. For two weeks this bundle will keep the tapping point hot and clean, and clear sweet palm wine can then come out of the tree. The effectiveness of this medicine is attested to by all those who took and had a taste of this palm – wine, that is those who have the taste for palm wine and can distinguish good palm wine from bad. There is certainly a difference between palm wine and the wine produced by those who do not use *ogwu-ngwo* or use inferior types of chemicals. How is one to combine two types of information about the raffia palm?

There is also another source of knowledge derivation in Igbo epistemology. This time, it could come from people in authority, people with special talents (dibia and oracles). They are special people who the society recognize as those who have the powers to decipher truth beyond the mere observed objects or events. At this stage, people believe that what comes out of these institutions cannot be false. The second attitude is to find psychological reasons why people who otherwise are sensible should believe in things like these. In this case, chosen elements of belief which relate to non-physical agencies and processes are explained as ways by which the people satisfy some crucial psychological needs. According to Udefi, …justification or verification can proceed on the basis of reports or testimony from *ndichie* or *okenye* (elders) *ozo* title holders and *dibie afa* in the community because they are regarded as the think tank of their people as a result of their old age and knowledge of their peoples omenani[20]. He further says,

> since they are people of impeccable character and also closet to the ancestors (living dead) their judgment or explanation is hardly challenged, The dibie afa, especially are reputed for their thorough understanding of the psycho-therapeutic functions of trees and herbs and their ability to foretell or make revelation to their client through divination[21].

For example since the time of Malinowski, British anthropologists have interpreted activities dependent on such beliefs as means of fulfilling functions in other spheres of life.

> Ritual, for example, was seen as facilitating some essential activity such as agriculture, fishing or trade by raising morale, enforcing the requisite values or giving organizing power to the magico-religious specialists. Ritual was also "useful as" a means of enforcing tribal ethics, supporting authority, making possible the re-forming of group and the assumption of new roles after marriage, peace-making or death[22].

From all directions of scholarship, they offer explanations. Whether they are phenomenologist's or radical empiricists, whether they are cultural or social anthropologists, intellectualists or fidelists, all they are doing is offering different kinds of interpretations for things they do not

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believe to be there. For example, a great debate has raged among the philosophers and cultural anthropologists studying the Nigerian belief and logic systems since 1967 when Robin Horton published his long essay on *African Traditional Thought and Western Science*[23]. Taking any of the opposing views at random, one may consider the differences between Horton and John Beattie. The crux of this disagreement could be attributed to the fact that Horton approaches thought patterns with an emphasis on logic and epistemology and therefore conceives of modes of thought and beliefs as stages in a continuum of a search for explanation, prediction and control of reality. John Beattie on the other hand, is interested in thought patterns as the premises for effective systems for the management of situations and events both physical and otherwise. Beattie then attributes the effectiveness of science to its being based on experience and hypothesis – testing while ritual is dependent on the imputation of a special power to symbolic or dramatic expression itself. It appears to us however that the ideas and expressions used in this particular Horton / Beattie debate proceed naturally from the perceptual framework of the disbelieving anthropologist. In their quest for the most acceptable explanation of how and why people believe in, say, spirit forces, they do not take into account one key possibility, namely, that these forces do exist.

Even, to say that mistakes cannot be possible at this level of knowledge claim is to over look the fallibility and gullibility of man. In other words, there is still room for further pursuit of truth in matters of what knowledge is derived. The Igbo would blame you if you are deceived of certain things that one ought to know. For instance, the Igbo would say, *imiga mmadu aka na oko guru ji-* to commit an error or offence using someone's ignorance. In this case, one is asks whether he/she has *akonauche*? *Akonauche* is very gamut in our choices of decisions and knowledge claims.

Part of the cynicism with which the educated African looks at the traditional belief and knowledge systems has to be seen to derive from the way in which some primary carriers of the traditions themselves operated this system. What was one to do with the statement that if one swore a false oath he would die if one found out that there was an attempt to poison the one who swore an oath? Did the people themselves believe that a false oath swearing could lead to death? Because, if they did, what was the need for poison? There is also the question of rainmaking. A *dibia* would take money with the claim that he was going to prevent rain from falling when the client was celebrating an event. The *dibia* would be seen parading the environs of the venue of the event, wielding a broom and chanting away with a stirring of irrelevant proverbs. Is that how to stop rain? One would have been tempted to discard rainmaking out of hand but for the discovery that often the *dibia* parading the venue is really a finder and that he might not himself be a rain maker. Having taken his finders' fee he has paid the real rain- maker who is in the laboratory doing whatever constitutes the process of rain-making or rain-stopping.

Another instance of this apparent discrepancy between statement and reality in traditional life occurs at times when the elders might say to two people quarelling over land that the matter would have to be settled by *Amadioha*. The trick that is used, we found, was to bury a series of lodestones on the boundary which the elders, in their wisdom, had decided. Whenever there was lightning, it would be attracted to the stones and dig them out, and the elders would declare that the lightning deity, *Amadioha* or *Kamalu*, had settled the matter. What is ascertained here is that most of the things we see as truth is what we are told to be so which in most cases are subjective.

In spite of these exceptions, however, it is the fact that most reports of the Igbo experience carry genuine expressions of belief. They describe experience as interpreted through the world view of

the Igbo. The question now is, what perception of the nature of reality makes rational and consistent meaning of the way in which the Igbo report and interpret their experience?

But first, is it possible to have more than one truth as to the nature of reality? Does not all knowledge tend to one, so that any department from the mainstream of world knowledge, from the body of accepted beliefs, is a deviation, a heresy, or ignorance, rather than an alternative truth?

That the questions above could be framed is an indication of the progress that the world of scholarship has made from the rigid certainties of European ethnocentric dogmatism of a few decades back. The access to liberalism has been generated from the most unlikely source, the same physical sciences that created the mechanistic world view that dominated the philosophy of knowledge.

According to Nwoga,

> extreme relativity would of course be self defeating. Once we accept the externality of reality, we must then acknowledge that progressively humanity will know it more and more exactly till perhaps one day reality will be all known. So one has to accept the concept of an evolutionary progression towards the correct description of reality[24].

The point here is that, one is still free to argue that there is a difference between physical reality to which one may apply with ease the principle of absoluteness of knowledge, and other areas of life. This is because the Igbo recognizes that the construction of the cosmos was not made by them and as a result gives room for uncertainities.There are the areas of man's relationship to the physical universe, man's relationship with his community and other human beings, man's conception of what makes life worth living. In the consideration of these areas of life there is clearly an easy case to be made for relativity.

In order to understand the Igbo world, it is necessary to accept that the Igbo recognize three types of reality, namely, the physical, the spiritual and the abstract.

The first implication of that statement is that the Igbo would not accept that every thing is made of matter. The second implication is that the standard posture of contemporary African metaphysics which divides reality into the physical and the spiritual would be considered inadequate to explain satisfactorily the experience of the Igbo. According to Nwoga, to put it another way,

> three forms of being impinge on a person's life – the physical that can be touched, weighted, eaten, that can touch one through the usual senses; the spiritual which may not be seen or touched except by specially "washed" eyes, but which all the same can affect the shape and nature of physical being, and then the abstract which exists and may affect reality by becoming realized in either of the other forms, physical or spiritual. Each of these forms of being has reality. Each of them is capable of being transformed into the other. The differences exist in the way they are experienced and the kind of impact they have. They are the three tips of the triangle of being which may stand on any side at a given time depending on circumstances[25].

Different permutations of these forms of being take place also at different times depending on circumstances. We hope this becomes clearer as our presentation progresses.

For the Igbo, the reality of an object emerges or assumes validity at that time when the object is in the process of performing its function. Once, when a group of dancers were at rest entertaining them, a well-recognized son of the land met them and offered them some more drinks. In the middle of the drinking, someone broke into song which was taken up to the effect:

Anyi amarana ndi wu nwoko
Nwoko, nwoko,
Anyi amarana ndi wu nwko,
O wughi oha wu nwoko.

There is also a variant of the song which goes with it and says:

Anyi amarana ndi wu nwoko,
Nwoko, nwoko
Anyi, amarana ndi wu obo mma
O wughi oha wu nwoko[26].

All this reminds one of the scene in *Things Fall Apart* where Okonkwo, full of his achievement as a man in the community, retorted to a man who had interrupted his discussion that this meeting is for men. An old man in the meeting commented. Looking at a king's mouth, one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast". And Achebe the novelist commented: Okonkwo knew how to kill a man's spirit[27].

We present here the importance attached to these statements derives, not from the purely metaphorical impact they might have, but from the fact that they come within a cultural context in which such expressions have ontological implications.

The prevalent use of the epithet, *ezi*, in the description of things when their reality is at issue is, we believe significant. We apply the epithet in quite disparate situations so that it qualifies people – *ezi mmadu, ezi nwanyi, ezi nwoko* and so forth; it qualifies things; it even qualifies words so that the concept of truth is represented by *ezi okwu*, meaning the real word. What all these uses emphasize is the Igbo attribution of importance to proper states of being, to things fulfilling the attributes of their being in order to be considered real.

The ontological status of things in Igbo thought is determined and recognized not by any static characteristics that the objects might have but by the action that the object performs. This is not to say that these attributes that makes up a thing in its form and nature do not matter.

Our argument here is that the Igbo give ontological status to three types of reality: the physical, the spiritual and the abstract or conceptual. Therefore that they will acknowledge effects as derivable from any of those three possible agencies. The physical agent does not require any description or explanation from us because we have described it in the earlier part of this sub-section. The spiritual agent is also very much in contemporary metaphysical debate. We believe that it is with the abstract agent that we have to struggle for explanation.

Once, a community leader invited a group of friends to rejoice with him and have some drinks over a new car. He brought out a fresh bottle of whisky which was to be opened and used in pouring a libation for the car. He gave the bottle to a prominent person from the eldest quarter of the town. A quarrel began to develop because there was somebody from the eldest kindred of that quarter who insisted that he was the right person to open the drink and pour the libation. The prominent person who received the drink was about to open the bottle when the other elder threatened: *Mehena nmai ahi mmara na iwne yi akonauche* (if you dare open that bottle, it means that you don't understand *omenala* and you don't have creative intelligence). *Akonauche*, is a concept, an abstract idea. *Akonauche* therefore is an active agent in the affairs of the Igbo. When somebody wishes to achieve and assert some level of deep conviction on an issue, he/she tries to establish that he/she has understood primarily the consequences of his/her actions. In cases of custom and traditions, people do not rely solely on what is said about a certain issue but on what is ordinarily ideal and obtained as a matter of conviction. According to Nwala,

> traditional Igbo world-view, when properly analysed and systematically expressed, reveals itself as a profound native ideology, a system, that portrays a way of life and that serves as an instructment of social control through myths,rituals, taboos, various prescriptions and prohibitions and sanctions, it tries to ensure a type of conservatism, and narrow-mindedness. Hence,

> people are neither reasonably skeptical nor critical enough (but
> rather gullible and superstitious)[28].

He further says,

> the spirit of open-inquiry and systematic research for the sake of
> knowledge was unknown. Since the system purports to have
> answers to all problems, this spirit of independent inquiry, the
> element of curiosity and conscious desire to probe into nature with
> rational skepticism and doubt from which springs critical efforts to
> examine the given and to determine its truth were lacking[29].

That is why the owner of the vehicle did not want to wipe sentiments on who is rightfully in the

position to unwine the drink. Such an intellectual atmosphere could not make for great scientific,

personal, intellectual and material progress. *Akonauche* is here an example of an abstract reality,

a concept with agency and therefore with the status of independent existence in a person,

conferred on him/her by the Igbo.

2.3 *Nzu, amaihe and akonauche*. Similarities and dissimilarities in Igbo world-view

We shall now direct this presentation to looking at the forms in which the three types of reality

postulated above manifest themselves in the actual day to day life of the Igbo. During my

interaction with Fr. Nze, he drew my attention to these Igbo categories especially as they are

discussed in Igbo idea of epistemology. In the first instance, when an Igbo person asks, *inwere

nzu*- he/she simply wants to know whether one has some discreet approach to life and, in its

vicissitudes. Also, when an Igbo person asks, *olee ebe amamihe gi nu*- what is asked for is

wisdom/knowledge of some already in existence. It could be put in a negative form-*imahu ihe*-

you do not know anything or *inwekwara amamihe*? Are you knowledgeable of anything?

These questions expect one to show some level of awareness and conformity with the norms of

his/her community. The objects of knowledge and events to be known are experiential and

empirical. They are directly linked with our sense organs. They are there for us to touch, feel, smell and see them. And that is why when one doesn't demonstrate in actions knowledgeable of these objects; he/she is looked at in disdain. Nwoga contends that,

> intelligence, cleverness, quickness of wit are aspects of what the Igbo person needs for adjusting himself to, and thereby manipulating changing circumstances- and –circumstances are always changing. This change is not only the progression of different situations and events. It equally also involves ontological status of things, since things are not always what they seem or what they were. The Igbo person is supposed to be regularly conscious of the difference between appearance and reality and to react to the potentials deception before it takes place[30].

Our longing as a people is to attain to the status of personhood in which the crisis of who is man is dispelled, while self knowledge is ascertained. Creative intelligence means to gather between or colloquially, to read between the lines and it refers to the dynamic and creative act of gathering between lines or perception through the mind[31]. What did the Igbo understand by Knowledge?

We have relevant words and phrases like:

Ama m ihe -Knowing something. This covers knowledge and learning of and about something

Omaghi- He knows nothing.

Ima Izu -To know the deeper sense of things as being privy to privileged information.

Nghota -literally means plucking and is used for Understanding, grasping, especially a problem, a puzzle.

Uche -Thought, reflection about an idea, applying the mind of something, on a problem chewing the cud with ideas.

Mmuta -To learn something: to learn to do something; learning *Ako*- Wisdom as in *NwaevulaAko*

- the wise, clever lamb - street wise

- Application of knowledge of life, and to forestall danger, using knowledge to survive and thrive;

- Being.clever enough to defeat cheats and frauds

Aghugho - deceitful dealing, contriving, conniving stratagems

- Knowing how to get on at the expense of others

- As in the tortoise legends. *Mbe onye aghugho*, 419

Endowed with so rich a vocabulary, depicting such delicate shades and nuances and indicating such a variety of ways of knowing, it may look somewhat obtuse, if not worse to continue to doubt if there was Igbo Indigenous Knowledge[32].

2.4 Igbo indigenous knowledge

Knowledge, though we know it is part of every human life and culture, has been a special object of inquiry in many philosophical cultures in history[33]. The Greek tradition of Knowledge-Philosophy may well have commenced with the early philosophers especially with the poem of Parmenides. Otherwise Socrates is the landmark. The questions he and his followers asked were:

What is Knowledge?

What are the types of knowledge? Plato

What are its necessary qualities? Plato / Aristotle

How does it take place? Aristotle.

What are the objects of knowledge? Aristotle

Which gave rise to the various disciplines?

Later European philosophers pursued this tradition to its logical consequences:

All knowledge can be doubted Descartes. So can we know anything at all? Kant

All knowledge is historical Heidegger', culture bound (Gadamer) and interested (Herbermas)[34].

It's clear that though knowledge has been practiced from day one of the life of Homo sapiens, (man as a knowing being) it is the Graeco European philosophical tradition that has dealt with the problem of knowledge over a time continuum of two (2) millennia. They have explored it in all its wealth of definition and in all the variety of the questions of its types, its sources, its subject areas and relevant faculties. They have continued to develop their vision in the matter of knowledge to the extent of marketing it to all the world as the heritage of mankind.

Heritage of mankind or not, it is the fruit of their own Indigenous Tradition of Knowledge.

The question we now put to ourselves is this: What is our own Indigenous Tradition of Knowledge? (Indigenous.i e to separate it from all that came from the Western Tradition, The pre-colonial understanding).

This question is not easy to answer because of the illiteracy of our tradition. A purely oral culture has a relatively short memory as well as a greater rate of inaccuracy in transmission. Time and distance also create great havoc on unaided memory, both individual and collective and, in the long run, only patches of information survive.

Difficult as it is, we need to attempt to answer it and then, hopefully to build on the result, however modest they may be.

What did our people the lgbo, the African mean by knowledge?

According to Okere,

> before the white man / the European ever came here to introduce his own stock and type of knowledge, our grand fathers and great grand fathers were there, flourishing and established. They must have had some knowledge tradition specific to them enabling them, to survive and flourish in their environment. We must presume this a priori if, that is to say, they were human beings at all, for as Aristotle well put: All men by nature desire to know or, put differently, man is a knowing being[35].

The question is: How did our ancestors satisfy that natural desire to know? What did they know? How did they know it? What indeed did they understand as knowledge? And can it be classified with what the rest of the world regarded and still regards as knowledge? Can we graft it into our present poof or largely western mediated knowledge, if only to save ourselves from collective paranoia?

Such questions need to be asked and answered because historically most of what our ancestors did had often been disqualified or devalued in light of the present western dominance in every field. The West has become, as it were, the measure for most things. It is now often a matter of doubt if the knowledge tradition of our fathers is qualifiable as knowledge with or without a western imprimatur?

On the other hand, there is something unique and inalienable about our people's experience of life and history in the world. Their insertion into this part of the world in this section of time

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must have a corresponding knowledge interface and this only increases the urgency of the question, what is it?

Here at home many are familiar with the big debate generated by Robin Horton when he compared African traditional thought to western science as both, he says, use theory, the one by referring to a spiritual agency, the other to theoretical entities, in order to explain natural events and things in both cases things invisible are used to explain visible events[36].

He further states that,

> the difference is that the African explanatory theory uses personal idiom, that is, speaks in terms of gods and spirits while western science is detached and objective, talking of things like atoms, molecules and particles rather than persons. Personal idiom means that persons that are gods are used in subjective language to do work for objective, though invisible particles. Substituting gods and spirits for atoms and molecules, traditional religious thinking is equivalent to theoretical thinking. The gods and spirits supply the theoretical framework[37].

Thus African religion is not only a metaphysics asserting the existence of invisible but objective reality, but even more, it is also an epistemology, a knowledge framework and explanatory apparatus for understanding reality and the world[38].

What one may think of this, one may ask if we are here comparing comparables, or rather mixing up apples and oranges? Or one may question the singling out of African religious explanation to compete with western scientific explanation as if the former, that is African religious explanation, was different in kind from western religious explanation and as if Africans gods did not play the same role as gods in any religion that admits gods anywhere in the world. But one must concede that here at least religious schema is accepted as a form of knowledge, a way of understanding, which Africans were possessed of.

Before Horton however,

> very influential anthropologists relegated most non-westerners as a lower species of knower if at all regarded as human. They had talked of primitive mentality", of "the primitive soulmind", of "primitive mythology" of mystical experience and symbols among primitives" of "mental functions in inferior societies and of salvage thought""Lapensee sauvage." These heavily loaded and pejorative titles all came from powerful oracles like Lucien Levy Bruhl and Claude Levi Strauss[39].

At some stage the primitives got a little promotion in the way they and their knowledge system level were regarded in the West. But if it was conceded they had any knowledge, it obviously couldn't be anything like the scientific knowledge that has distinguished the West and accounts for its knowledge prestige and technological preeminence in the modern world. Horton's comparing what was presumably the most advanced forms of knowledge must have been greeted with shock.

But would he have elicited the same level of shock if he had compared the explanatory religious categories and schema of the religious of the West (Christianity and Judaism) with those of western science?

Meanwhile, all was being done to draw a clear dividing line between science, hard science and the so-called knowledge of other sciences.

> This dichotomizing exercise that privileged western science while devaluing other forms of knowledge was promoted especially by western anthropologists who lost no opportunity to oppose their own culture to those of the savage and, to compare their religion with other peoples magic/superstition[40].

They pretended there was a linear hierarchical and evolutionary development from other peoples' magic and religion leading eventually to their science. This was the thesis of Auguste

Comte the founder of Positivisim. Technological development became a criterion for evaluating and classifying cultures and knowledge systems as high or low. The success of technology boosted the knowledge credit of science.

Even within the West, techno-science assumed superiority and disciplines like the Humanities, philosophy and theology were obliged, and stretched themselves, to prove they were also strictly scientific. But this scientism is a narrow reduction of what knowledge fully stands for, resulting in the exclusion of alternative knowledge forms and methodologies. But as Laura Nader has observed, during most of human history there have been different ways of knowing and an enormous range of ways of understanding the world.[41].

We are speaking of knowledge, Indigenous knowledge, Science. In the original Latin, *ScientialScire* translates knowledge, science from scire I know. But today, science is narrower. The name has been appropriated through the natural sciences. Science has become a subset of knowledge. It is only one way, a very specific, very narrow and very exclusive way of knowing; an arrogantly triumphant, privileged way of knowing, and in its own view, a superior, better and most definitive way of knowing. The rest may be in any grade of science's illegitimate shadows religion, superstition, local or indigenous knowledge/physics. But essentially it is only a new way of knowing nature/matter by methods favouring observation, measurement, experiments and hypotheses. Now this is a contraption of knowledge.

 And what of Indigenous Knowledge? One can define indigenous knowledge as ideas of local peoples (as distinguished from western scientific knowledge) about everyday realities of living, again not compares or comparables to western common sense knowledge and non western common sense knowledge or western science and non western science.

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But indigenous knowledge is more than mere common sense. It can also be specialized expert knowledge. Herbalists used more than common sense and virtually every branch of indigenous knowledge has its experts. Expert comes from the Latin experior and means some one tried, tested and approved i.e. experienced.

Outside of modern science and beyond its narrow methods, the vast area of Human Science viz: history, geography, the behavioural sciences, agriculture, economics, commerce and medicine, philosophy and theology. These branches of knowledge are largely environment or culture-dependent. Each human group within its own environment has at least the beginnings and often more or less advanced forms of knowledge in these areas.

But knowledge is not only knowledge of an object, be it, inorganic or organic, plant or animal, human or divine. Knowledge has also to do with meaning. Whichever of the many meanings or meaning we mean to choose deciphering and interpreting, constructing, inventing and creating meaning. Did our forefathers create meaning? Of course they did. It may be after all this area of the creation of ideas that they were most creative. Beside brilliant abstractions like *ofo n'ogu*, they observed their natural environment very carefully and quickly turned empirical data into moral principles. Virtually every proverb appears as a conclusion from close empirical observation of the world of men and animals. In this way they generated a great wealth of knowledge which has been stored as ideas and as proverbial wisdom, that is, knowledge internalized and personalized. Most of this knowledge according to Okere,

> was hardly ever theorized about but was knowledge applied
> directly to life and environment in the battle for survival. Applied
> knowledge is at work in the weaving of the simplest basket, ngiga,
> ubu and the fishing net; in the architecture of a simple dug out
> canoe: in the choice of building materials, whether to employ raffia
> palm elephant grass or the leave of the coconut or palm trees of'

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roofing; in the crops we choose or choose not to cultivate or plant: the seasons we plant them; the special attention given to the yam as distinct from the casual cultivation of the cassava or the cocoyam; and the purpose and techniques of double harvesting of some species of yam applied knowledge determining what vegetables we choose to eat amid the infinite variety offered by our lush rainforest. As we say; ahihiajuru n 'ohia nuho okazi many vegetables abound in the forest, but the choice fell on okazi[42].

Of course the same applied knowledge goes into the selection of those medicinal herbs and poisons that combine to give the herbalist his awful power of good and ill. The types and quantity of *nche* which the palm wine tapper uses to prepare his tree-top brew; the delicate combination of meat, fish, vegetables and condiments that produces our finished *Egusi, Ofe Owerri, Okro, Ofe nsala*, these are all a matter of knowledge. Even the preparation of the lowly cassava from fermentation to *foufou* requires the application of knowledge. Has any one observed the blacksmith at work? Has any one seen the combination of brain and brawn, the puffing of the bellows, the beating of the red-hot iron into any combination of geometrical shapes to finally produce the finished article? This is knowledge at work. The same combination of art and function and the same mastering of the imposition of form on matter are in evidence in the ancient Okigwe pottery.

Is it acceptable that we should still continue to be in doubt whether rainmaking in Igboland is a genuine craft, a technique based on sound but secret knowledge or empty magic and illusion masquerading as craft and technology? And if we find out that it is something genuine based on secret knowledge, is it not time to make such precious information and techniques publicly available for the greater good of society? Is it possible that the resilience of native indigenous medicine, its thriving, prospering existence or even its competitive advantage over western medicine in modern Nigerian / Igboland is accounted for only by the economic impoverishment of the people forcing them to resort to cheaper medicine or quacks as they are called. Or is it not

rather the case that it is a resience born of confidence in its proven ability to heal and those cure and sustain the people the hundreds of years before the encounter with the West.

It is our duty to find out the truth and that is mainly what this research is designed to do.

Ideally knowledge should like the Igbo Kola nut (oji) only speak and hear the indigenous language. Language should ideally serve as the medium for assimilating material from extraneous knowledge systems to ensure an organic integration of both into a well- adjusted individual and society. The Curriculum implications of such a programme should act as a catalyst and challenge to out universities to at least work towards integrating our past and present knowledge systems.

If we have even the beginnings of knowledge system original and indigenous to our people, we are now obliged to bring it to the center stage of our educational program if we want a natural transition from the known to the unknown, and if we want to be grafted back to the rots from where we have beclouded with the West. Indigenous knowledge must begin to be taught from the kindergarten.

It must be researched into and developed enough to take its place in secondary and tertiary education. Agriculturalists, conservationists and environmentalists rightly stress the necessity of indigenous knowledge in optimizing and sustaining agriculture for third world peoples and in maintaining the necessary balance in a threatened global environment. Many other jaunting for indigenous knowledge in order to use it as raw material after the manner of commodities and raw materials for scientific manufacture in order to package and market them for teaching others how best to exploit the third world. Our own immediate aim is to establish the existence and scope of such knowledge in the first place. We do not need to legitimize it by subjecting it to the criteria

of western science and its models and methodologies, a temptation many easily, naturally and matter of fact succumb to.

Once established, we hope that its use will serve not just, these and other useful but narrow ends, but will help to form the root and foundation of all our future knowledge, a root and foundation to which all other extraneous, subsequent and contemporary knowledge acquisitions must be grafted.

Therefore our purpose in this section is not for the mere reason of establishing a difference, not for continuing the divide between western knowledge and indigenous knowledge. Rather it is first, to recognize and valorize for ourselves our own indigenous.

Knowledge and take, off from there as our starting point. It is also to help us mark the limits of western narrowly scientific knowledge and be mentally prepared to combat its reductionism, its hegemony, its strangling and impoverishing monopoly of orthodoxy. Hopefully it will enable us to integrate our two sources of knowledge since the two meet in us and our future lies in their harmonious merger. It is likely that a healthy merger will help us forge a more inclusive, holistic and sustainable knowledge of our environment and better-sustained development[43].

If we succeed in laying such a foundation we shall be helping in achieving the most significant form of people empowerment; nay of independence beyond any dreams of our people since strangers enslaved us in our land. Thus we are by these claims on Igbo indigenous knowledge referring not just to, knowledge based on rules of logic or science, but knowledge on which the human person strives for harmony, growth and development, and a well deserved understanding of his/her person and the society.

2.5 Duncan Mighty on *Akonauche*

In most cultures, artistic forms and ideas are simply derived from specific objects in nature, or as an illustrative symbolic representation of a specific abstract being or god[44]. Today, there is a constant quest by people of a particular culture to define and understand who they are and why they do certain things different from what is in some other cultures. This is exactly what the famous artist and musician Duncan Mighty did in his album titled, *akonauche*. The immanent and unceasing search for the basic unity of identity of the individual wore a different mode in Igbo culture. This time and new form of looking at the person in his environment seek clarity artistically. Duncan, had in his creativity emphases on what and the role of *akonauche* in defining and determining a person. He describes *akonauche* as very mighty in the vicissitudes of every individual. We saw in his artistic prowess fame and in-depth philosophy of the ontological make-ups of the person. In this era, emphases is not more on just the social aspect of a person, but a person as an individual and indivisible whole based on the *onwe* (self). We shall make elaborate limits of communitarianism in our chapter three and in chapter five dissect the Igbo ontology of the *onwe*.

The emphases on the need to redesign our perceptions about the relationship between the autonomous individual person and the community is apt now that we are facing challenges of lot identities and social disorder. Accroding to Duncan, that, *akonauche*-very mighty, *akonauche*-greater than father/mother, *akonauche*-greater than *iwu* (law)…[45]. We need to establish from the onset that what defines a person is not totally what the father or mother or community say about the autonomous individual person, but with what the person know and do with him/herself. Our claim gain supports even with Socartes' assertion: **man know thyself**.

2.6 Summary

There is real continuity in the search to understand holistically who man is. This search is made manifest on the different interpretations of what a person is and in whose culture. According to Bleiker,

> in contrast, critical hermeneutics focuses upon the material conditions which causally shape our awareness. It is concerned, not with understanding and hence judgments and prejudices, but with interests and ideologies, and with their correction through the social sciences. Its task is to identify the material causes and thereby to make possible action to remove or adjust those material factors which by impeding the proper flow of dialogue and communication give rise to misunderstanding and conflict[46].

In other words, what we are doing here is to interpret the concept *akonauche* in which a person's true identity and nature is anchored and maintained.

However, we have established, using diagrams, that the concept *akonauche* has both metaphysical and epistemic dimensions. It is metaphysical because of its abstract role in the ontological make-ups of a person in Igbo culture and epistemology, as it seeks to understand self (*onwe*) as the basis of the unity of identity. We have tried also to show various ways the Igbo arrive at truth or knowledge. We showed that beyond the rational and empirical ways, the Igbo also rely on divine means of knowing what and events are. Most importantly is, in Igbo epistemology, there is cultural based means of decipherable knowledge claims. At this level, the idea and significance of *akonauche* sets in. This is because man is a fallible being and in a constant quest to know what things are in themselves, and because change is permanent, there became the need for steady re-evaluation of what is known and how what is known can help the individual to understand him/herself and remain on a proper direction with his/her community.

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Chapter Three: The idea of social order in Igbo culture

3.0 Introduction

In our previous chapter, chapter two precisely, we defined and described what *akonauche* is and its significance in Igbo idea of a person. We tried also to show how the conception of *akonauche* helps in the ontological evaluation of a person, as a relational entity in the community of beings. We are going to proceed now to the idea of social order in Igbo culture. This is necessary because the individual, as an autonomous entity, has the autonomy of deciding on actions that could either threaten or sustain social order.

3.1 A Note on Social Order

The issue of social order is at the center or central to any analysis or explanation of social reality. Thus, it is one fundamental problem that has continued to occupy the attentions of social philosophers and theorists since antiquity. Consequently, social order is about how people behave in society, which is basically needed for society to function properly[1]; that is, the notion of social order refers to the stable patterns of social expectations and the problems of what makes societies cohere, and how this cohesion is sustained.

Theoretical consideration of the existence and persistence of social order in society date back to the Sophists (particularly Protagoras) when they insisted that 'man is the measure of all things', meaning that any explanation of how social order exists and persists can only be understood through the activities, actions, inactions, and decisions of individuals[2].

However, systematic explanations of the existence and persistence of social order in society first appeared in the work of August Comte who employed scientific methods to explain societal origins and developments. This great theoretical achievement derived from Comte's belief that; …the methods established in the natural sciences could be applied to the study of society's

origins and developments. Although Comte did not develop a theoretical perspective, (however) he made an important contribution to the theories of social development. Comte provided an evolutionary account of how society developed and changed: he believed that the development of the human mind, and thereby of knowledge and belief, was closely related to the way in which society was organised[3].

There is no doubt whatever from the quotation above that Comte was the first to engage in a systematic explanation of society. Beyond this, implicit in the quotation is the commitment to the view that existence and persistence of social order can only be explained through an understanding of the social system rather than through activities of the constituting individuals. This, however, does not mean that where the social system is not working, the individual cannot forge ahead in proffering means of achieving harmony between the individual and the society.

This classical position of explaining social order (and other social phenomena) through the social whole, rather than through the constituting parts, is popularly known as methodological holism. In a more technical sense, methodological holism- sometimes called positivism in recognition of Comte's contribution is a philosophical concept which refers to a particular set of assumptions about the world and about appropriate ways of studying it. In general, positivists see society as more important than the individual. For example, they point out that individuals are born, take their place in society and then die, but society continues largely undisturbed. Moreover, positivists suggest that people are the puppets of society, ie. They are controlled by social forces emanating from the organization of society.

> This is because they believe that just as there are natural laws governing the behavior of chemicals, elements, plants, animals, etc., so there are social forces or laws governing and determining the operations of the social world, particularly our everyday experience and life chances. Such laws are the product of the way

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society or social group is socially organized, ie. Its social structure, and are beyond human influence[4].

In view of the above, Comte bequeathed to his successors this classical doctrine of explanation of social phenomena through the whole rather than the parts. With little but significant modification, later social theorists and philosophers, Marx, Spencer, and Durkheim Emile, followed this line of thought of Comte.

For instance, in Marx's philosophy, there is the insistence that a thorough explanation of any social phenomenon can only be achieved through the understanding or analysis of the society's economic whole. This is because Marx strongly believed that the overall structure of society is heavily influenced by how the economy is organized[5]. Similarly, Spencer, according to Thomas, also insists that society is a set of interdependent parts that work together to maintain the system overtime. In fact, he considered social change and unrest to be natural occurrences in a society's evolution towards stability and perfection, and hence thought that no steps should be taken to correct social ills[6]. In the same vein, Durkheim equally embraced this doctrine when he admits that beliefs and values of the society (particularly religion) as the glue that hold society together[7].

However, a mechanistic conception of the individual dominates the analysis of social order (and social phenomena) as appeared in the explanations of these methodological holists. And it is this mechanistic conception of individual that later became the very undoing of methodological holism as inadequate and unreliable doctrine to explain social phenomena[8]. This is because it did not take into account the reality of human conduct, behavior, and autonomy of the will (onwe), and the fundamental roles they play in shaping and reshaping social affairs and harmony. In fact, Durkheim's classical position, for instance, being the foremost representative of this doctrine, could not stand the test of time because, he did not consider the thoughts and feelings of

individuals within society, and therefore completely falls out of favor as an adequate explanation of social order.

With a very significant modification, Max offers explanation of social phenomena with considerable incorporation of human factors, although he was interested more in groups within society than in social whole and this emphasis on group led him to analyse the effects of society on the individual. He, however, believes that social theories must try to uncover the feelings and thoughts of individuals[9]. The mere appearance of the individual as well as individual's feelings and thoughts in the explanation of social phenomena by Max Weber (and others like Popper and Mill) qualifies him as an advocate of methodological individualism. This theory depicts the importance of the individual in the explanation of social phenomena, social harmony and social order.

Thus, in contrast to methodological holism, methodological individualism is the doctrine that aimed at explaining and understanding broad society-wide developments as the aggregate of decisions by individuals. It is the philosophical view that social phenomena are, in principle, only explicable in terms of individuals' action[10]. As an alternative doctrine to methodological holism in the explanation of social phenomena, methodological individualism enjoys wide acceptability among modern and contemporary social theorists for two technical reasons: that is; the individual rather than the society that has ontological existence and that the whole is in final analysis reducible to the individual. In other words, social phenomena are a result of individual behavior and action and therefore any attempt of analysis above the individual is not possible, … thus the focus on individualism is on explaining human behaviour because it is only the individual that exists[11]. Matolino seems to agree with Bone that the individual has a way of influencing or impacting his/her decisions on the society. He says,

> … the restriction placed here is that the issue of communal rights and reality of community taking precedence over the individual is not to be taken as an influence or reference to personal identity. It is to be taken as a communal and social reference of the many aspects that the individual person is able to live out. When we speak of the essence of a person or what really constitutes a person, we strictly refer to the metaphysical scheme[12].

Thus, inherent in methodological individualism is the salient and fundamental issue of ontological orientation about the creative and autonomous intelligence of the individual, particularly as it regards the question of personal identity and persistence of social order. For instance, why does an individual take decision and action that sometimes threatens or enhances social order? This fundamental problem has more to do with the underlying ontological conception of human nature especially the human personality. According to Bone, implicit within this perspective (what is methodological individualism) is that humans have total free will and are thus given complete agency in regard to their behaviors and attitudes[13].

In this regard, it is clearly revealed that methodological individualism identifies with a fundamental element in human nature that allows the theory to remain faithful to the analytical core of individualism. In other words, methodological individualists stress the emergence and sustenance of social institutions and phenomena as the consequences of human actions (intended and unintended), therefore, points to the view that knowledge of human autonomy and creativity are significant and worthy of theoretical exploration.

In fact, some important arguments against methodological individualism are directly connected to the ontological conception of the human person. That is the criticisms against methodological individualism, that it provides too much autonomy to the individual and that it has low predictive

power, arising out of the ontological conviction that individual's autonomy of ideas is free and remains absolutely free in performing its function of initiating decision and action in individual.

Hence, the shortcomings of methodological individualism fundamentally reside in its basic assumption about the nature of the individual which derives from the ontological conception and conviction that the human person has autonomy and therefore, is free. But does it deny the role the community's norms help in shaping and maintenance of social order? Our next subsection has to do with the idea of social order in Igbo world view.

3.2 Igbo cosmology and the idea of social order

According to Nwala,

> the Igbo world-view implies two basic beliefs (1) the unity of all things and (2) an ordered relationship among all beings in the universe. Consequently, there is belief in the existence of order and interaction among all beings. Any disorder is the result of an improper conduct on the part of any of the beings. If the cause of this is known, then it can be corrected and rectified. Human survival and existence depends on a proper maintenance of this order. To safeguard and ensure this cosmic and social order a number of prohibitions, taboos (Nso-ala) and sanctions are devised and enforced through various means[14].

This means that at a certain level of human experience, man comprehends the universe as a totality. The interpretation of human experience at the level of tradition is usually dominated by a type of unconscious analogy which attempts to view external nature as endowed with human qualities. Things are interpreted and explained in personalistic terms and traditional peoples ascribe purpose to both animate and inanimate matter as well as to elements and ordinary events in nature[15]. Action, energy and purpose are human attributes which are also applied to natural objects. Agulanna agrees with Nwala that, inspite of the rapid changes and transformations taking place in Africa today, which have greatly affected many traditional ideas, and in some

cases brought about their abandonment, some traditional concepts still provide the essential background to many beliefs in most African societies and communities[16]. Igbo people are one of these African communities which see the universe as made up of spiritual and non spiritual realities.

Whether this interpretation of the universe and the beings that inhabit it or are supposed to inhabit it) which result from this process of thought accords with the actual nature of things is a different matter: What is being discussed here is the process and line of reasoning which lead traditional peoples to believe in the unity of all things and their dynamic or spiritual essence[17]. It is being stressed that this belief results from:

(a) the unifying tendency of the human mind.

(b) the unconscious analogy leading into a transference of human qualities and attributes to things in nature. This is further supported by the fact that

(c) a lot of things we experience appear to have purpose similar to the ones in the human mind.

The whole thing, however, is like the famous argument from design in which philosophers (like Thomas Acquinas, Leibniz, Kant, etc.) have argued from the fact that there is order in some aspects of nature to the conclusion that this nature is the handiwork of an intelligent being. As it is common with human nature (and this is part of the argument), the disorder, chaos and miseries which are encountered are explained in such a way that belief in the element of order is not affected. For order is what human beings desire (in a world of conflicting desires) for their own continued survival[18].

But the concrete form which traditional beliefs take as well as the social life and behaviour which they lead to are determined by three cognitive and psychological factors.

(a) Empirical observation which yield forms of knowledge and particular ideas. An example is the observation that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. There is nothing human desires can do to alter this basic empirical act which is given.

(b) Those obstrusive elements and stark realities which lead to such experiences we call lessons of history. Thus we say experience is a great teacher. Such is the belief that trusted friends can fail us at moments of great need; or that fire bums, war is devastating and destructive, or the belief that adultery is bad because if adultery is allowed the leaders of the society will find commoners making love to their wives.

(c) The human desires which seek to make this life palatable and comfortable and thereby give rise to unconscious beliefs meant to ensure, preserve and promote human life. Such are the beliefs in reincarnation and existence in the spirit world which aims among other things at overcoming the fearful thoughts about death.

There is a tendency in the human mind to seek order. The first two relate to what psychologists call the reality principle while the last two relate to what they call the pleasure principle. This analysis is true of most human societies and their belief systems but the whole process is more indirect and informal in traditional societies.

Man's nature is such that he/she acts first and foremost in accordance with those things which agree with or are in harmony with his feelings and desires, his comforts and well-being. Elements of altruism, charity and self-sacrifice are also found in human beings but they result

from and are only meaningful in a situation of social relationship and they often presuppose the self.

This desire for comfort and self-preservation (which many say is the first law of nature) is, however, at times checked here and there by the stark realities of human experience including the unpleasant results of certain of our own actions. A man may want to own a car but he finds that the economic system is such that unless he has the money he could not own one; or again, a man may also feel so hot that he jumps into a river to cool off only to find that the water is deep and he cannot swim. Consequently, he may get drowned unless someone else comes to his rescue. In both cases experience teaches him something about the world. The resulting impression and opinion so formed go to form part of his picture and beliefs about life and the world in which he lives. When students live together as room-mates, one may want to read with, the light on, while the other may like to rest with the light off. When one wants to rest, the other may like to listen to the music from his radio. As a result their interests clash. Eventually it will be resolved either by mutual accommodation or one may impose his will (by one means or the other) on the neighbour. Thus, in the end, if they must live together a basis of acting, code or rule will emerge to regulate their desires. The overall aim being to secure order, harmony and peace. For in an atmosphere of conflict, their individual desires and interests may not be satisfied; each may, in fact, be worse off[19].

This type of belief is aimed at providing a psychological antidote to the unpleasant experiences. The belief that the reward for all our sufferings here on earth is in heaven may be compared to that. The traditional lgbo belief that if a dead man is properly buried he will live an exhaulted life in yonder world is also similar to it. Indeed such beliefs are the psychological tonics with which we cope with the vagaries and the unpleasantness of our human experiences.

These two elements—human desires and the realities of human experience—influence all the rules, customs, myths, conventions and codes of laws which operate in all human societies.

According to Nwala,

> the traditional Igbo man's experience tells him the world is such and such but his human desires make him wish it were such and such, and indeed, it turns out to him to resemble his unconscious desires and wishes. But the wishes are in turn put in check by some obstrusive elements in his objective experience. In the end, equilibrium will emerge in the overall picture he has of life and the world which indeed is a dynamic synthesis of desires and objective experience[20].

We have shown the main outline of Igbo traditional world view. It has been emphasized that there is a common principle to all the various categories of being. This common principle is a spiritual force. Apart from the purely spiritual beings, there are also the abstract forces. There is an order in the universe which we may call cosmic order which is reflected in the social and spiritual lives of the people. The cosmic order is maintained by what we may again call a cosmic law for the people believe that nothing happens in any part of the universe without a prior cause and each happening is purposeful and orderly. For an event springs logically from an action that has necessitated it, and this is a basic principle in Igbo traditional thought.

It is also true that these spirits and forces interact. There is greater interaction among all the created beings than between them and the Supreme Being. Although it is believed that everything emanates or comes from Him. We should note that there is a kind of symbiotic relationship between the spirit world and human environment. According to Nwala, the gods and men live a symbiotic life, one of mutual and reciprocal relationship. Men feed the gods and the gods provide health, fertility of soil and reproduction. Certain gods and ancestors are said to complain of hunger or cold and so demand food or fire as the case may be[21].

The influence of the disembodied spirits and deities on human beings, their association with other animate and inanimate matter and all natural elements and phenomena have been pointed out above.

Human beings manipulate and influence these higher forces through prayer and invocation, rituals, festivities, '*ogwu*' or mystical force, etc. The lower beings *ihe* also play very vital part in this scheme of ontological interaction. The roles of the priests, diviners, elders, medicine-men in the attempt to secure a proper harmony with natural forces are indeed indispensable.

In the human realm, this philosophy of nature and life—(and the appropriate behaviours it generates) is embodied in the concept of *Omenala*—customs and tradition—(a complex of beliefs and practices) which every Igbo man is expected to accept and live up to. The taboos, totems and prohibitions hedged around *Omenala* (*omenani*) are also designed to ensure that the natural order is not violated and that a proper relationship among spirits; between spirits and men, among men, between men and the lower beings, between husband and. wife, child and parent, among kinsmen, etc. The gamut of natural order stretches from the high principles and basic beliefs about life and the universe to economic pursuits and to the lowest items of etiquette. In all, there is unity of all things. The highest principle which is the cornerstone of the behaviour and actions among all these beings is Justice, symbolized in '*ofo*' held by the elders, priests, and the initiated. In the realm of human intercourse, this cosmic and social order is crystallized as said above in the concept of *Omenala*. Cosmic and social orders are further secured through some magical or mystical force called '*ogwu*' and *ofo na ogu*. We shall in this subsection take a closer look at the concept of *Omenala*, and the cult of *ofo*.

3.3 The Igbo Concept of *Omenala* (*Omenani*)

Literarily translated *Omenala* (*Omenani*) means that which obtains in the land or community, according to the custom and social tradition of the community. Briefly stated, that which obtains in the community means also what is natural in the understanding of the traditional lgbo[22]. And 'what is natural' to them has several shades of meaning.

(a) It may mean that which happens according to the events in the physical world such as the 'fact' that water (in rivers, streams) descends hills and does not climb them; things thrown up fall downwards and not upwards: the sun rises in the east and sets in the west and not vice-versa; women give birth to children while men do not; children are born without teeth and they are born with five fingers on each hand and five toes on each foot, and so on and so forth. These natural facts relate to what scientists and philosophers call 'laws of nature' and include part of what religious thinkers call 'divine laws' because they believe these natural laws are decreed by God[23].

There is a sense in which the Igbo regard these laws of nature as divine. Consequently, anything happening contrary to them is a sacrilege or abomination—hence the birth of twin in pre-colonial Igbo was an abomination and, unusual. Deformities and all other strange happenings are regarded as contrary to *Omenala* and therefore are *aru* or *nsa-ala* (abomination).

However, they believe too that only the spirits and gods and the medicine-men have power to alter these natural laws. Their attitude to anything happening contrary to nature in this sense will depend on the circumstances. But usually the deciding factors in their reaction are generally based on a utilitarian consideration. If a woman gives birth to a deformed child, then it is a curse for which her family, relations and friends will lament and for which certain rituals will have to

be performed to cleanse her and restore the goodwill of her ancestors and the gods. But such an event will be an occasion for her enemy to give thanks to his/her own gods and ancestors. For her enemy will see it as a vengeance wrecked on the woman on his/her behalf.

This attitude is found in all human societies and it results from a narrowly—defined humanistic philosophy. It is predominant wherever the structure of society allows a false type of competition rather than co-operation among its component units—individual family, tribe or race. If a medicine man uses his power to cause a woman from an enemy clan to deliver a deformed child then members of his society will glory over it. But if he uses that power on a kinsman, he will be punished by the community for such an abomination. Kinship units see themselves as competing units.

Second, to the traditional Igbo, *Omenala* also means 'according to the way our forefathers and our people do it'. Thus it refers to the social and historical tradition of the people. Very often if one presses for the reason for a certain belief or action, he is very likely to get in reply, *O bu ka ndichie kwuru ma o bu, O bu ka anyi si eme ya* (i.e. it is according to what our ancestors said: it is according to how our people do it). This refers to such questions as—whether a man should marry his kinswoman or not, whether a woman should climb a palm tree, when a son should work out of his/her father, whether people should farm in a particular piece of land or not. Usually the main reasons for the conventions relating to these are well known to them but in the final analysis their explanation rests on the authority of the ancestors and the elders. It is in this aspect of *Omenala* that we encounter the numerous taboos, marriage and mortuary (burial) regulations, fashions, taste and morals. It includes the whole realm of their metaphysical and social values and ideals. The traditional Igbo acknowledge that a great part of this aspect of *Omenala* is relative hence they say 'what is good in one society may be bad in another'. But

certain values seem to them to have universal values (in the sense that other societies are known to observe the same rules). They express this knowledge by saying '*Odi nala anyi di nala ozo'*— what obtains in our land does obtain in other lands (communities).

Although this aspect of (*omenala* derives from custom and convention, yet the body of custom and convention is being continually enlarged and adjusted according to social contingencies and pragmatic considerations.

> Omanala is not only a body of beliefs but also a moral order. And in traditional Igbo society, as in other traditional societies, morals and laws overlap. Hence it extends from its metaphysical foundations (—the very realm of cosmic intercourse, the basic beliefs about life and the universe) to the very lower realm of social intercourse arid etiquette. It is indeed a body of law and moral, "the lore of the land which is beyond the knowledge of many fathers[24].

According to Nwala,

> omenala also refers to the actual practice of the customs as they apply to any aspect of social and ritual life of the various communities in lgboland. Very often when you see the Igbo celebrating any festival, performing any rituals like sacrifice, initiation ceremony, ordination of priests, taking titles, performing naming ceremony, marriage rites, breaking kola in a gathering, planting yam, etc; they say anyi neme omenala—we are performing omenala (i.e. they are carrying out the activity which is customary to them); according to the way which custom prescribed; in short, according to their way of life. Indeed, (omenala is also the realization of the culture and civilization of the Igbo[25].

If you fail to do anything in the way it is supposed to be done under the custom of the people, they say *Omeghi omenala* or *Omeghi ya dika omenala*—it was not done according to custom. If you want to marry an Igbo man's daughter and he asks you to perform according to *omenala* (*meeornenala*), he expects that you know the marriage regulations and custom of his people. And so he is asking you to do it, not as it is done in your own area, but as it is done in your

prospective father-in-law's community. Very often you walk into a gathering of Igbomen and you may find them engaged in a serious argument (not unlike what lawyers do in the court as to whether a particular thing done at the meeting is *Omenala* or not. You could be called to order, or called off on point of information in the midst of a speech if you happen to contravene or slight any aspect of *omenala*—relating to what is going on.

The elders, diviners, priests, titled men, etc., are continually setting up new standards and redefining existing ones. Positive laws are being continually enacted by the various *Amal*a (village councils) and chiefs—or chiefs-in-council—for the orderly rule and administration of the various communities. These play the role which the Church Councils and Church Synods, the Popes and bishops etc., play in enlarging and adjusting the body of religious ideas and faith; as well as the role governments and constitutional conferences play in contemporary legal and constitutional development of states.

On the whole, *Omenala* reflects a cosmic order because it reflects the body of beliefs and norms without which the community would mean nothing and without which, in fact, as the Igbo see it and as said earlier, the community would cease to exist because it must have lost its touch with reality and the source of their very existence. It reflects the cosmic order which keeps the world going and without which too, the very existence of nature and the world would be jeopardized including the welfare of the community and all the beings that live in it. There would be chaos, and the community would lose its normal balance with nature. One can now understand the outrage which the incursions of Western civilization through the activities of the missionaries and their agents, and British administration, evoked among the Igbo during the early colonial days. One can also understand the fanaticism with which the Igbo resisted British attempts to destroy the great oracles and gods in Igboland. Such were the nature of the *Aro* Expedition of

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1901—1902 leading to the destruction of *Ibini Ukpabi*, the destruction of *Igwe-ka-ala* of *Umunneoha* in 1905. the *Agbala* of *Awka* and the goddess *Haba* of *Agulu* in 1906. These oracles and the gods were part of the cornerstone on which traditional beliefs and *Omenala* rested.

Omenala, thus conceived, ensures conformity, social harmony and peace, the practical and theoretical instrument for social control and hence could be regarded as the support of what is conservative in Igbo traditional thought[26].

From our analysis so far on the meaning of *omenala*, one might be tempted to think that these norms are sacrosanct. But in actual fact, they are not. They can be amended or re-evaluated especially when it contradicts with certain truth an individual or a group knows to be so. In this regard, Nwala says,

> apparently, *Omenala* would seem by its very nature to be rigid, inflexible, and so to militate "against the freedom of thought. Strictly speaking, this is not always the case. Even though it is an offence to go or speak against *Omenala*, yet the lgbo have clever ways of manipulating Omenala and the various spirits and forces which are postulated. There is a good degree of flexibility and relativity in Igbo system of thought[27].

Anxiety about threats to established body of traditional theory' was there, no doubt, but the Igbo say *Omenala abughi omenelu* i.e (*Omenala* is earthly, not celestial) and they occasionally ask *Obugh madu mere omenala*? (Is man not the author of Omenala?).

These two expressions usually come as outcry against *Omenala* and that happens when an Igbo man sees that tradition is being invoked to stifle a novelty which he is very anxious to see through or when what tradition enjoins seems to stifle the dictates of his personal conscience.

The element of relativism in Igbo traditional belief system has been stressed by Chinua Achebe in his paper '*Chi* in Igbo Cosmology'.

Dogmastism as an attitude to cherished beliefs is not strong among the Igbo. Igbo system of thought with its myth, proverbs, etc., exemplify the attitude of a people more interested in manipulating the forces of nature to the advantage of the human element. The traditional principles, beliefs and theories are pragmatically (instrumentally cherished to achieve ultimate aim (survival of the group). Their validity is contextual.

Basil Davidson has described this flexibility in Igbo traditional society as seen in their social organization[28] '*Onyekwe chi ya ekwe*' (If a man wills, his god wills too). This proverb does not present a fatalistic approach to human existence, but it emphasizes the importance of the human will, intelligence and determination; and the fact that his fate is not absolutely determined by external forces. Man could succeed if he is determined. '*Mmuo adighi egbu onye nadighi ihe omere*' (The spirits do not kill an innocent man). This emphasises the principle of Justice (ogu) which guides the actions of men and spirits. Thus the Igbo say '*ogu di na madu di na mmuo*' (there is justice among men as well as among the spirits). This principle is a limitation on the power of the gods and when a deity contravenes it, he is regarded as wicked. The Igbo are known to destroy an ineffective and all-together malevolent deity or cult. For example, when a man's '*ikenga*' does not prove effective he hangs it up and refuses to sacrifice to it or even destroys it.

The Igbo are known to threaten a dead ancestor with hunger if the dead ancestor no more fulfils his protective role. When a deity proves very destructive, he is sent back (in a ceremony) to the town or village known to be its traditional home, and its shrine in the former place is destroyed.

All the above point to the instrumental role of the gods and cults. Although they are seriously believed by the traditional Igbo, in practical terms, they must be effective in sustaining his survival and wellbeing, otherwise they are discarded.

The Igbo, in their sayings accept cultural relativity. They say 'what is good in one place may be bad in another place and what is good among one people may be an abomination with others. The proverbs, idioms and folklore, in which traditional Igbo values may be found, show apparent contradictions to the outsider. But a closer look at them reveals that the apparent contradictions emphasize the important fact that 'there are several facets to experience and other ways of looking at a thing.

We have looked at the meaning of *omenala* in Igbo culture. We saw that these *omenala* are in no way rigid, even though they are meant to protect and maintain social order and to control the relatationship between the individual and his community. We saw also that in practical terms, the individual can create and amend some of these norms, especially when it bothers on conscience and personal identity. We equally have showed that the veneration of spiritual/divine forces does not suggest fatalism to fate as the individual through *akonauche*, (creative intelligence) has the capacity to build and re-build.

Let us examine the way the Igbo ensure the maintenance of this cosmic and social order and what institutional and ritual forms they create to express its reality.

3.4 The Institution and Cult of *Ofo na Ogu*, The Mystical Symbol Of Authority and the Idea of Justice in Igbo Culture

Most Igbo scholars and even non scholars would agree with us here that the idea of *ofo na ogu* in various Igbo societies is to ensure peace, fairness, innocence and harmony among peoples. When an Igbo says, *aka m dikwa ocha*-my hands are clean, he or she is referring to the *ofo na ogu* cult. The Igbo people agree that truth must prevail and they say, *ajugbu dike na ogu, eburu ozo ya ga afe na amanna ya*- that a guilt person has his/her couples taken beyond their father's house.

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What these proverbs suggest is that, traditionally, the *ofo na ogu* cult was highly respected and symbolic that it was the final resort to a helpless person. According to Iheancho, in many pre-colonial Mbaise communities, ofo-symbol seemed to have served many purposes. It was first and foremost the symbol of a religious covenant that bound and united together the fate and destinies of the members of a kindred, village and community in general[29]. Similarly, Nnawuihe says that, *ofo* symbolizes … covenant … it symbolizes justice, righteousness and truth[30]. It was also a symbol of arbitration. As Nzewuba rightly remarks,

> *ofo* symbolizes truth. Honesty and justice, and therefore calls and empowers the *oji ofo* to be most righteous at all times, regardless of the odds and circumstances … *ofo* is a staff of authority, calling the *oji-ofo* to act on behalf of the entire community-living and dead, unborn and yet to be born. Above all, *ofo* empowers and links the *oji ofo,* on behalf of the community, to the ancestors in the spirit world, and *Chukwu* in heaven. *Oji ofo* is thus, a civic and spiritual leader of the highest order[31].

On his part, Odu describes ofo as, the common will of the ancestors…dating back into the distant past and binding ancestors with progency. It was the unwritten common law of traditional society that continuity invoked past solutions to problems as precedents for reaching conclusions on matters that were brought for adjudication[32]. Nwala was not salient on the role and significant of *ofo na ogu* in pre-colonial Igbo communities. He says,

> according to an Igbo saying, it is ofo which gives rain water the power to bite dry earth. In other words, this emphasizes the principle that 'right is might'. It is ofo which ensures that this is so in Igboland and that the reverse (which is what happens in our contemporary society) is not the case. Thus, the institution and cult of *ofo na ogu* is the defender of the weak and the weapon of the innocent or the man who stands on the 'alter' of innocent (i.e. *Ogu*)[33].

Ekwuru agrees with others on the sacredness and performative relevance of *ofo* symbol in Igbo world view. According to him, the etymological exposition, furnishes the essential primary or natural aspect of the *ofo* as a ritual object[34]. He continues that,

> from its theriomorphic etymological root, the ofo figure was already seen as an incarnate of the two-ness principle of reality. Its natural, physical aspect was totally subsumed under the hierophanic cloak of the incarnate symbol of the sacred. It was as if its physical nature never existed as real, but rather existed as a mirage of the sacred presence. However, despite its sacredness, it was also a physical reality that the traditional man saw with his eyes and touched with his hand. The dialectics of its apparent two-ness nature, became the point of accumulation and diffusion of various ideologies in the process of symbolization. Thus, from its sacred genealogical root, stems its association with ritual, as an efficacious performative symbol. It is from this level of functional role that the myths hedged their various descriptive and ascriptions of meaning[35].

In the first place *ofo* has a material symbol made up of either a carved stick of about four to six inches long, thick at one end; or it could be made up of a bundle of ofo sticks. It is made from a special tree called '*osisiofo*' (detarium Senegalese). It is usually black owing to constant rubbing of blood and feather from fowls and other animals sacrificed onto it.

Even though the *ofo* symbol is made of wooden materials, but its in-depth significance and control in the various communities transcends its sculptural image. In pre-colonial Igbo communities, *ofo* was more reverenced and respected that even the deities. The idea of *ofo* was to ensure that communities had some sense of moral probity, social harmony, equality and fairness to one another. *Ofo* tree is believed to be a mystical tree specially designed by providence for its role. *Ofo bu nti mmuo, ofo* is the ear of the spirit. The sacredness of life, its santity and value was revolving around *ofo* symbol. This was how *ofo* was seen and understood by our ancestors. According to Ekwuru, the second proverbial motif analysis is based on the

qualification of the *ofo* holder: *ofo na ezi-okwu yi*, *ofo* goes with the truth:' the main prerequisites of acquiring an *ofo* symbol is a sound moral probity based on truthfulness and justice[36].

When the carved branch or bundle of it are prepared into *ofo* symbol, it is consecrated and becomes the central family cult which unites the living and the dead. And in fact through this cult the deities and ancestral spirits endow the holder with special rights and privileges which the living must respect. The cult is indeed the key which the ancestors give to their holders for binding and loosening their members as the case may be. Whatever the holder of *ofo* binds or condemns or approves is that which the gods and ancestors disapprove or approve.

Consequently, one begins to doubt if these attributes of *ofo*, its role, significant and its holder is still very effective in most contemporary *Igbo* communities. Investigations have shown that one of the traditional beliefs in pre-*Igbo* society that has been highly damaged by colonial conquest is the *ofo na ogu* practice and understanding. According to my uncle. Pa Canice Mbara, who is ninety-one this year (2016), he says that, *onweghi onye ji ofo na oge ugbowa, ndi ichieajula ofo ma agba baa na uka*, -no one agrees to hold ofo staff in our time now. All the elders have abandoned tradition and are born-again Christian. The situation has even deteriorated, where deities and gods take bribe. (the case of Ngige and the Ubas') There is now conflict of personal and social identity. This should make one to reflect on the words of Wylie. He says,

> in a world that is engaged in the reckless rush for mass-produced material objects, there is neither room nor time for honest consideration, integrity of thought, introspection, or the operation of conscience. In such a world-democratic, fascist, Soviet, whatever the form of government-there will be no security because security comes from man's trust of man-man's confidence in man-and the mills cannot manufacture it and the state cannot guarantee it[37].

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On the other hand, according to Nwawuihe, the *ogu* is more of a religious concept than a physical object[38]. The *ogu* (part of *ofo na ogu*) stands for innocence, and can be symbolized by anything, be it a stick or a stone, during an appropriate ceremony. *Ogu* is invoked when a person is enumerating the injuries done to him by another person while declaring his own innocence[39].

Ofo -na -ogu are two sides of the same coin. While *ofo* is the spirit of justice and righteousness, ogu is its vindication in action[40].To invoke an *ofo-na-ogu* was just like calling on the deity of righteousness to act in the here and now to vindicate a position and declare the invoker innocent and blameless in that situation. In this sense, *ogu* is the actionable side of *ofo*. According to Iheancho, when *ofo* is in action to vindicate and declares somebody free and without blame, it is called *ogu*. Hence *ofo-na-ogu* is the deity and its action in the here and now freeing and declaring people blameless and innocent[41].

Ofo, as a legal instrument 'for validating decisions of the family lineage, village or clan helps to ensure political stability by its role as a means of sanction, settling disputes and ensuring peace, harmony and conformity. It expresses the will of the community including the Iiving, the dead ancestors and the gods. Its presence in any Amala Council ensures legitimacy of the meeting and its proceedings. It's presence fosters in all the members of the group a sense of unity, coherence and conformity" — for the ofo is "a most dreaded cult[42]. This is so because of the belief that ofo can kill and can be used to ostracize any erring member of the community. In such a case it is regarded as *igbu ofo* and when it is done in respect of any member of the community, it spells "the end of all fraternal, social and diplomatic relations[43].

In general *ofo* in lgboland performs similar roles as legal seal and the mace in legal and political affairs as well as the Bible in court swearing. Above all *ofo* performs detective and judicial roles,

Its ritual and religious roles cannot be overemphasized. It acts as the highest moral principle. Together with '*ogu*' — the twin cult of innocence, they form the bastion of lgbo morality. *Ofo* is, in fact, the symbolic representation of (Ala or Ani) the Earth goddess and the ancestors

"*ndichie*" who superintend over Igbo customary morality. As the highest principle of justice (law) and morality it binds both men and the supernatural powers, while at the same time serves as their instrument for ensuring cosmic and social order.

3.5 Communitarian View of personhood

The communitarian view of personhood retains unrivalled dominance in African philosophy. It is readily invoked to show the difference between African notions and European notions of personhood. While most of European philosophy seeks to articulate the notion of person from a perspective that insists on the ownership of this or other attribute; the African view seeks to portray questions of personhood as couched in terms of the primacy of the social reality in the individual's sense of the self[44]. An interesting philosophical upshot of this position is that it confers metaphysical precedence to the community over the individual whenever questions of personhood arise.

This concept is also used as a flagship of ethical conduct befitting and expected of a fully developed person. It is invoked as a prescriptive ethic of how one ought to live her life if she/he is to be seen as having lived a meaningful and worthwhile life. As an ethic it essentially calls upon the individual to be responsive to communal dictates and fulfill her/his obligations towards other members of society. In this discharge of her duties towards society, not only does she/he become a real person, but she will also be said to have led her life ethically as she ought to. In this regard, Ikuenobe argues that: In African communal tradition, 'personhood' does not just

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describe a human being with body and mind but also an individual who indicates by his actions that he can accept and meet certain standards of social responsibility to achieve recognition[45]. Within this school of thought it is routinely held that the mere possession of human biological characteristics does not automatically qualify the individual to personhood. This is only attained in the arena of ethical conduct where one is judged as either displaying conduct befitting of personhood or not. This ethical conduct is realised within the realm of social reality and in the course of interaction with fellow human beings. It cannot be an ethic that is developed by the individual all by him/her and for her/his own benefit. The individual cannot say he/she has their own independent ethical outlook that guides her behaviour. No matter how well reasoned and sound such an ethic may be, it remains unjustified and without recognition if it is not reconciled to communal aspirations, expectations and injunctions. These social orders are the basis of individual behaviour. Any behaviour or ideas that are to the contrary of these social constructs are not only deleterious to the social order but are also said to be meaningless both for the individual and the community at large[46].

Our focus here is to investigate the grounds on which the communitarian view of persons is premised. Following Gyekye, as well as accepting his terminology, we make two broad distinctions in the communitarian school. The first school is characterised as the radical view while the second is seen as moderate communitarianism. The three classical proponents of the radical view are Placide Tempels, John Mbiti and ifeanyi Menkiti. The moderate view is one that is represented by Gyekye. Gyekye believes that there are serious differences, between these schools, in the manner that they characterise the fact of communal life and how it affects an individual's conception of her identity. Our aim here is not merely to present what each school and thinker says about communitarianism as a source of personhood, but to investigate the

reasons that this school proposes as informants of communitarianism. Our reason for this is that in literature that seeks to critique the African communitarian conception of personhood, very little attempt is made to attend to the reasons that are provided as the basis of this concept. Most of the attacks express objections along the lines that this concept is archaic and relevant only to small scale traditional societies hence ill-suited for any use in today's largely urbanised Africa, or, that it tends to exaggerate the influence of the community in the construction of the self. Our findings obviously seek to differ from these kinds of criticisms and others that may be associated with this line of objection. We seek to develop some criticisms that seek to examine the philosophical strengths of the reasons that are submitted in support of any form of communitarianism.

Here, we aimed at outlining the radical position. We shall start with Placide Temples's notion of force, followed by John Mbiti's enthusiastic underscoring of oneness in the coinmunitarian scheme and end with lfeanyi Menkiti's radical conclusion that, in Africa personhood is the sort of thing that can fail at. The second part will then outline the reasons behind Gyekye's moderate communitarianism which seeks to take seriously individual attributes as well as communal obligations in the definition of personhood. We argued that moderate communitarianism as defended by Gyekye does not triumph over radical communitarianism. Our conclusion is that Gyekye does not take the issue of individual reality seriously since moderate communitarianism is prepared to trump individual rights in favor of communal rights.

According to Temple, there is one supreme value that is of great significance to the Bantu. This supreme value is life, force, to live strongly, or vital force[47]. These four terms do not characterize four different or related entities. According to Matolino, Tempel is actually referring to a single value of force that is at the core of this system. So the term life and to live strongly refer to the

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same value of experiencing a strong perception of leading a full life not wanting in strength[48]. The term force and vital force refer to the single notion that Tempels thinks is at the centre of all Bantu thinking. According to Tempel, force is the essential characteristic that drives Bantu life. For the Bantu, he says, life is essentially about one's force: it is always to aim at increasing that force[49]. The increase of that force bordes well for the individual and its life. So to have life and live strongly is to have force, vital force. According to Tempel, the possession of that greatest vital force means that the individual has a full life that is being lived in accord with God's intentions for humans[50]. Even though Tempel does not want to present a fatalistic notion of personhood in Bantu world view, his intention is to demonstrate the fundamental difference between the Bantu and Western notion of being. The Western hold a static notion of being while the Bantu hold a dynamic notion. He goes on to say that when Europeans talk of being, the Bantu talk of force and when Europeans talk of different categories of being owing to their different characteristics the Bantu talk of different forces. Tempels hold that at the heart of Western philosophy is the notion of being and each differentiated from one and the rest by virtue of its nature. On the contrary, at the heart of the Bantu system of thought is the notion of force which makes a distinction between entities by the virtue of their different forces. However, what seems worrisome is Tempels desire to find an equivalent notion among the Bantu that will do the work of the notion of being. Perhaps, not finding such a notion, or maybe for a better word, he settles for the idea of force. Again, he seeks to characterize the Bantu notion of being as a dualistic entity. His claim that force is being, being is force, seems to suggest that unlike the West where the characterization of being as being suffices, that is not the case with the Bantu. According to Matolino, "he seems to suggest that for the Bantu when there is a certain being one has to be reminded that this instance is actually force. Equally if there could be an instance that is seen as

force one also has to be reminded that the force is actually being. This kind of dualisation of each in terms of the other could elicit problems. For instance, it could be said that he has distorted the notion of force, for indeed he has no local word for the notion, or that he has totally misunderstood what being is among the Bantu. But more seriously is that Tempels account of force seeks to mystify the notion of being[51].

Again, what Tempels seeks to show is that the notion of force on its own does not readily qualify an individual to be a person[52]. What the individual needs to do is to engage her/his force with other forces in harmonious relationships that seek to promote the well being of all. So if an individual who possesses force truly desires to see that force extending to become greater force, which would mean an increase in her ontological status, he/she must seek to foster harmonious relations with all other forces. In essence, this is what makes Tempels's force thesis a communitarian notion. Thus, Matolino opines,

> a single force finds itself constrained to be in a relational standing with all other forces that surround it. But further the relations that the single force of muntu must foster are to be of benefit to all these other factors. The individual finds his/her self under a permanent injunction to behave in a manner that is beneficial to the community of forces[53].

Tempel is of the view that a force that does not increase in line with the intention of other forces distinguishes its vital force from other forces. He writes, it is always to accord with this conception of forces that the *Baluba* speak of "*muntu mutupu*" to indicate a man of middling importance devoid of real force, while the *muntu mukulumpe*" indicates the powerful man who has his part to take in the community. The word "*muntu*" inherently includes an idea of excellence or plenitude. And thus the *Baluba* will speak of '*ke muntu po*" this is not a *muntu*", of a man who behaves unworthily[54]. Similarly, Mbiti, whom Kaphagawani has described as Tempels greatest disciple, starts by insisting on African difference. He brings out what he

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believes are the important distinguishing characteristics of African people. These characteristics are said to mark them apart from other people. However, Mbiti, unlike Tempels does not choose to pursue his project through a detailed compare and contrast between Africans and Europeans. He gives an account of the most distinguishing features that are supposed to constitute the identity of each clan. The first important feature is that each clan, as a people, has its own language. Another important factor that is very different among people is location. What is most significant with Mbiti's position is its insistence that everybody is related to everybody else. He writes that, we have so far spoken about the life and existence of the community. When then is the individual and where is his place in the community?

> In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group. Physical birth is not enough: the child must go through rites of incorporation so that it becomes fully integrated into the entire society[55].

In this quote Mbiti makes it clear that what comes first is community. This means that the community is the first real category of existence. The community takes precedence over the individual as reference to the individual is made in an attempt to discern what its place is in wider community[56]. Mbiti argues that it is only from this reality of the individual as a specific entity operating within the confines of society that the individual comes to be conscious of her being. Even something as personal as marriage or bearing children is not seen as meant for the individual benefit or enjoyment but to be shared with the rest of the clan. Indeed, he goes on to say that marriage and children belong to the kinsmen as opposed to being an individual event. This leads him to famously conclude that, whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual

can only say, I am because we are: and since we are, therefore I am. This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man[57]. These words have become a standard representative of the African communitarian view of personhood; used by the sympathizers of the position that seeks to show the fundamental difference between the Cartesian cogito and the African conception of man[58]. One can pinpoint two implications from these words. The first implication is that Mbiti has construed a duality of equals between the community and the person in this scheme. He carefully points out that whatever happens to the community happens to the individual, and vice versa. In this way exonerating him of any accusations that he prioritizes the reality of the community over that of individual. It appears as if his construal is intent on showing that there is a symbiosis of effect between the reality of the individual and that of the community. We could say that Mbiti is amenable to the idea of granting equal metaphysical status to the individual and the community in the final construct of selfhood. Again, his deliberate use of terminology that seeks to emphasise the difference between the Western conception of person and the African conception. His slogan is a deliberate corruption of Descartes's "I think therefore I am[59]. What this meant to show is that the person comes to know his/her identity and understand his/herself as having such an identity through sharing in the fate of other persons (community) and having other persons share in her/his fate as well. This is not an isolated static quality that can be reduced to this or that property but an embrace of the dynamic relations that people have in the communal normative scheme. The basis of successful personhood, just like in Tempels's scheme, is an increase of relational force. This effectively means that identity is not a matter of one-to-one standing that the individual has with some property of his/herself but a never ending series of seeking to develop and grow his/her nature in ways that promote the good of society. For it is in the promotion of the good of society that the

individual's own good is promoted. And it is from this promoted good that the individual's sense of self as a person can ever make sense.

In the same vein, Menkiti's work entitled, *person and community in African Traditional Thought* argues for a view of personhood that is radically different from its Western counterpart. According to Matolino, Menkiti's thesis closely follows Mbiti's view on the importance of the community in the construction of self identity. Menkiti's claims are stated in a radicalized and rigid form. He insists that the view that the community takes metaphysical precedence over the individual is thoroughly fused with the community[60]. For Menkiti,

> the African does not isolate a single feature to be constitutive of personhood. From this, he states one obvious conclusion to be drawn from this dictum is that, as far as Africans are concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of the individual life histories whatever these may be. And this primacy is meant to apply not only ontologically, but also in regard to epistemic accessibility[61].

From this quote, it is undoubtful that Menkiti sees the community as the ontological determinant of personhood. This calls to mind how Menkiti would want to resolve problems of personal identity and realities. Menkiti would readily refer such questions to the realities of the community as opposed to the realities of the individual. We observed how insignificant the reality of the individual is with the communal realities. His position suggests to us two salient puzzles. The first instance is that the individual's life history, his/her own perspective or story about him/her does not matter when it comes to a construal of his/ her identity. This position denials the individual the capacity to legislate on certain issues for his/ herself. It also contradicts the idea of *onwe* in Igbo conception of personhood. The idea of *onwe* will be properly dissected in our fifth chapter. The second puzzle raised by Menkiti's view on personhood in Africa is the possibility of the individual's story not allowed in his/her own experience but that the individual

must align his story with that of the community. He argues that, the various societies found in traditional Africa routinely accept this fact that personhood is the sort of thing which has to be attained, and is attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of the various obligations defined by one's station[62]. Menkiti characterizes this ontological progression, meaning that the individual is growing ontologically and is different from the time s/he was a baby to the time that s/he is an adult with required excellencies. He claims that evidence of this ontological progression can be found in the way that the word "it" is used in the English language. This takes us to another level of challenge Menkiti's position is confronted with. That is, his use of "it" to describe children and thereby denying them of their ontological /metaphysical basis of personhood/identity. He thinks that the permission to use the word on babies is not only a matter of grammar but signifies an ontological difference that exists between children and adults. Children do not have any ontological status hence they can be referred to as it[63]. We wish to point out here that Menkiti is wrong to think that the word "it" serves any ontological function or as evidence of ontological difference. Ordinary or ontological usage of the word "it" does not lend credence to that idea. This idea is incorrect because adults were once babies and matured from stage of infancy to youthfulness and becomes a father and an elder. Therefore to say that by using 'it' to describe a child denies him/her is unfair and not in line with the metaphysical scheme of personhood. Demonstrating that a child has ontological relevance just like and adult, Iheanacho says,

> once the child was born, either in the backyard of the expecting mother or in the home of the expert midwife, the women broke into dancing and cry of joy. The men, on hearing the joyful celebration of the birth of a newborn by the women, did come around and gather in the reception house (ovu/obu) of the father of the house. The husband of the new mother would immediately send for or buy a jar of palm wine and kola nuts to entertain the

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men and the women that would immediately gather to celebrate the birth of the child[64].

He further says[65], as the women sang and danced in the compound, the men would gather in the

(ovu/obu) shouting at intervals their own cry of joy. A typical cry of joy by the men went thus:

Cha cha, umuofo (or the kindred in which the new child is born) keele nu

Ha!

Muoo nu!

Ha!

Riee nu!

Ha!

Baa nu!

Ha!

Tii!

Ho!

Tii!

Ho!

Cha cha, Umuofo (or the particular kindred in which a child is born) respond to my greeting

Ha (yes)

Give birth to more children

Ha!

Eat more!

Ha!

Become rich!

Ha!**.**

There are other rituals performed according to the patterns of the particular kindred. What all these points to is that the ontological relevance of a newly born child cannot be reduced to mere "it" because the child is still at the stage of infancy. That is why the Igbo for instance say, *nwata kpozie aka ya, osoro okeye eri nri-* a child that displays some level of creative behavior or morality can dine and wine with the elderly. In this way letting the society know that children too are persons on its sincere conviction and analysis. Menkiti would argue again that the African understanding of the community refers to the first category where there is what he calls an organic dimension to the relationship between component individuals[66]. In this set up, he argues, priority is given to the duties that the individuals owe as opposed to their right.

It is this formulation that leads to the identification of this school as radical communitarianism. What is radical about it is that it seeks to give priority to the community not only in matters of identity but also in terms of the regime of right. While it is, in some framework, the case that the society owes the individual a certain regime of rights arranged in a certain order from inviolable to social-economic and cultural, the opposite is true for the communitarian outlook[67]. Communitarians think that it is the individual who owes society first before society can be said

to owe him/her anything. According to Matolino, the individual is not entitled to speak of any rights before he/she has completely discharged their duties that he/she becomes a person[68].

Although this is a widely held position, it has its detractors who not only think that it is an inaccurate representation of the African notion of communitarianism but that it does not make any philosophical sense. One of its most able detractors to argue along these lines is Kwame Gyekye. He seeks to present a position that he thinks is more accurate and one that is philosophically sound in contrast to radical communitarianism.

Gyekye characterizes the radical project as unsustainable and in its place seeks to argue for his own version of communitarianism that he identifies as moderate communitarianism. To achieve this, he brought forth a twofold strategy: in the first he seeks to show that the radical position is incoherent. He does so by mounting a scathing attack on Menkiti with the sole aim of showing the philosophical incoherence of his position. Again, he marshals out some argument from the *Akan* society that seek to show that the traditional understanding of personhood is one that does not ride roughshod over the individual's rights. He also seeks to show that any communitarian project ought to take into account the fact that individuals are other things besides being merely communal. He calls these things mental features which include rationality, having a capacity for virtue and a moral sense[69]. He suggests that his moderate communitarianism takes both issues of rights and non-communal component of personhood seriously.

He agrees that community has a role to play in the formation of personhood or development of the individual. He argues that a human being is born into an existing community which naturally makes her/him communal. Hence he cities the *Akan* proverb that says, when a human being descends from heaven, (he/she) descends into a human society[70]. Thus in essence Gyekye does

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not argue against the idea that the community plays a role in the formation of the person. He is against what he believes is an overstated or exaggerated role that is given to the community in the formation of personhood.

Gyekye did not frown at the position that communal life is not optional for the individual, since it necessarily the case that the individual finds him/her self in a given communal setting and cannot live an isolated life. He/she finds self constrained to have relations with others and for this, the person is constituted, at least partly, by social relationships in which he/she necessarily finds self[71].

However, Gyekye is not entirely impressed with this manner of arguing which is supposed to show the priority of the community over the individual. He states that, yet, it might be supposed that if a community consists of individuals sharing interests and values, would this not imply that the individual has priority over the community and that therefore the community existentially derives from the individuals and the relationships that would exist between them? This means that the status of the community is derived from the reality of the antecedent existence of individuals. According to Matolino, the community is only a result of the social constructions that arise from different relations among individuals[72].

To sustain this point Gyekye refers to some proverbs among the *Akan* such as: the clan is like a cluster of trees which, when seen from afar, appear huddled together, but which would be seen to stand individually when closely approached. This proverb, he says,

> illustrates that though the branches may touch each other if you look at the trees closely you will discover that each stands on its own. This also applies to persons in the community. If you look at them closely you will discover that each person, like a tree, is separately rooted. Each person has his/her own identity and is not absolutely absorbed by the community. He quotes more proverbs

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> to support this position: "life is as you make it yourself" it is by individual effort that we can struggle for our heads", life is war", the person who helped you carry your load (ie., who places the load on your head) does not develop a hump", One does not fan (the hot food) that another may eat it (expressed also as: Nobody cracks palm kernels with hi/her teeth for another: and The lizard does not eat pepper for the frog to sweat[73].

He argues that what these proverbs seek to show is that individuals are responsible for their situation in life. They bear their own burdens and are responsible for their own stations in life and their well-being This view, says Gyekye, seems to come to represent a clear attempt to come to terms with the natural sociality as well as the individuality of the human person. It requires recognizing the claims of both communality and individuality and integrating individual desires and social ideals and demands[74].

Gyekye says,

> extreme or unrestricted communitarianism fails to give adequate recognition to the creativity, inventiveness, imagination, and idealistic proclivities of some human individuals in matters relating to the production of ideas and the experience of visions. The powers of inventiveness, imagination, and so on are not entirely the function of the communal culture: they are instead a function of natural talents or endowments, even though they can only be nurtured and exercised in a cultural community[75].

However, on a close analysis of Gyekye's position on moderate communitarianism,one sees a situation that is not totally different from its counterpart, radical communitarinaism. In the first instance, Gyekye agrees with the radical communitarians that the community has a role to play in the formation of the individual.Again, Gyekye failed to establish a different position from that of the radical communitarians. For instance, Gyekye had wanted a wider conception of personhood devoid of moral compliances of the individual, but he ended up endorsing the same line of thinking as Menkiti. According to Gyekye,

> now, the moral significance of denying personhood to a human being on the grounds that his actions are known to be dissonant with certain fundamental norms or that he fails to exhibit certain virtues in his behaviour is extremely interesting for communitarians. Personhood in this model of humanity is not innate but is earned in the ethical arean: it is the individual's moral achievement that earns him the status of a person. Every individual is capable of becoming a person inasmuch as he is capable of doing good and should therefore be treated (potentially) as a morally responsible agent[76].

If we analyse this claim closely, we shall find one revealing assumption that is built into it. The actual claim that Gyekye is making here is the same as one made by Menkiti; that personhood is attained in the arean of moral excellence. Again on individual rights, Gyekye says that,

> individual rights, the exercise of which is meaningful only within the context of human society, must therefore be matched with social responsibilities. In the absence of the display of sensitivity to such responsibilities, the community will have to take the steps necessary to maintain its integrity and stability. The steps are likely to involve abridging individual rights, which thus, will be regarded by the moderate communitarian as not absolute, though important[77].

We have in this subsection, shown some of the reasons why radical communitarians had thought that community is the metaphysical basis of personhood. We also showed that the suggested difference between radical and moderate communitarianism is not sustainable at the long run and therefore, insignificant.

3.6 Limits of communitarianism

In this section, we argued that if we think of the concept of a person as a matter of strict ontological identity, we will see that communitarians conception is not necessarily the best way of talking of persons. We seek to argue that the communitarian conception is an ethical articulation of what persons ought to be as moral agents. The question of what persons ought to

be as moral agents who are conceived in a communitarian set-up is quite different from the question of what persons are as ontological entities. According to Matolino,

> to ascribe socio-ethical considerations to the entity of strict identity is erroneous. While it is not controversial at all to claim that morality and moral status is important to a person, we need to be careful in limiting what that importance is exactly supposed to be. We should be careful to note that many things are important for persons, about persons and in persons; but not all things are important for the identity of persons. We cannot take things that are important for persons as living beings that have conscience and a moral sense and make those things important for persons subjects that can be distinctly identified as such. Socio-ethical descriptions of what persons do or what persons are supposed to do are not markers of what persons are. They indicate the capabilities that persons have certain range of considerations[78].

Similarly the Igbo people have the idea of *onwe* as the basis of personhood. According to Okere,

> It is not easy to figure out the complex relationship between these elements and the *Onwe*, or with each other. Cumulatively however they make up. not *Onwe* itself, but the sum total of all the functions and actions attributed to *Onwe*. And if any new functions or activities are ever found, they will still be attributable to *Onwe*. This goes to point out that *Onwe* is perhaps neither defined nor definable, but remains essentially the ultimate subject of all attributions. One can distinguish, but cannot separate, these functions, qualities and actions from their subject of attribution. Neither can this subject be reduced to any one of them or any combination of them. The self/*Onwe* is neither this nor that attribution, but is rather the sovereign and ultimate proprietor of all attributions of the individual[79].

But the best way to start this discussion is to pick on a brief of what the question is really about.

When we are asked to identify what a person is we should endeavor to understand what the question is really asking us to do. The question can be put this way; what is a person?. This question is different from another question which can be put thus: what do persons do?. We can also come up with another question that will ask: how do persons understand themselves?. Or we

could ask a different question such as; how do persons operate?. We could also ask, what do persons value? Or how do persons interact with each other?. We can say this class of questions is the how and what category.

We could develop another category of questions which we may call they why category. In this category we may ask questions such as:why do persons behave the way they do?" why do persons interact the way they do?. We could also ask: why do persons value this aspect of their existence over all others? or why do they believe in the things they do?. We could actually ask a lot of questions of this nature about persons.

The first set of questions which we have called the how and what category seeks to give certain features about persons as true to all persons. It tells us the composition of persons and fixes the kinds of things that they are. These questions point that the things they discuss are limited to persons. This type of discourse is different from the second category. The second category differs from the first in that it seeks to explain how the characteristics in category one are animated in the lives of persons. We can say that the first category asks about the kinds of things that persons are endowed with and the second category shows how those endowments translate into certain activities.

If we are correct therefore, what the communitarians have done is in line with the second category of questions. That is, why persons behave and are expected to behave in a certain way. This aspect of a person does not fore-close others but very important aspects of the same person. In fact, as a matter of importance, the first category of questions of how and what a person is precedes the second category of questions. According to Bujo, in many counties of Africa the process of the birth of a child consists of at least, two phases: the biological birth and the

community birth[80]. The first is linked to a joyful event of the little family and friends which still prolongs in a certain way the role of the maternal womb[81]. But veritable birth takes place when the child is given a name in front of the community[82].

The point we want to make here is that the birth of a child is the beginning of the child's worth and with time, the child grows from stage to stage. And what the community does for the child is to initiate the child into the social values of the community so as to enjoy from the later worth of the child and forcibly, give social meaning and identity to the child's existence.

3.7 Social values as conventional

Bujo affirms precisely that: the community is the place of true birth[83]. The anthropological significance of giving a name goes beyond a simple designation of the child, or choosing a name from a list, or inventing one. Rather it is a ritual of discovering, revealing or detecting the right name capable of defining the being of the child[84]. The meaning of social values are those rituals (like in birth giving and name ceremony) respect for elders, burial of the desceased (*ndi eze, ndi ozo*, *ndi ichie*) *ihe umu-ne* (like incest, abortion) are all designed by the community as a means to an end. They do not always are the case all the times. Some of these social values change from time to time. For instance, when a child in Igbo community is born, kinsmen and women gather together to celebrate and do other rituals, like singing traditional songs, initiating the child into the family by given him/her a name, etc. The child bears this name from infancy to a certain level when he/she begins to welcome new ideas and realities. At a point, the child begins to see reality from a different perspective and decides for instance to change his/her name. Not because of baptism as in the Christian perspective nor because of marriage, but because certain belief has

become to him/her reliable and conforms with his/her ideologies. In this case, what has happened is that the naming ritual performed when a child is born does not mean that the child cannot help self in matters of personal conviction and identity.

In other words, social values are not necessarily sufficient to determine the level of fulfillment by an individual. Again, we also note that these values vary from one culture to another. For instance, incest that is as *aru* (abomination) in Igbo world-view is not in China. Also we found in most traditional Igbo societies where burial rituals determine whether an individual becomes an ancestor or not. What is often obtainable is the interest of his kinsmen being displayed. This is true because traditional, women are not seen as worthy of becoming ancestors. Again, family of the deceased in some cases would disagree with the decision of their kinsmen if the decision is not favorable. In fact, they go on to invoke for his intercession in case and moments of confusion and difficulties. Our puzzle is first that does it mean that women cannot live uprightly so as to enable them benefit from this ancestral world? Do we have and can substantiate that those who the society calls ancestors thoroughly are?

Hence, we believe that the idea surrounding social values is to establish some level of harmony and a smooth relationship between the individual and his/her community. This is achieved even when the individual feels that some of these values can be re-evaluated and reconstructed. To achieve this harmony, there should be a level play ground where the individual is allowed and welcomed with ideas that can create more harmony in the individual's relationship with the community.

*3.8 Ji (*Yam*) and *Ala (*ground*). Toward a principle of Reciprocity*

In this subsection, our interest is to show how the individual human person owes to a certain level some responsibility to his/her community. *Mmadu*, who has been endowed with certain good qualities, is also expected to reciprocate by conducting his/her affairs in a manner that should bring harmony between him/her and the community. To live accordingly is to live a life that conforms to the community ethos. To live according to the community ethos is not to applied creativity in administering these ethoses. This is true because a community that does accept independent ideas rarely grows and would always have conflict between its ethos and the application by its members. *Mmadu*, as beauty of creation is for the Igbo people admired, and what is admired for the Igbo society is emulated.

According to Animalu, the spirit of *ufiejoku* must help in the development of man as a loving and doing being, based on cause and effect relationship which is the hallmark of scientific process[85]. He asserts that: Igbo gives old yam (*ji akakpo*) to the ground and ani eats it and gives him back new yam (*ji offuu*); this is reciprocity, a principle of give and take and of dialogue, which is a principle of unity and regeneration between man and nature, man and man, and man and machine[86].

What is expressed here is that, man (*mmadu*) which is beauty has some interesting potentials that are ontologically given to him/her by nature, which should enable him to follow up these intrinsic qualities that continuously connects him/her with the community and nature. The individual do not even need to be told of the importance of keeping abrace in harmony with the community. This is made manifest in the Igbo proverb that, *etu onye siri mezie okpkpo ya, bu etu osiri ede na ya-* the way one makes his/her bed is the way one lies in it. This suggests that to be

in harmony with your community or environment is to seek for those qualities of conduct whether enshrined in the *omenala* or not that brings harmony.

The Igbo say that, *ewu melulu nga o na eden, nkuzo akara ya mma-* a goat that litters where it sleeps would have no option than to stand. In other words, a winner takes all situations in which *ani* or *ala* eats the yam and returns rotten yam (*ji melu onwu*) to the farmer is one that dooms the community, as it were, to starvation.

In this regard, Animalu notes,

> the important thing, however, is that the principle of reciprocity is a universal principle of regenerative relationship that is applicable to all human societies, including the Igbo society. For this reason, it is not unreasonable for the Igbo to demand that in all his dealings with his fellow Igbo and others, the principle of reciprocity should be strictly observed, as it occurs in nature[87].

Man is not only regarded as the most important aspect of creation, he is also regarded as superior in natural intelligence to other beings, even to the spirits (except *chukwu* himself who knows everything). The spirits are more powerful than men but like human beings, they can exhibit some foolish attitudes. They can sometimes be callous.

Man or the human person who is the paragon of the world is distinguished with his unique attributes and which bound him together with his creator *Chukwu*. With these distinguished qualities, he is expected in return to perform ordinarily what seem to promote his well being in line with his/her communal ethos. Thus, *mmadu* or man who is endowed with creative intelligence or what in Igbo called *akonauche*, understands the customs and codes of the society, which are so internalized from childhood onwards, that they go unquestioned (except on rare cases) as a way of life.

This idea of reciprocity or what could be called to strike at the balance between the individual and the community in establishing harmony is what the Igbo explain in the ufiejoku ritual. Animalu was apt in this regard when he asserts that,

> the life-cycle of the seed yam (ji) in the fertile soil, particularly its regeneration irrespective of whether a piece of seed yam (awaji) from its head (isiji), its tail (oduji) or the middle part (etitiji) is planted in the soil, is so pregnant with drama that it captured the attention of the people in this culture area, fired their imagination, and permanently altered their way of looking at life[88].

Bringing this idea of reciprocity to agriculture in Igbo communities, Ihanacho asserts,

> in many communities in pre-colonial *Mbaise* era,before the harvest of new yam would begin, there was a big festival in honour of the yam Deity called *Ahanjoku*. The purpose of the celebration was to thank the deity for producing yam tubers for feeding the family and raising children in general. The festival was also embarked upon as a way of obtaining the permission of the deity to taste the first new yam tubers[89].

The importance of the quotation above is simply to show that the idea and significance of being reciprocal is not necessarily because the community expects one to do so, but because the act in itself is part of the ontological make-up of every human person.

3.9 Summary

We have in this chapter, x-rayed various aspects of Igbo cosmology (*uwa*) and how they live in it. We demonstrated that the Igbo recognize the *onwe* as central and autonomous but has its social identity lived out in relation with the others in his/her community. We noted that institutions play very significant roles in maintaining order in the communities. In this way, the ritual of *ofo-na-ogu* was used to discourage individuals from living unguidely. Individuals from time to time consulted *ofo-na-ogu* to prove their sincerity and honesty between them and the communities. *Ofo* symbol was seen as very sacred and impartial in resolving conflicts and

disputes. Interestingly, we saw that in most of our Igbo communities today, nobody as such talks about *ofo-na-ogu* in both civil and criminal cases. This is as a result of western missionaries and the gospel of Christ. You are seen as a pagan or worshipping idols when one still makes reference to such rituals like *ofo-na-ogu*.

Again, we showed the tension and challenges between the radical and moderate communitarians on how a human person is determined and personhood attained. At the end of both theories, what was very clear is their insistence that at certain point, the community defines and affirms a persons' personhood. They did not recognize the right and autonomy of the individual person with regard to personal identity. They did not want to believe that the ontological /metaphysical aspects of a person cannot be over emphased in matters of personhood. We agree with them that the community has role to play in the social network of the individual but is not the only yardstick for measuring a person's complexities. This is why we argued that social values are meant for the well being of every individual person, but not as an end in themselves. This is not to say that the individual person does not hold duties to maintaining harmony in the community, but it must be carried out in such a way that both parties are preserved and live in harmony.

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Chapter Four: *Akonauche* and Personhood

4.0 Introduction

It is important to note one major personality complex that has overtaken the cultural consciousness of the contemporary Igbo. In their unbridled quest to become more Christian and European than the Europeans, most Igbo have come to cultivate the reckless attitude of jettisoning the fundamental basis of their traditional values system and culture. Most persons, families, clan/communities are now in disarray because of lot of identity and inadequate application of *akonauche* in the choices we make. This does not mean in any way rigidity, but a proper guide to a state of harmony between the individual and the community. Among the contemporary Igbo therefore, one notices a situation where their fundamental basis of their value system has come to be synonymous with backwardness, archaic ideas and primitive practices, as well as idolatry all in the bid to please those who brought Christianity and Western civilization to them[1]. According to Nwaezeigwe,

> the consequence thus became a situation where the fundamental elements of Igbo identity are not only being treated with cataclysmic disdain, but are progressively fading away in the name of a mad rush to modernity and Christianity. In the process, the Igbo unconsciously became victims of unbridled European value judgment, forcing them to equally lose a sense of pride in their personality, conscious identity and time-tested value system[2].

Our duty in this chapter is to show how and the role of *akonauche* in defining personhood and the relationship that exist between a person and his/her entire social and environmental order. This is necessitated following the situation the world is in now. A situation where any thing goes for some culture and people calls for serious attention with regard to personal/ social identity. A situation of same sex marriage, transgenderism, proliferated religiosity, cultural and tribal chauvinism, racism, to mention but afew. The perennial question is, amidst these conflict of

interest and identity, how does *akonauche* help in fine-tuning and sieving one's decision so as to remain in the line of order between his/her interests with that of the community.

4.1 *Akonauche* and the ontologies of a human person

According to Hallen and Sodipo's article The House of the '*Inu*': keys to the Structure of a Yoruba Theory of the Self, they opined that, the model of the *Inu* so far introduced by the *Onisegun* has claimed that it is the source of all thought and action, and that it has various specialized faculties, capacities, or abilities… at its disposal[3]. *Inu* in Yoruba conceptual scheme can be likened to the Igbo concept of *akonauche*, as both are seen as part of the human person. *Akonauche* is referred to in matters concerning human nature and nurture and not to any other being. Whenever we are deliberating on Igbo concept of knowledge, *Uche* is talked of in relation to problems and *Ako* is seen in relation to morals[4]. Coming back to the concept of *Uche*, it is only when problems disturb the receptable that the content, intelligence or dispositional knowledge becomes ionic through the agitation of *Uche*. Hence, the work *Uche*, is to produce a conceptually analyzing disposition directed towards the problem responsible for the agitation of *Uche*.

There is yet another concept (or faculty) in the epistemic ontologies of a human person. It is called '*Ako*'. It is the active moral part of knowledge. It can also be called wisdom[5]. It is wisdom or moral dimension of knowledge because its functions are to humanize or moralize man by using the product of '*Uche*' to solve human problem. For some scholars, *Uche* is linked with the *muo* of every self of the individual. The *muo* or spirit in man is clearly conceived as the cause or principle of life in the individual because when someone dies it is often said that his spirit has left-*muo ya ahafula*. According to Okere,

further usage of the notion of spirit shows that it is regarded as the seat of emotions. Ihe okwuru gbuchara muo m, what he said quite killed my spirit, dispirited or demoralized me. Ihe okwuru meturu m na muo-what he said touched me in the spirit, in my inmost depths. Muo m anabataghi ya-my spirit refused to accept it (a suggestion). Muo m ekweegh-my spirit rejected it. Muo is therefore conceived as the intangible, invisible element in man, the seat of will and emotions, the principle of life and point of connection, similarirty and sharing with the world of spirit. It is the muo in man that is responsible for the following activities without which the idea of onwe/self could neither emerge nor be sustained: (1) Uche, Iche echiche-thinking, considering, reflecting with some anxiety over one's lot. Cebara ya echiche- think it over. Icheedi gini-what is it you are ruminating over?. Uche awaala ya aba-his/her thought is split into branches, he/she is in doubt or is full of thought…[6].

This suggests to us how significant *Uche* is in the making of a person. It is truly the kipm of a person. According to Ohia, it is at this point of moralizing of human being that full circuit of knowledge is completed. At this stage what the circuit represents is what the Igbo call *Ako-na-uche*, otherwise known as knowledge. Thus, knowledge becomes the application of the contents of *Uche* to particular problems by *Ako*[7]. Furthermore, Chris says, because of this, knowledge can be defined yet, in another way: it is a disposition demonstrated behaviourally in a manner that is favourable to human welfare or to the solution of human problem[8].

At this juncture, we can say that the Igbo concept *akonauche* is knowledge, and this kind of knowledge is power which is made manifest as a guide for human conduct and as the basis for social organization. An Igbo man can boast of grasping the knowledge of reality as it is in reality through his/her senses and intellectual ability. He/she is also capable of explaining both the conditions of acquiring knowledge as well as possessing the ability to say what knowledge consists of.

Again, the *muo* of person is never satisfied with acquiring knowledge for the sake of knowledge only. Rather he will insist on the practical use of whatever knowledge he acquired to further the

human progress. This point made here is very important because we have argued that the Igbo concept *akonauche* helps in maintaining social order. Supporting this view above, Ohia says, again, the Igbo man through the help of *ako-na-uche* is not satisfied with acquiring knowledge for the sake of knowledge only: rather he will insist on the practical use of whatever knowledge he acquired to further the human progress. This idea is made manifest in his numerous extended family system…[9].

Ako-na-uche therefore gives one the knowledge that can sustain him/her in the face of identity crisis, conflicts of personal and community values so as not to be seen as a social deviant or one without *uche*.

4.2 *Akonauche* as creative intelligence

We saw that the concept '*akonauche*' which is at the seat of every human conduct is not just epistemic, it is also creative. In its metaphysical sense or dimension, it looks beyond existing ideas to search for broader ways of contributing to not just its well being, also to that of his/her community. This is because its thought is deep and immeasurable. It is wide in apprehension. It is not describable and has no name and no function except as the ultimate author of all the functions of the individual, the carrier of all experience. It is the link between the experience of yesterday and today, the basis of that proprietorship by which these fleeting multitudes of experience are one and are mine.

According to Onah,

> within the hermeneutical method, Okere keeps both phenomenology and ontology together as two moments of the same inquiry. This is particularly important in the study of human nature. On the one hand, the phenomenological approach seeks to gain preliminary understanding of the human being through an

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interpretation (hermeneutics) of his manifestations. On the other hand, ontology seeks to deepen this interpretation in order to arrive at Being as it is manifested in the human being[10].

What the quotation above shows is that an individual is in a constant search for his/her proper identity. According to Okere, *akonauche* is essentially a metaphysical or, to be more precise, an ontological category[11].

Even though we have used diagrams in chapter two to discuss in details of the nature of *akonauche* as a metaphysical category, we would wish to sum up here with Animalu's assertion which states that,

> it should be clear that the use of creative intelligence (*akonauche*) which was called for at the beginning of this lecture ought to be applied to our entire cultural matrix-world view, religion, politics, economics, military and so forth- as a way of life, in order to find our way forward in the modern scientific age that contains space travel, television, computers, energy crisis, atomic destruction, and drug addiction, among other societal ills. I do not think that the use of creative intelligence calls for any specific recommendations in the sense of a detailed programme for how such creative intelligence is to be inculcated in the population. The important thing is that it should help us to guard against certain assumptions we have been making in certain emotional out bursts about Igbo people which Nwoga has called stereotyping[12].

4.3 Levels of *Akonauche*

When Menkiti said that African metaphysics does not recognize infants as persons and therefore refer to them as 'it', he was apparently saying that infants are anti-social beings and therefore lacked what it takes to be addressed as person. Though not one of its constitutive elements like the others, the community is, nevertheless, a determinant factor in the concept of the self within the context of Igbo traditional thought. Okere puts it aptly,

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if we have been looking at the structure of the kernel of the self, one must immediately add that this hard core is surrounded by a thicker layer of enveloping relationships… Even though one can be thought of as a unit and in abstract from any thing else, in fact, the self is never alone. The individual is never a pure, isolated individual…. This is why in this culture, the self is a congenitally communitarian self, incapable of being, existing and really unthinkable except in the complex of relations of the community[13].

It is within the community of other closely related selves that each individual self attains its perfection. Beginning from the members of one's own family, to all the members of a traditional community, the individual self lives out its identity and autonomy in relation. The I-We relation is an indispensible mediator of personal identity and autonomy[14].

The point enumerated here is that the self is the basic unit of every individual. It is ontological and does not consist of the community for its ontological existence. If we are correct that the self of every individual is ontological, then we can say that the self is in every individual both old and young. What plays out is different level of the self. According to Onah,

the metaphors of the "core" or kernel" of the self and the 'layer of enveloping relationships" permit Okere to safeguard the two important poles of the self, namely, the substance-pole and the relations-pole. While defending the importance of the web of relations in the full understanding of the self, he does not thereby suggest that it is these relations that constitute the self. The self exists in itself, though not in isolation, but in relation with others in a community of selves. It is often said that the Igbo and in general the African concept of the self or person is social, so social that it is sometimes contrasted with what is supposed to be the Western 'static' notion of the individual substance. In his account of the structure of the self, Okere deliberately avoids all forms of comparison between the concept of the self which emerges from his interpretation of Igbo culture and some other concepts of the self, whether Western or Eastern. His conclusions show the limits (and sometimes even the futility) of all such comparisons, for there is no uniformity in the concepts of the self nurtured within any single cultural context[15].

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What this long quotation shows is that the self exist as part of the components of an individual when he/she is born. Also, it is not the relational attitude or nature of the self that defines the self. This is true because the self exist and can exist in itself. This shows the constancy in the self's drive to understand self at every point in time.

There are levels of *akonauche* in matters of social realities and identity. At infancy, they believe that a child at that level has the capacity to be nurtured and behave in a way that is consistent with the social realities. When an Igbo person describes or says, *nwata, mma ihe*, he /she is recognizing that social relevance of the child to the society. At this very stage of personhood, the Igbo proverb that says, *otu aka ha nwanyi ka oga echie e bigidiya di ya*-the size of a woman's hand must cover the body of her husband. As an adult, he/she is referred to as *dimkpa*, when the idea and behavior comes in a way that it promotes communal realities. When an Igbo say, *ibu dimkpa*; is commendation and it simply means that one has demonstrated certain thoughts and behavior that are in line with the society. There is the level of social identity in persons which seem to be the last stage, and any contrary demonstration reduces one as a mere person. This stage is the level of adulthood or elder hood. Since one has passed from infancy, through youthfulness, and to adulthood in the society, it is given that one should have grown both personally and communally and should not been seen as not fully grasped with him/her. This might be the reason why Ikeunobe would have seen Okonkwo and his father Unoka as persons who did not attain personhood in line with their communal expectations. Suffice to say that Unoka had been told by the community's gods to go home and work hard. This shows that, first Unoka was still a person and secondly, that he could apply intelligence in the discharge of his vicissitudes as a person in the community of people.

We should note that at all these levels, what is consistent is the fact that a person enjoins some ontological characteristics whether as an infant, youth, or adult. Again, a person with these features or characteristics can reconcile conflicts in matters of personal identity as opposed by social identity

There are Igbo adages that support the views. Some of them are *nwata kwozie aka, o so ndi okeye rie nri-* a child that washes his/her hands cleanly eats with elderly persons. In this context, what it means is that personhood is not restricted to some persons. Since the capacity to personhood (self/onwe) is in every human person, it is commonsensical that there are no restrictions to who attains it *Otu o bula nwa siri yo uwa, ya hiri-* in whatever form or manner a persons took in coming into existence, he/she is welcome and accepted into the world. In this case, what makes a person in matters of personal identity is ontological. However, it is the metaphysical and not the normative idea of personhood that is germane to Igbo traditions, as personhood connotes those ontological/metaphysical characteristics every individual person must have before he/she is said to be a person. According to Metuh, man is the individual person created by God. A living person is called *onye mmadu*, a dead person is called *onye mmuo*. Hence it is the full individual person not a part of him or his soul which survives after death. Similarly, at conception, a new individual person is created by God[16].Status, ethnicity, is not contemporarily a necessary precondition in the attainment of personhood. This is because most people who have attained certain positions in the society have failed to use their positions in maintaining of social order.

Contrary to our views above, is Menkiti's doctrine of the human person. A summary of Menkiti's on the concept of person goes this way; the human being is not defined abstractly but by reference to a community. One is not a originally a person at conception or at birth, but

gradually becomes one through a process of incorporation into the community and also ceases to be a person with time after death. Since one becomes a person only gradually, it follows that all human beings are not ontologically equal since some are 'more persons than others. For instance, infants and anti-social persons would be 'less' persons than socially integrated adults. Those who are only apparently persons but in reality are not so are referred to as 'it' in African societies. He describes this concept of the person as maximal in contrast with what he regards as the "minimal" concept in Western philosophy. He also argues that this maximal concept of the person is shared by all African societies[17].

This concept of the person, though attractive for its effort to safeguard the social dimension of life though important in African societies, is replete with difficulties. For instance, the description as maximal. A definition or a concept is by its very nature minial, for it seeks to extract that which is common to all the members of a genus[18]. According to Onah, a maximal concept or definition would be a contradiction in terms, for when considering the maximum that each individual member of a specie can attain in its development, it would be difficult to fix the boundaries, which is what definition (definition) is all about[19]. It does seem that in Menkiti's anthropology there is a conflation of the concept of the person with its perfection. What he describes may well represent a fully developed person. But one has to be a person first before becoming a fully developed person[20]. For even when we say a fully developed person, we did not forego growth and other dynamics surrounding experience.

Another difficulty with this concept of the person is that it denies the fundamental ontological equality of all human beings. Many aspects of traditional life in many African societies (the Igbo in particular) demonstrate exactly the contrary. There is, yes, a strong social dimension in the concept of the person in Igbo traditional thought. This does not, however, imply the denial of

some fundamental ontological basis which belongs to every individual human being, irrespective of his/her social status. According to Onah,

> when a human being is said 'not to be a human being' such a statement is largely metaphorical. Infants and insane persons, for instance, may be excluded from some social responsibilities, but this does not deny them the basic dignity they deserve as human beings, as one who deliberately kills an infant or a mad person would definitely be discovered. Moral valuations, strong as they are in such traditional thoughts, do not equate to ontological valuations[21].

With regard to Menkiti's it-argument, it suffices to point out the linguistic difficulties contained therein. In Igbo, for instance, the same pronoun (o) stands for he, she ,it. Only from the context can one tell whether the statement *o di ndu*[22] means he is alive or she is alive. It is not clear on what basis Menkiti would claim that that statement referred to a child should be translated "it is alive. What is clear is that a child is never referred to as a thing (*ihe* or *ife*) in Igbo, except perhaps in the extreme case of parents who have suffered so many successive infant deaths that they believe a reference to a newly born child as a thing could deceive the *ogbanje* spirit, thought to be responsible for such deaths, into leaving the child alone.

Having suggested these level of *akonauche* of man at various stages, our interpretation, proposes a philosophical thoughts that are culturally nurtured, ontologically grounded, and universally relevant.

4.4 *Akonauche* and personal/ social identity

Nwoga, Animalu, Okere, and Adeofe agree with us that the concept person has multi-dimensional facets. And the human person has the capacity to understand self amidst these dimensions and conflicts. Nwoga for instance, contends that,

intelligence, cleverness, quickness of wit are aspects of what the Igbo person needs for adjusting himself to, and thereby manipulating changing circumstances- and –circumstances are always changing. This change is not only the progression of different situations and events. It equally also involves ontological status of things, since things are not always what they seem or what they were. The Igbo person is supposed to be regularly conscious of the difference between appearance and reality and to react to the potentials deception before it takes place[23].

Similarly, Animalu says,

the natural world… is one of infinite varieties and complexities, creative intelligence (akonauche) which was one of the attribute of our ancestors, should guide our thoughts in a multidimensional world which contains no straight lines or completely regular shapes, where things do not happen in sequences, but all together, a world where- as modern physics tells us- even empty space is curved[24].

In the same vein, Ejiogu, supporting Nwoga and Animalu, has this to say,

part of the ethnic identity often played down in the socio-economic circumstances we find ourselves is our traditional use of 'creative intelligence' which is its self among the attributes of our ancestors. … stresses that there should be recourse to the use of 'creative intelligence' in all facets of life because it is the basis of our socio-cultural as well as socio-political economy….that there is no one way of doing anything, but many ways through the use of 'creative intelligence[25].

Okere supporting the view that a person is a complex entity still struggling to understand him/her

and the community says,

this identity in no other than the self, the onwe. But we cannot round off this study of the self in Igbo thought without at least a brief mention of the defining context in which the identity plays itself out. If we have been looking at the structure of the kernel of the self, one must immediately add that this hard core is surrounded by a thicker layer of enveloping relationships. The self as so far studied remains in a way only an abstraction. Even though one can be thought of as a unit and in abstraction from any thing else, in fact, the self is never alone. The individual is never a pure, isolated individual[26].

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There is an Igbo saying to this effect that *madu anagh agba ka ugba*- a human being does not fall like a bolt from the blue. The human being is conceived as the focus of a web of relationships. According to Adeofe,

> any credible theory of personal identity must be metaphysically and socially stable, and the two forms of stability must be interconnected… Metaphysical stability helps to explain the unity of the self, so to speak, that makes personal identity possible. Social stability helps to explain our socialized existence, our belief systems, social character, and projects of value that seem to make our lives meaningful[27].

He further says that, a theory of personal identity is likely to be stable in some form or another, but the challenge is to be stable in both forms in the same context at the same time with respect to the same determinations… The self-actualization process allows me to recognize a social life as mine, not my surrogate's[28].

The individual knows that he/she is existing in a physical environment where others are meeting. He could have existed without others because the biblical narration tells us that Adam was first created and that later was given Eve as a companion[29], and not as condition for the knowledge of the self. This means that what is a person is more a metaphysical exercise than from a social point of view.

In the words of Matolino,

> I think that of the confusion in the old communitarian camp arises out of the failure to make the distinction that limited communitarianism makes between personal identity and social identity. If old communitarians had made this distinction then they would have naturally come to see the difference between individual rights and social rights. Rights apply to both the personal and social sphere of identity but they are different sorts of categories that require different sorts of application. Individual rights are of such a category that we think most important and very fundamental both in the regime of rights and to the individual

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person. These are the sort of rights that we should talk about when we are talking of personhood. Social rights on the other hand are the kinds of right that belong to a category that is of lesser importance than individual rights[30].

4.5 *Ilu or Ilulu*, Proverbs in Igbo Culture that support *Ak[nauche* as vital component of the person in maintaining social order

For the traditional Igbo, *ilu ma obu ilulu bu mmanu Igbo ji ata okwu*-proverb is the oil with which the Igbo eat words (speech). In this sense, they are considered as the kernel that contain the wisdom of the traditional Igbo, and are called sepiential sayings[31]. According to Ekwuru, more than myths and folklore, the Igbo have a large store of proverbs, which are used daily in both formal and non-formal speeches[32]. The use of proverbs among the traditional Igbo is symbolic, and as Ogbalu puts it, proverbs constitute a language of diplomacy among the Ibos[33]. For the adult Igbo male discourse is a package of proverbs; it is the elders' *senso unico* for wriggling out of a difficult situation. Hence, it is said that, *okenye n'esi n'ilu anyipu eziokwu-* an elder excretes the most painful words of truth via the "morphological tunnel of proverbs. Substantiating on the importance and preponderant role of proverbs in the traditional Igbo, Egudu writes,

> in Igbo society life is much of proverbs and riddle: human beings are 'the livestock of the farmer, God", 'the victims of theft, death'. Man is as crafty as the tortoise, as gluttonous as the pig, or as noble as the eagle. The entire natural phenomena, including the heavenly bodies, belong to one vast family of parallels, and are so closely related that the sky and the earth are but two enormous "potsherds" that previously constituted one "earthen pot". The proverb and the riddle are ready tools for thinking and communication, not only for their exquisiteness, but also for their being a way of life in Igbo culture[34].

Proverbs therefore, as important indigenous mode of expression, constitute an essential part of Igbo cultural wealth and experiences passed down from one generation to another[35]. According

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to Edeh, proverbs are derived from a detailed observation of the behaviour of human beings, animals and nature, and in them are expressed the folklore beliefs, values, attitudes, perceptions, and emotions: indeed, the entire cultural system of Igbo society[36]. The effectiveness as well as the force of proverbs are derived from the collective imagination that apprehends the basic principle connecting a literal fact and its allusive amplification. This collective imagination vivifies an experience by placing it beside another that has the community's seal of approval[37].

Following some recent studies of Igbo proverbs, scholars have discovered that among the tripetide features of rhythm, norm and metaphor that make-up the formal structure of proverbs, Igbo proverbs are dominantly constituted by the normative and metaphoric features.

In the first instance, the normative element is the most essential dimension of all proverbs. For norms give a proverb its basic character as a sentence, hence, to make a sentence is to a value judgment, which invariably implies, a reference to an empirical norm. And also, through such kinds of sentence structure, one judges components[38]. Thus, says Madu, while some proverbs may lack rhythm or metaphor, all proverbs are normative[39]. However, it must be emphasized that, the normative feature does not have equal force in all proverbs. For while some are prescriptive, others are either declarative and evaluative respectively. This aspect of the normative feature in all proverbs, strengthens the hypothesis of some scholars that proverbs are usually the 'decocted' remnants of myths and folklore[40]. Thus, expressing the view of Kremenliev, whose hypothesis is that several proverbs are often the essence or the moral extracts of sayings that started as ordinary stories, Madu says that, when proverbs become more familiar, people begin quoting them in the place of the original stories[41]. This accord with the nature of many Igbo proverbs, which semantically speaking, represents the distillation of myths and folklore.

Secondly, the most important feature of Igbo proverbs is the profuse use of metaphors. Aristotle's saying that proverbs are metaphors from one species to another is truism, overtly confirmed and realized in most Igbo proverbs[42]. Igbo proverbs as wise utterances are the fruits of experiences based on particular concrete cases from which analogies are made that elicit curiosities and offer explanations. Generally, these are condensed and enigmatic enough to provoke reflection, decoding, and at times, derision. As metaphor, proverbs exhibit certain dominant characteristic modes of explanations. Thus, Madu[43] in his hermeneutics of Igbo proverbs, opines that proverbs in their metaphoric character, explain:

The more complicated through the more simple

The less known through the better known

The mental through the physical

The ideal through material

The social through the biological

The abstract through the concrete

The essential (fundamental) through the ethnic contingencies or historical particularities.

Lastly, with their metaphoric forms, proverbs are said to be capable of multiple base meanings. Thus, the concrete image in a proverb is capable of eliciting as many as three meanings. Elaborating on this position, Umeh says,

> every proverb has at least three meanings or interpretations from the wordings of the proverb, because at the literal level we are engaged in the understanding or visualization of the actual statement. The figurative meaning does not necessarily depend on

the wording of proverbs. But it formulates a sort of general statement which can be applied in different situations of life. The contextual meaning depends mostly on the context in which the proverb is used[44].

Considered from these two dominant structures, most Igbo proverbs are veritable sources and channels of symbolic images. Hence, they stand at the morphogenetic root of many Igbo iconographic forms. Here, some selected samples of Igbo proverbs relevant to the entire scope of this work that are presented in a thematic pattern.

Proverbs on *Agbara, Arusi or Umuarusi and Mmuo* (Divinities and Spirit)

Agbara ji ihu abuo ebi n'obodo- a god lives in a village with two faces. (Diplomacy is a principle of survival. The goods are double faces).

Agbara kwama ngaga, egosi ya osisi nke o si n'ya - a god cannot not be powerful than the owner, if not, it will be shown the tree from which it came to be. (Man is responsible for his vicissitudes)

Proverbs on Causality and knowledge

Eji ako kpara isu, o dika abaraba- with intelligence, poverty can be taken for richness. (with intelligence, poverty can be averted).

Nwata nwere ako ka okenye efulafu mma- a child with intelligence/wisdom is respected than an elder that does not know him/herself.

Proverbs used in the analysis of human autonomy

Uche wu akpa, onye o bula bu keya- that the human mind is like a sealed bag in which the thought of every individual emanates (Autonomy of the human will/thoughts)

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Ewere uche ji ma ihe- To do things in an articulative and diligent manner.(Supremacy of thoughts and ideas)

Ahu ihe ka ubi eree oba or ahu nze ebee okwu- when something that is greater than farm is seen, the barn is sold or when a titled man comes in, there is a break in speech (dynamism and free flow of ideas as important in the live of every individual)

Proverbs expressing the Igbo conception of life and death

Nwa nza rijuo afo o si chi ya bia were ya- a prepared person does not fear death (supremacy of personal identity and conviction about personhood)

Ana-ene osisi kporo nku anya odida, nke din du esi na ukwu buru-what people think will not happen may happen instead of the expected (appearance is deceitful)

Chinchi gwara umu ya na ife di oku ga-aju oyi- patience is the key to life (Do not be quick to take an action).

The Igbo say, *uka wu-ilulu*. Talk is proverb. We shall open our mouth in proverbs, that is, all serious discourse is proverbial and requires discernment and intelligence. Human discourse is complex and requires diligent and careful interpretation. The Igbo also say *atuola omara omara, atuola ofeke, ofebaa n'ohia*- a word is enough for athe wise.

4.6 The Metaphysics of Personhood (*onwe*) in Igbo culture

To investigate the concept of the self in Igbo culture one starts naturally with the commonest usages as they occur in the expressions:

myself, yourself, himself, etc. In Igbo, one refers to oneself as *Mu nwa*— Myself, *Gi nwa*—Yourself, *Ha nwa*—Themselves, where *Mu* means I, *Gi* means you, and *Ha* means they; the attached *nwa* is a demonstrative which means This here. Thus *Mu nwa*, literally This I or "I here, is essentially an emphatic pronoun. But the primitive noun that names the self, the core concept in the structure of the self is *onwe* as in *Onwé m* myself, *onwe gi* yourself, *onwe ya* himself or herself. *Nwe*, which seems to be the original root, means to own; *onwe* would then mean he who owns. Thus the above-mentioned expressions would translate literally: *Onwe m*- he who owns me or myself; *onwe gi*- he who owns you or yourself, etc. According to Okere, *Onwe* is therefore a self-owner, an independent self[45].

Dialectal variations would include *ike m* and *ôgwe m*, each with rather more obscure etymologies. Ike could possibly derive from the root *ke* meaning division or creation and Ike m could originally be construed as my portion my own piece of reality. *Ogwe* is literally a log and in its use as self, is reminiscent of the expression commonly used by witnesses—*a nom noshishi m ya emee* literally I was there in my trunk when it happened, that is, planted there and solidly present as myself.

According to Okere, *Onwe* or *Ike* or *Ogwe* roughly meaning self, is the core subject of identity. perduring and enduring all human experience. It is not describable and has no name and no function except as the ultimate author of all the functions of the individual, the carrier of all experience, it is the link between the experiences of yesterday and today, the basis of that proprietorship by which these fleeting multitudes of experience are one and are mine[46]. The *onwe* or Self is that part of me (in a manner of speaking, because it is not just, and cannot be just, a part of me) of which I cannot speak in the third person: the possessive adjective *m* in *Onwe m* (my in myself) is not exactly the same as the *m* in *ahu m* (the my in my body) which latter does

convey some distance, some alterity, a subject-object relationship. Self is not an object but rather the ultimate subject. Myself is myself *Onwe m bu onwe m*. Here we are talking of identity as distinct from mere equivalence.

The self is the basic unit of autonomy. If the etymology of *onwe* has to do with the root -*nwe*, to own, then one must remark how perfectly this fits in with the lgbo expression for freedom. The Greeks would say:

We are free because we are autonomous, that is, we give ourselves our own laws. The lgbo, instead of using the idea of lawgiving and self-lawgiving, would define their freedom from the idea of ownership and self- ownership. To say that we are a free people is: *Anyi nwe onwe anyi*—We own ourselves or negatively, *Odigh onye nwe anyi ni*, i.e., there is no one who owns us. Freedom is conceived as self-ownership; a free person is a self-owning self. The basic assumption is that the self is not owned. The expression *Onye nwem ni*—He who owns me, though occurring mostly as a flattering, endearing invocation, is used to designate the closest relationship, especially of blood. *Ndi nwegi ni*—those who own you—designates the most immediate family, the innermost circle and last line of defense for the individual. It is the utmost insult and challenge to threaten some one with: *Mmechaa gi ihe m'echere ndi nwegini*, i.e., after dealing with you I will wait to deal with those who own you, that is, your most intimate family, those to whom you are precious and who would be your most reliable defense. But basically, to be free is to be one's own owner and not to be owned by anyone else[47].

Around the kernel of *Onwe*, *ike* and *Ogwe* or self there is a cluster of other elements most intimately involved with it and some how contributing to its make up. Foremost among these is *Muo* or Spirit. Although *Muo* is the principal name for immaterial beings, gods, ancestors and

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ghosts, it is used also for the immaterial but constituent element in the human being. This indicates that man is thought of as sharing in some way in the peculiar being of spirits. Despite appearances, man is therefore part spirit[48]. The *Muo* or spirit in man is clearly conceived as the cause or principle of life in the individual because when someone dies it is often said that his spirit has left—*muo ya ahafula*.

Further usage of the notion of spirit shows that it is regarded as the seat of emotions. *Ihe okwuru gbuchara muo m*, what he said quite killed my spirit. despirited or demoralized me. *Ihe okwuru meruru m na muo*, what he said touched me in the spirit, in my inmost depths. *Muo m anabataghi ya*, My spirit refused to accept it (a suggestion). *Muo m ekweeghi*, My spirit rejects it. *Muo* is therefore conceived as the intangible, invisible element in man, the seat of will and emotions, the principle of life and point of connection, similarity and sharing with the world of spirit. It is the *Muo* in man that is responsible for the following activities without which the idea of *Onwe*/SeIf could neither emerge nor be sustained: (1) *Uche, Iche echiche*—Thinking, considering, reflecting with some anxiety over one's lot. *Cebara ya echiche*, think it over. *Icheedi gini*, what is it you are ruminating over? *Uche awaala ya aba*, His thought is split into branches, he is in doubt or he is full of thoughts. (2) *Iru eruru*—to reflect deeply, usually on some sad, sombre, tragic subject. *Eruo m uwa m*—I am reflecting on my world (lot), my bad luck, fortune, and destiny. (3) *Ncheta*—lit. to think out, to remember, recall. *M cheta Rahurahu nne m nwuru ni*— When I just remember my late brother Rahurahu! to quote "the Tortoise in the tale. The Igbo verb has a peculiarly dynamic structure whereby the ta enclitic confers on the verb root the notion of bringing forth into existence or into presence (for example, *Nku-ta* means to earn or bring in by labour or *oku*, *Nzota* to bring home by struggling or *izo azo*). Hence, *Ncheta* is strictly speaking to fetch out from the past by thinking, *iche uche*. *Ncheta* is a crucial function

since it is not only useful in storing the memory of events but also accumulates them and unifies them into a continuity that makes them into a story and thus helps to give the self its unity and identity. (4) *Nghota*—lit. to pluck, to grasp, to understand, to comprehend, to appreciate the full implications of. *Ighotala ihe m n'agwa gi*? Do you understand what I am telling you? The image suggests that understanding amounts to getting a firm grip on a rather slippery object or getting some hold on a complex and confusing mass. (5) *Izu*—deliberation, consensus or wisdom and information resulting therefrom. *Igba izu* is to undertake deliberation to determine in a case an appropriate, generally a consensus, of judgment. *Ima izu* is to have wisdom or know how, or to be privy to. *Ama m izu*?Do I know ought? (6) *Ako*—Clevemess, Wisdom, Prudence. *Onye ako* is the prudent one. *Nwaevula ako* is the wise, little ram of folk-tales who outwits the notoriously clever tortoise. (7) *Ngenge, Igba Ngenge*— Imagining, surmising; and finally (8) *Atutu, Itu atutu*—to plan, to project, to order the execution of a plan. All these can be summed up as mmuo nwere *akonauche* which is significant in matters of personal identity of an individual. They are activities of the *Muo* or spirit in man. A dead man cannot do them. An animal or any being lacking spirit cannot do them. They are therefore typical of the self of which *Muo* is a constituent part and it is from its aspect as *Muo* that the self can do them.

There are other components of the *onwe*. They are *obi* (heart) and *ahu*-(body). According to Okere, the *obi* (heart) reveals and confesses to the self whatever it knows, that the obi is itself not the self or *onwe*, but relates to the self (*onwe*) whatever it knows, as a child to grandfather, and that it is the *onwe* that is the core of the self. *Ahu*, on the other side, perhaps derived from *hu* is the verb to see and therefore, perhaps designating the seeable, visible, tangible, sensible part of the self. According to Onah,

> the body is evidently the material aspect of the self, which, nevertheless, has a complex and intimate relationship with the spiritual aspects. It is sometimes metaphorically used to represent the self in its concrete external manifestations. It also plays an indispensible role as medium through which the individual is inserted within a given community. This insertion within a community is expressed in terms of blood relation or consanguinity, and often lived out in the form of physical proximity and interaction[49].

These and all such are activities of the *onwe* (self) is not the *onwe* but as its ontological components. The relationship between the *onwe* and its *akonauche* is expressed in Igbo proverb that says, *nwaayo, nwaayo ka eji na eji aga na ogwu-* a snail crawls through a thorny path slowly and intelligently.

4.7 Personhood as an end in itself

Among all created beings, man is at the centre of events and there is none on this earth that is so much a world unto itself as the human being. This human being is man. And when he/she is referred to as a person in the contemporary usage, it is taken to mean the distinct selfhood of the individual, one that is unique, incommunicable and unrepeatable[50]. According to Nze, the person is the subject of rights and duties and who is therefore an end and never a means[51].Colaborating with Nze on the above position, the Pontifical Commision says, he is one who can meaningfully experience and influence the environment- abilities that are consequent on consciousness and moral sense[52].

Thus, the concrete, real existing human being has worth or value that inalienable dignity that can never be lost. Hence he is worthy of respect and protection of a unique kind, qualitatively different from the real respect that is owed to the natural world and to the varied forms of life that populate it[53]. The dignity of man or the human person consists in the dominion of man over

the visible world. Society is therefore made for man. In all social institutions, the well-being of the individual human persons is the criterion and measure of every human achievement.

In a nutshell, human realities are for man, who has a central place within society. It is therefore unacceptable to sacrifice the dignity of the human person for national or communal interest. He is a being that exists in the world of existence and cannot be marginalized or subdued. This social honor, his dignity and rights made him/her a person, a gift from God[54].

4.8   Summary

We have with an expository analysis projected *akonauche* as pivotal of a human person, especially in matters of personal and social identity. The analysis presents the Igbo that are, characterized as independent, dynamic, versatile and creative. The Igbo is also tolerant, ultra-democratic and highly individualistic and pragmatic.

We argued that the Igbo emphasis on the *onwe* is the locus of personal identity and draws its line of self-affirmation and actualization through its *akonauche*. The Igbo people say, *onwe m, mbu-* my self first. This is why social honors, communal recognitions are necessary parts of a person but are not sufficiently what determines a person. Personhood, therefore, is an end in its self.

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Chapter Five: *Akonauche*, Personhood and Social Order in Contemporary Igbo Thought

5.0 Introduction

According to Igbo tradition, life is not a linear proceeding which ends in the unknown but a circular movement, built up in time and space by all moments and beings, related to one another in ever-ending reciprocal generation of life. According to Emy, being born must therefore be thought of in category of passage. To come here is to leave the beyond; it is to be in transit, to change one's state. Being born here means dying up there, and at the end the opposite is true: to die here is to be born up there[1]. From Emy's quotation, we are challenged with the ultimate reality and end of our individual lives. This is supported with the Igbo saying that; *ahia enyiri-enyiri, anaghi eri onye ngworo*- to before warred is to before armed. How does the knowledge of the self (*onwe*) help its bearer in the attainment of a good destined end? How does the community help in the lives of the individuals in their attainment of this destined end? These questions are important because the life of man here is transit, and as such, his/her social personality, his/her individuality and identity and his/her place within the clan are means and opportunities of attaining a good dissevered end.

In this chapter, effort is geared towards establishing the role *akonauche* plays in the terrestrial vicissitudes of the individual human person.

5.1 *Akonauche* (*onwe*) and the idea of communal life

It is pertinent to at this point note that the relationship between the person and the community is of particular interest as far as the individual is vested with some level of freedom and autonomy. According to Woityla, the communion of 'we' is the human plural form in which the person accomplishes itself to the highest degree as a subject[2]. We need to state clearly here that even

though the human person pre-exists in itself, in dignity and does not become a person for what it does, its rank as being lies actually in the capacity to transcend itself, to fulfill itself in relationship with other people. Woityla opines that,

> it means that several people tend to achieve together something in which they can find more than just themselves, so as to find in this way truly themselves. What matters to them is a common good so great and so important that they may reappraise their own desires and needs in acting by mutual consent. Naturally this common good should not be detrimental of the individual and has really to be a good for each one within the community[3].

Along history, common actions in which individuals were involved have often shown to be detrimental to the real common good of the person and society. This has been verified either in communism, liberalism or other isms and now in our consumer society[4]. In fact either standardization or isolation of the individuals are both distortions of a true community. Both are contingently necessary for the total actualization of the person.

The metaphysics of the community is necessary for not just the actualization of the individual's personal existence, also for their communal experience. According to Okere,

> one has to be careful however not to exaggerate the opposition between individualist societies and communitarian societies. In the final analysis it is a matter of degree for, even in the most individualistic of societies, the existence of armies and patriotic forces ready to risk or sacrifice their lives for the common good shows clearly that there will always be limits to individualism. In the same way, the fact that in most communitarian societies the individual could choose freedom and autonomy, even in ostracism and asylum, means also that the individual always will have his/her say as a person. It is therefore in the main, a matter of degree, although there is a better balance between the individual and community in the so-called communitarian setup[5].

Here, the individual is always and in the first place a member of his/her community. Again and most importantly is that the metaphysical aspect of personal identity can come into being without

the aid of the community. According to Matolino, persons are conceived and born with minimal interference or help from the environing community[6]. Though the Igbo is an extreme republican society having no feudal-type rulers, and though direct democracy reigned in Igbo hamlets for centuries before white colonial rule, the Igbo is a man/woman defined to an extent by his/her community. He/she understands self identity in and through the community and finds therein his/her fulfillment. Reciprocally, the community regards the individual as its own, not in the sense of superiority but as a platform for the actualization of their existence. According to Okere,

> without derogating from the uniqueness or the personality of the individual, it is fair to say that the community is part of his essence. But it would be untrue to conclude that the individual thereby loses his/her identity as to think that the community has no identity at all. The individual is inserted in community. His/her individualism is thereby qualified, bounded and limited, but by the same token it is supported, enriched, given a direction and bearing[7].

He further says that, thus in the subtle dialectic between individual and community, there is independence of the individual, there is dependence on the community and there is interdependence of each on the other. None is perceived as less important or more dispensable; each is regarded as an integral part of human condition[8].

 Even though the individual enjoys some level of autonomy and privacy, but it does not stop the community in which he/she is a member to introduce punishment bequeathing on him/her when a crime or offence is committed. This is so because he/she has the capacity to have restrained and refrained from sin. This is one of the major role his/her *akonauche* does for the *onwe*-individual in its self-actualization and fulfillment. He or she is punished not because of hatred or prejudice, but to serve as a deterrent to others and a continuous social order. According to Okere, it is in the light of this dialectic between the individual and community that Daly reports that in contrast

with the practice of secret, auricular confession which the missionaries introduced into Igbo community, there are traditional public admission of guilt followed by a sacrifice of reconciliation[9]. Similarly, Nwala agrees with Okere that punishment or sanction serves as the most effective means of social order and control. Nwala says that,

> … sanctions are the means whereby the customs are protected by making sure that any infringement of them is punished. Sanctions range from those believed to have been imposed by the deities and ancestors, such as epidemics, death, famine, draught, floods, accidents and other natural disasters, to those which the community imposes on its erring members. These include death, selling into slavery, banishment, ostracism and ritual blockade (such as that nobody should sell to or buy from a thief or a witch or poisoner or any member of his/her family;, propitiatory and cleansing rites, fines, replacement of damages and simple apology. Sanctions serve as the most powerful and effective means of social control[10].

There are common expressions relating to public opinion which serves as deterents from crime. Such as, *ihe ndi ozo gekwu*-what others will say about one's personality? *Onyeanachi akpaya, anachi ya*-a man whose bag is being scorned, is being scorned himself. *Ihere neme nwanne onye ara, obugh onye ara ka ona eme*-shame is for the mad man's relation, not for the mad man/woman him/herself. *Onye nwanne ya nagba nkwa ojo oko iku nako ya*-a man/woman whose relation dances very badly normally has twitches of the eye-lids. *Onye ihere nadigh eme bu onye ohi*-a man/woman without shame is a thief. *Biko emeye kwala anyi n'ihere*-please do not put us into shame.

There are also Igbo proverbs and adages that support the relationship and mutual symbiosis between the individual and the community. They are, *otu onye anaghi e siri oha nri maka na oha ga eri ya kpam kpam, ma na oha siri e otu onye nri, ogaghi ericha-ya*-an individual can cook food for his/her community and the food will be consumed to finish, but if the community cook

for an individual, he/she cannot finish it. This, philosophically, means that the individual cannot live without a community. *Agbakotaka nyawu imamiri, ya agba ufufu*-a collective passing out of urine foam much than that of an individual. This means that unity brings development and achievement. *Grir-giri bu ugwu ezi*-it is the king's subordinate that gives the kingship respect. This means that no individual singlehandedly can achieve much without some cooperation from his/her clan.

What these proverbs or adages suggest is that the individual is autonomous in certain aspects of his/her personal identity, but is communal in matters of social realities and relations. In this regard Nwaezeigwe says,

> the high level of Igbo intelligence combined with their habitual hard work and goal-getter instinct has made the Igbo a conspicuous guest to his host within any environmental setting. Distinctly individualistic and republican in outlook, the Igbo have the quick-witted tendency to unite wherever they find themselves outside their traditional Igboland. They possess the highest propensity to group efforts and commitment to community development[11].

There are two vital points worthy of note from the quotation above. Firstly is the fact that the Igbo is individualistic in terms of personal interest and identity. But this personal interest does not hinder his/her from involving in matters regarding communal interest, social order, growth and development. This attitude of communal interest is captured in Igbo adage that says, *onye na ewighi ukwu an ibe, ihe koro-ya-* an individual without clans and friends is incomplete.

Since life does not have a universal tool for measuring success, the *onwe* guided by its *akonauche* need to purse and weigh its options in life. Is it better to gain praise and loose its personal identity or to live according to the dictates of a well designed and worth-emulative life?

5.2 Some objections to traditional views on personhood in Igbo culture

There is the seemingly contradiction most traditional anthropologists, anthropological linguists and philosophical anthropologists run into when discussing and analysing the concept of the person. Most often than not, we see a straight-jacketed view and perception of the traditionalist on personhood centered on myths, speculations and communal. Our major contention is that most traditional views on personhood accept the normative requirements which also tied to the view that community is the ontological element in personhood. Our position is neither eccentric nor anti-Africanist (Igbo). Had they carried their analysis to its logical conclusion, they would have rejected (communitarianism) as a basis of personal identity, or at the very least, argued for granting communitarianism a secondary status in the view of persons. In this case, Menkiti would not have argued that the community takes precedence over the individual. He insisted that, the community takes metaphysical precedence over the individual and the identity of the individual is thoroughly fused with the community[12.] For Menkiti, the African does not isolate a single feature to be constitutive of personhood. From this he states,

> one obvious conclusion to be drawn from this dictum is that, as far as Africans are concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories whatever these may be. And this primacy is meant to apply not only ontologically, but also in regard to epistemic accessibility[13].

From this quotation it is quite clear that Menkiti sees the community as the ontological determinant of personhood. This means that when questions of personal identity arise in African philosophy, Menkiti readily refers such questions to the realities of the community as opposed to the reality of the individual. Indeed, he is quite firm in dismissing these individual realities as insignificant in comparison to communal realities. In our view, his position suggests two possibilities; the first is that the individual's life history, his/her own perspective or story about him/herself does not matter when it comes to a construal of his/her identity. The second

possibility is that the individual's story can only matter if told through the realities of the community. This means that the individual has to align his/her story with the realities of the community.

His position as we argued before does not capture the idea of *onwe* in Igbo philosophical anthropology. The *onwe* for the Igbo is the determinant basis of personal identity. It is independent of what and how the community views it. The idea of *onwe* is the original and ontological root of personhood. It is a metaphysical aspect of the person that bears the physical and other experience by the individual. The Igbo person considers his /her *onwe* first before proceeding to the *onwe anya* (our own personalities). That is why the Igbo person would say, *ama m onwe m*-I know myself. The expression is not referring to any components of the self. That is, it does not refer to the person's physical presence but the person as the inner unit of experience. According to Okere, *onwe* is therefore a self-owner, an independent self and the basic unit of autonomy[14]. There are Igbo sayings that support the *onwe* as the basis of personhood and personal identity. *O bu so onwe mara chukwu nke mu na efe*-is only my self that knows the kind and type of God that I worship. *Ana m echebara onwe m echeche*- my self is having sober reflection. *E nwerem ike ime ihe obula*- I have the power to do anything of my choice. *Onwe m bu onwe m*-myself is myself. What all these sayings suggest is that the individual has this metaphysical/ontological aspect that defines him/her for her and not as the community perceives him/her.

We should note and most importantly the difference between the Western perception of individualism and the Igbo perception of individualism. While the former sees the individual as an absolute entity with unlimited freedom that could at the long run have negative implications on actions and inactions, the latter sees the individual as the basis of communal unity and

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development. For instance, while western individualism may look away from acts like abortion, the Igbo individualism will frown at abortion. The condemnation is not just because a law or religion frowns at it, but because common sense would tell the individual that if every other woman finds reason to always committing abortion, the human kind will go into extinction. According to Okere,

> but man is not just an individual, an island, left to him/her self and sufficient to him/her self, on his/her own. Man is essentially community… . As a matter of fact, we actually see it and experience it in the flesh in this society in its fixation on individuals' rights, unlimited rights to freedom, to property, to abortion, to death. But in Igboland, in Nigeria, in Africa generally, the community, the common good is the dominant reality and it alone ultimately provides the context and guarantee of individuals right[15].

Like we had explained earlier, that, the idea of community and its role in the social identity of a person should not be infused to the realities of individuals as basic units of community. The individual's personal identity is guided properly by his/her *akonauche*. *Akonauche* is that aspect of the self (*onwe*) that mediates between personal interest and communal interest. That is why acts like abortion is not an option both at the individual's level and at the community level, except when it poses danger to the bearer.

The point here is that the individual self (*onwe*) is endowed with will, creative intelligence, wisdom which he/she applies in its dealings with the communal interrelationship. If we are correct, it means that Menkiti's position that, the attainment of personhood is reliant on norms that are provided by the community[16] cannot be sustained to a logical conclusion. Menkiti further argues that the African conception is occupied with articulating what he calls a maximalist definition. As far as African societies are concerned, personhood is something at which individuals could fail, at which they could be competent or ineffective, better or worse[17].

Our understanding of this claim is that Menkiti conceives the community as the ontological basis for understanding personhood. He locates this ontological realization in the realm of normative. The community as a prescriber of norm opens the individual to the possibility of being subjected to a precise standard of measure that will determine whether he/she is a success or failure as a person. He argues that the African understanding of community refers to the category where there is what he calls an organic dimension to the relationship between component individuals[18]. In this set up, he argues that, priority is given to the duties that individuals owe as opposed to their rights.

Similarly, Ikuenobi argues that "there are only two conceptions of personhood in African philosophy. He identifies the first, which is also least important, as the metaphysical or descriptivist, while the second, which, according to him, is most important, as the normative[19]. In his words, he states that the matter as follows, there are two plausible conceptions of personhood: metaphysical (descriptive) and normative. In the African view, the idea of a person has descriptive and normative dimentions[20].

We agree with Ikuenobi that there are two plausible ways of talking about the notion of personhood, we tend to disagree with Ikuenobi on two issues of naming the first category as descriptive and his characterization of the second category as normative. Ikuenobi seems to have borrowed much from Wiredu's position that, the Akan conception of a person has both descriptive and normative aspects that are directly relevant not only to the idea that there are human rights but, also, to the question of what those rights are[21].Wiredu then characterizes the relationship between these two concepts thus: through the possession of an *okra, mogya*, and *sunsum* a person is situated in a network of kinship relations that generate a system of rights and obligations[22]. According to Matolino, what we see here is a suggestion that the kinship relations

are important and the so-called descriptive enables a person to be a participant in the kinship system[23]. He further states that, for indeed Wiredu goes on to spell out the social structure of the Akan explaining how matrilineal lineage extends itself into a clan and how individuals are expected to be a competent social being not only in the confines of the clan and the lineage but to the whole of humanity[24]. According to Wiredu, to the *Akans*, a human being is already social at conception, for the union of the blood principle and the personality principle defines a social identity[25]. The reason why a person is a social being beyond her/his clan is found in her/his possession of the okra which is God's spark that serves to link the individual with the rest of mankind. It is the possession of this spark that creates obligations for the individual towards all of mankind.

Ikuenobi juxtaposes the difference between the descriptive/metaphysical and the communal notion by stating that,

> by contrast, a descriptive or metaphysical conception of personhood seeks to analyse the ontological make-up of a person. It examines whether a person is material or immaterial, or whether a person is made-up of one or two essential natures. For example, the metaphysical analysis of the nature of the mind and body and the relationship between them is a descriptive account of personhood[26].

Like Wiredu he goes on to emphasise the importance of the community in the realization of personhood.

Our contention with this account is with its use of the word descriptive as an interchangeable category with metaphysics. Suffice to say that the use descriptive and the manner in which it is interchanged with metaphysics is misleading. This misleads thinkers into the conclusion that the communal is more important than the descriptive category. According to Matolino, in philosophy, metaphysics is a far more serious category than a mere exercise in describing

entities. Metapyhsics is concerned with the question of what entities exist and what nature of entities they are. Descriptivist account on the other hand, do not make an investigation into anything but merely narrate what is seen from a certain perspective[27]. He further says,

> to say that one is a descriptive account and the other a metaphysical account is not to claim that both are engaged in the same exercise. A metaphysical statement is much more powerful in that it seeks to give an entity those characteristics that constitute it. Naturally, we think that a metaphysical exercise goes together with investigation and demonstration of what things really are. On the other hand, descriptions do not seek to give entities their essences and do not bring categories to reality. Descriptive is just about everyone's business and not an exclusive concern of the philosopher. Hence, I suggest that to equate metaphysics with descriptive is misleading[28].

It should be noted at this stage that the community is not an empty space and location that void of human persons and other beings. The community rather is the coming together of different autonomous individuals to form a collective existence for the betterment of their beingness. Even though every individual should always try to protect the community by respecting communal norms, this does not necessarily imply the denial of the individual's interest. Both are two sides of the same coin. The community's norms are there to preserve and maintain order and peaceful co-existence, while the individual is sufficiently at the centre of these norms and resist when they turn against its self identity. If we are correct, then Ikuenobi's idea that, the idea of community is also the logical and epistemic foundation of the normative conception of a person and the basis for a person's own view of self-identity and ways of doing things[29] denies the individual of his/her ontological constituents that are part of his/her idea of a person. Two important philosophical claims emerge from this understanding. The first claim is about logic and epistemology and how they relate to each other in arriving at this notion of personhood. The first claim seeks to rest communitarianism on logical grounds. The position is that this notion is not

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encumbered by some contradictions and cannot be said to be incoherent or fallacious in any way. The claim extends to provide some serious philosophical cover for the notion from attacks or accusations of being illogical or of violating some fundamental laws of reasoning. This means that the normative concept is one that is always arrived at if one thinks through things properly. From its logical validity it is extended to being the foundation of all knowledge of what the individual knows about other individuals and how she identities his/her self. She knows herself as well as others as communal beings. She just does not come to know this in any manner or through testimony that could be unreliable, but she knows this as a result of going thought the thoughts logically to arrive at an epistemic position of the constituents of a person. In other words, this is cast as an objective and indisputable account of how things are ordered. In order to get to it, all one has to do is to think about this issue in the right kind of way and he/she will arrive at this communitarian notion.

The second claim is that this logical and epistemological notion of personhood, which is reached with natural ease, extends itself to the domain of ethics. An individual who logically knows that his/her identity is communitarian, either has to exhibit, or at the very least ought to know that he/she must exhibit a moral outlook that is consistent with the communitarian ethic. Ikuenobi thinks that this is the case and state of affairs because of the importance of community in all philosophical matters. He argues that,

> the normative conception of personhood is plausible because of the conception of community and its place in African people's normative conceptual scheme. In other words, the idea is a conceptual foundation on which most African ideas, beliefs, values, ontology, cosmology and ways of life are grounded. Anything that exists or is believed to exist must have some connection in the community[30].

What this essentially amounts to is that all African reality, including philosophical truism, is grounded in the reality of the community. The community determines what reality is and what is to be perceived as important. All ideas and beliefs do not have any other origin besides the community. This means that anything that tends to exhibit non-communitarian features is regarded as false as it is in contrast to communal reality. The implication for this position is well known as ethnophilosophy[31]. And the implications of any philosophy being branded as an ethnophilosophy can be devastating to the status of that position. If it can be shown to be the case that communitariaism is indeed an ethnophilosophical account, then, all the problems associated with ethnophilosophy may haunt it to its demise.

If we agree that philosophy is a constant criticism of the ideas we live, we then need to revisit the communitarian claims about what a person ought to be. If African philosophy insists on being built on ethnophilosophies at this level of human awareness, then its essence might be blurred. In this regard, Ikuenobi's argument that, in African communal tradition, 'personhood' does not just describe a human being with body and mind, but, also an individual who indicates by his/her actions that he/she can accept and meet certain standards of social responsibility to achieve recognition[32], can no longer be sustained. This is because the world has gone beyond philosophies that neither do nor conform to the practical experiences of life. The Igbo say, *uwa asala anya*-the world's eyes are open. What this means is that the time of killing twins because they are seen as witch and wizards are no more.

We should not forget that different communities will have different interpretations of life and reality. And in some cases, one finds some pockets of biases, prejudices, discrimination, envy which most often influence the norms and its implementation in the community. For instance, history has it that Socrates, the father of philosophy was unjustly poisoned as a form of

punishment because of greed and callousness. It was a case where the community decided to turn their norms against an innocence person. Who says that such are not still found in some cultures and communities? So it is not a case that the community defines the personhood of an individual's self examination and identity. The individual thinks, knows, creates and can even influence his/her community in some ways. That is why *akonauche*, and the *onwe* in Igbo conceptual scheme is very significant in the metaphysical and ontological understanding of the individual. *Akonauche* is the idea of the *onwe* and mediates for the *onwe* not just in matters of personal identity and conflicts, but confers on the *onwe* self-autonomy, knowledge, independence and actualization. What *akonauche* does to the *onwe* (self) can be likened to what Moses does for the Israelites.

> Taking from psalm (106: verses 19-23) at Horeb they fashioned a calf, worshipped a metal statue. They exchanged their glorious God for the image of a grass-eating bull. They forgot the God who saved them, who did great deeds in Egypt. Amazing deeds in the land of Ham, fearsome deeds in the Red Sea. He would have decreed their destruction, had not Moses, the chosen leader, withstood him in the breach to turn back his destroying anger[33].

We have since sort to argue that the traditional /communitarian, normative/ethical views on personhood, though significant but does not and most importantly has not dealt with the personal/metaphysical identities of the individual.

5.3 *Akonauche* and the principle of causality in Igbo cultural anthropology

Among the Igbo, there is a sense to which the metaphysical/epistemic concepts correlate with one another in defining a person. A discussion on these correlations may expose the nature of the principle of causality in Igbo cultural anthropology. The Igbo principle of causality believes that wherever something is, there is something that stands behind it- *ebe ihe obula di, onwere ihe di ya na azu*. This means that nothing for the Igbo culture exist without its cause and effect principle. The principle of causality here does not connote fatalism or pre-determinism as could be argued by some scholars but as way of describing independent realities. According to Ohia, in Igbo epistemic worldview, concepts such as *Ako* (wisdom or moral knowledge) *amamihe* (dispositional or intelligence) and *uche* (thought or thinking) make up the epistemic circle which in turn expresses the ideas of knowledge as continuous[34]. He further says that, *Uche* or *Echiche* is a receptacle in which there is a disposition or potency called *Amamihe* (Intelligence). This disposition is an insight into the relationships among the components of any reality. This potentially yet creates another insight for discrimination between independent realities[35]. This is from which we establish our thesis that; it is the individual's *akonauche* that directs and defines for every individual what reality is, most especially, in matters of personal identity and even in his/her relationships with the community and the world at large.

The *onwe* (self) sees itself endowed with certain epistemic criteria for accepting and rejecting issues or beliefs according to the order of values. The *onwe* (self) is autonomous vertically and horizontally. It is vertically autonomous because it has the capacity to coordinate other constituents of what makes him/her a person: its religiosity, aesthetics and beliefs, and horizontal because it coordinates its relationship with the society. According to Ohia,

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> hence the work of Uche is to produce a conceptually analyzing disposition directed towards the problem responsible for the agitation of 'Uche'. There is yet another concept (or faculty) in the epistemic circle. It is Ako. It is the active moral part of knowledge. It can also be called wisdom. It is wisdom or moral dimension of knowledge because its function is to humanize or moralize man by using the product of Uche to solve human problems. It is at this point of moralizing of human being that a full circuit of knowledge is completed. At this stage, what the circle represents is what the Igbo call "Ako na Uche" otherwise known as knowledge[36]

or creative intelligence. In this way, knowledge becomes the application of the contents of *Uche* to particular problem by *Ako.*

At this juncture, one can now posit that *Akonauche* serves as the Igbo idea of causality in matters of personal/social identities. *Akonauche* is the power for penetrating reality and is made manifest as a guide for human conduct as well as the basis for the Igbo social organization. An Igbo person can boast of grasping the knowledge or reality as it is in reality through his sense and intellectual ability.

5.4 *Akonauche* **and the challenges of the contemporary Igbo person**

Our interest here is to interrogate *akonauche*, with the view of proffering measures through which *akonauche* could help in the development of the individual and the community at large. Since one's *akonauche* could lead him/her into trouble, there is need for every *akonauche* to interact and seek for the help of other *akonauche* from other culture. The role of *akonauche* is to guide a person on how to live in harmony with one another. This does not necessarily suggest that *akonauche* cannot seek for improvement, especially, in the areas of technological and human capacity building. *Akonauche* is innovative. But it could be more innovative when interacts with other *akonauche* from far and near.

In other words, *akonauche* should not been seen as an end in itself. Even though it has the capacity to mediate for the individual on what is uplifting and down casting, it ought to be on a

constant interaction with what is obtainable in the global world. *Akonauche,* in its nature is dynamic and on a viable pedestrian to grow and bring the end result, which is to develop the individual's w0ellbeing and ensure a state of harmony amongst people. *Akonauche* is capable of helping the individual or community to come out of crisis and begin anew.

. According to Ejiogu, like its predecessors, this lecture by Professor Alexander Animalu has raised a number of questions about the Igbo identity, both at the personal and ethnic levels, which seems to be eluding us[37]. He however upholds that both identities must be maintained in the interest of personal and ethnic harmony. Nwaezeigwe aptly defines the situation as urgent and imperative when he says that, in considering the issue of identity among the Igbo, mention should be made of the fact that most names of Igbo towns, clans and sub-culturre groups do not often define their origins[38]. He concludes saying,

> it is important to note one major personality complex that has overtaken the cultural consciousness of the contemporary Igbo. In their unbridled quest to become more Christian and European than the Europeans, most Igbo have come to cultivate the reckless attitude of jettisoning the fundamental basis of their traditional value system and culture. Among the contemporary Igbo therefore, one notices a situation where their fundamental basis of their value system has come to be synonymous with backwardness, archaic ideas and primitive practices, as well as idolatry all in the bid to please those who brought Christianity and Western civilization to them[39].

In the same vein, Achebe opines,

> there is no doubt at all that there is a strand in contemporary Igbo behaviour which can offend by its noisily exhibitionism and disregard for humility and quietness. If you walk into the crowded waiting-room at the Ikeja Airport one of those days when all flights are delayed or cancelled "for operational reasons" and you hear one's voice high over a subdued and despondent multitude the chances are he will be an Igbo man who "has made it" and is desperate to be noticed and admired[40].

This does not mean that the acquisition of wealth is wrong but should not be allowed to determine for the individual paths that are even inimical to the individual. In this regard, Obilor says,

> *ajuju anyi ka bukwa, ma, ofo ndi Igbo o nwere ike bia Uka Jesu Kristi? Anya ga-ebu uzo leba anya n'uzo ato ahu omenala Ndiigbo na Nzuko Kristi nwere ike inwe mmeko. Na uzo mbu, e nwere ufodu omenala Ndiigbo jooro njo joka udele. Omenala ndi di otu a megidere Chukwu megidekwa mmadu. O nweghi uzo omenala ndi di otu ahu ga-eji buru uzo ndu. (...) Nke abou, e nwere ufodu omenala ndi Igbo e metosiri emetosi. N'ime ha, ihe di mara mma juru n'ime ha ma ihe ndi jogburu onwe ha juputakwara n'ime ha. Ajuju puru iche bu: "A ga-awufu nwatakiri a sara ahu, ya na mmiri ojoo e jiri saa ya ahu? Mba! Kama a ga-ekuru nwatakiri, kuputa ya, ma wufuo mmiri ojoo a saputara n'ahu ya. Otutu omenala ndi Igbo no n'udi nke abou a*[41].

The points Obilor has raised are not different from his predecessors on some of the challenges facing an Igbo person, especially as regards his/her personal identity and life at large. He agrees with others that some Igbo tradition and cultural practices cannot help an individual to retain and harmonize his/her affairs in a way that the individual enjoys its identity.

The consequences thus became a situation where the fundamental elements of Igbo identity are not only being treated with cataclysmic disdain, but are progressively fading away in the name of a mad rush to modernity and Christianity. In the process, the Igbo unconsciously became victims of unbridled European value judgment, forcing them to equally lose a sense of pride in their personality, conscious identity and time-tested value system. It must be stated that one cannot be a true individual without being proud of his/her identity, and one's identity cannot be complete without a firm and resolute attachment to his/her *onwe*.

There is therefore no gainsaying the fact that the refusal to take pride in one's past and present, and in accepting one's traditional value system is no doubt an attitude of self-rejection. It does

not in any form act as an impetus to one's advancement in both modern scientific and technological sophistication. One can still retain personal identity, cultural identity; customary spirituality and traditional sophistication yet excel in modern advancement. Reiterating on Animalu's position again, he says,

> it should by now be clear that use of creative intelligence (ako na uche) which was called for at the beginning of this lecture ought to be applied to our entire cultural matrix-world view, religion, politics, economics, military and so forth-as a way of life, in order to find our way forward in the modern scientific age that contains space travel, television, computers, energy crisis, atomic destruction, and drug addiction, among other societal ills. I do not think that the use of creative intelligence calls for any specific recommendations in the sense of a detailed programme for how such creative intelligence is to be inculcated in the population[42].

5.5 *Akonauche* and the idea of *onwe* (self)

There is the tendency that the *onwe* being autonomous could act and behavior in certain manners that promote its understanding and ideas. *Ndigbo* need to foster critical self-awareness by creating and allowing its *akonauche* to always mediate in its wide spectrum of existence and life. There is need for the Igbo person, as an individual or group to grave for a constant and routine criticism and self-criticism. In this way, personal excesses can be put to checks and the adoption of the principle of criticism becomes basic for every worthy individual. According to Cabral,

> it is essential to apply at all echelons of our life and our struggle the principles of organization and work which the party adopted as basic norms for its action. A case in point is the principle of criticism and self-criticism to solve internal questions and contradictions ... and to help ourselves to improve our thought and our actions[43].

The cultural source on which the *onwe* is built and established is the Igbo idea of *akonauche* which serves as a critical mediator between the individual and his/her thoughts and actions. *Akonauche* helps the *onwe* to pursue issues that are not just for personal benefits but also for the

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betterment and benefit of the community. This is true because the *onwe* is *onwe ya* because there are other individuals on whose relationship does each *onwe* recognizes its self.

According to Chinweizu,

> surviving as individuals is not enough. If it was, we wouldn't be gathered here for this conference. So, what is it that makes us want to survive together as a group? Put another way: what is it that makes each of us an Igbo and makes us crave to survive as Igbo? Obviously, if the group doesn't survive, its individuals will perish. It is the group that guarantees the lives and rights of its individual. That's why it is in the self-interest of the individual to help the group to survive[44].

She further says that, without your community to define, defend and secure your personal interests you can't survive in your competition with members of other groups. Individual talent, however exceptional, and ndigbo fortunately are endowed with their fair share of it, doesn't count for very much[45]. In as much as we agree with her that the community in the metaphysical sense is significant in the actualization and manifestation of the individual's itinerary, but as a community in terms of numbers or the community as a concrete entity on its own. This idea of community is not just restricted to tribe or ethnicity, in the sense that where one dwells, he/she has become part of the conglomeration of other beings. The Igbo say, *ebe onye bi ka o na agbachi-* where one lives is his/her home. We do not suggest that the idea of community is not significant but we suggest that it is complementary to the actualization of the individual's talents. Therefore Obilor is right to say,

> *ihe ozozuru oke n'Omenala Igbo nke Nzuko nabatagoro nke oma bu nghoya Ndiigbo banyere Umunna. Nghota nke a na nke Ndu mmdau dakoro onu. O bu n'ime Ununna ka ndu onye Igbo abula na-enwe ugwu na nsopuru n'uzo putara ihe. Ndi Igbo na asi "Umunna bu ike" "Umunna bu oputa obie", Onye agghala nwanne ya" dere gawa. Nghota na nkowa di n'ime Umunna puru iche n'ala Igbo[46].*

We had argued along side with Obilor and some others, especially the communitarians that the community plays a significant role in the final analysis of what a person should be in the community of people. The reason is because no individual would function properly in a disordered environment. The coming together of individuals whether from the same ethnicity or as group of like-minds is geared towards establishing an atmosphere that could help each individual to live and let the others live. We should note that this community is made-up of individuals who by nature or artificially decide to stay within a certain geographical location from which they go about for their daily bread. In the first instance, these individuals pre-existed before the community and again, there forming a community is not the case that the community now determines what makes them persons but the community helps and is part of what makes them persons, even though they live autonomously. We can say therefore that the *onwe* (self) lives in a community not because s/he is not autonomous but because part of its beingness requires co-existence and habitation with others. The diagram below explains what a community represents and the role of the individual in the community.
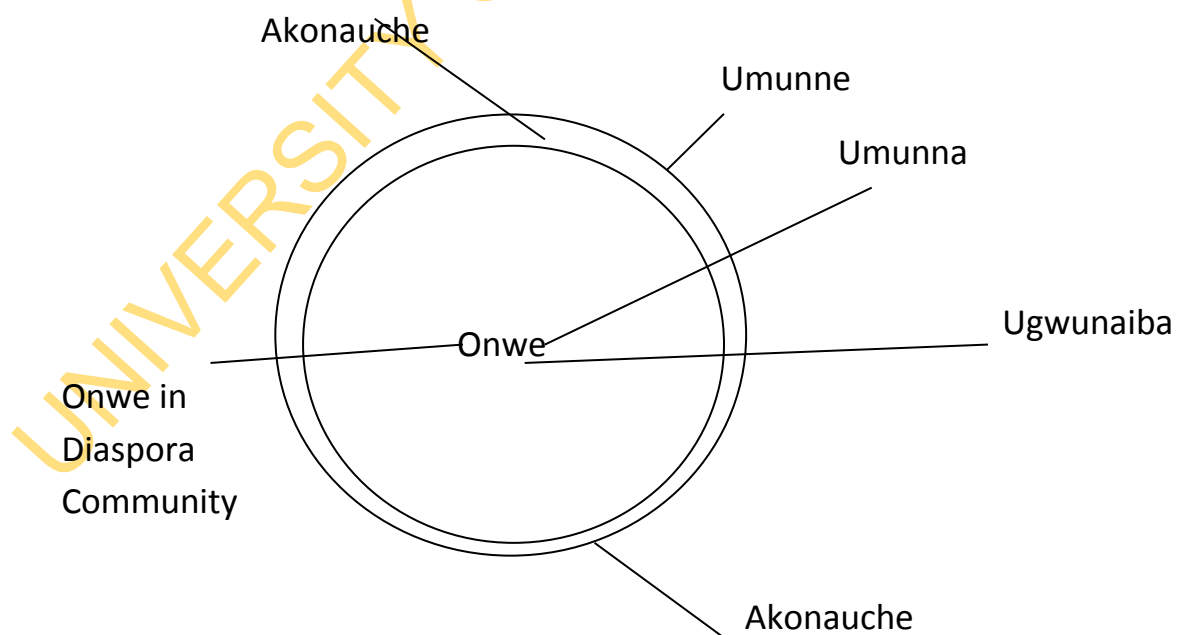
The diagram above explains the *Onwe* as the basic unit of autonomy in which its web of relations and identity (personal or social) is actualized and recognized within *Akonauche*.

5.6 *Akonauche,* Personhood and Social relations

The cumulative result of all we have said so far is that Ndiigbo today need to wake up from their slumber and redress their steps. The all can go attitude of some Igbo people should be check-mated with the situation in which the world at large is in. According to Nwogu,as earlier mentioned,

> a methodological question which must be posed and answered at this initial stage in order to avoid misdirection is whether the proposed world view is a synthesis articulated by the people being presented, or it is that of the presenter. In other words, when I say that 'A' is part of the world view of the Igbo, do I mean that 'A' is what the Igbo articulate as what they think, or do I mean that 'A' is what I configure that the Igbo think? Is the explorer looking for the theoretical explanations by the people of their experience or is he formulating the conceptions of agency which he considers as lying behind the patterns of behaviour of the people? Does he seek their explanatory categories or their effective agencies?[47].

The Igbo emphases on the *onwe*, even though not complete without the community is the basic unit of identity. But we should however note that the idea of community for an Igbo person is not restricted to communities in Igbo states. Community in this sense suggests the existence or coming together of a group, either as clan or as people living in the same locality. In this case, the community is the community of people. The community serves in man as in the capacity of duality. Hence the individual is still responsible for his/her actions. The Igbo say that, *isi kota ebu, ka o ga agba*- the head that scatters the swap's nest has its head stunk. This means that the

good and bad conduct of an individual is treated and assessed at the individual basis and not at

the collective group. According to Nwogu,

> part of the perception of group identity is the recognition that the achievement of one person leads to the improved level of existence of the community, at the same time as the crime of one person can lead to abomination and the destruction and suffering of the town. It is this sense of corporateness that gives consistency to what should have been contradictory in some Igbo behaviour. There is, for example, the paradox of independence and yet mass support of individuals observed[48].

Similarly, Okere says that,

> beyond the nuclear, but within the extended family, cousins and more distant relations are referred to as brothers and sisters and special rights and obligations accrue-taking care especially of children, widows and orphans and taking corporate responsibility on behalf of all members. The individual lives and moves within this orbit of solidarity. This solidarity continues in diminishing degrees towards the exterior peripheries of consanguinity, but it remains vibrant within the limits of the village-group or town[49].

He further says that, the pre-fix *Umu*, the children of, attaching to hundreds of place names in

Igboland-Umuonyike, Umukabia, Umuchima, Umuelemai, *Umuleri-* demonstrates the important

role of kinship in defining the Igbo person's self understanding[50]. He says,

> it makes a statement of corporate solidarity based on blood relationship even when some sub-groups are known to be relatively new immigrants. It also makes this statement of solidarity within the geographical ancestral land shared by these villages, which is a piece of land consecrated and bequeathed by the ancestors, and ruled and protected by the earth deity, which thus confers on this solidarity a quasi-religious character. It is this convergence of blood and soil-Blut and Boden-which creates and supports the living space and the network of relationships where the onwe/self sees itself as part of a community and this community as a constituent part of the self. This is why in this culture, the self is a congenitally communitarian self, incapable of being, existing and really unthinkable-except in the complex of relations of the community[51].

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The idea of community/communitarianism here is one that realizes that for a person, issues of being a member of this or that community have an important role in satisfying his/her social, political, and ethical identities. Such an identity, we argue is important for the purpose fulfilling the associative character that is brought by the capability that persons have to be both cultural and ethical subjects. This capability to be a cultural and ethical subject is enabled by the key characteristics that are given to persons at creation, in African/Igbo thinking, by God/*Chukwu* and that they are inherit biologically.

We argued and insist therefore that matters of strict identity will always be separate from issues raised by old communitarians under the rubric of persons in Africa/Igbo thought.

5.7 *Akonauche* **and the Praxis of social order**

In a multidimensional society, a period in which contemporary scholars/scientists have described as a global world, in a situation where there are conflicts of interest, clash of cultures, lost of values, a society that must survive and retain its identity both personal and communal must apply in its maximum the faculty of *akonauche* in there discharge of program. *Akonauche* and the praxis of social order seeks to answer its lead question- what should be the attitude of individuals, the place and role of *akonauche* in this hyper-globalised world where what matters in a certain culture does not matter elsewhere. How can in this jet age, an individual maintain certain high values for him/herself and translate such into communal good? How do we excel in a world where there are extreme differences in ideology, understanding and desires, and where individual interest seems to be taken too much precedence than that of the community? How can an individual control and guide against its excesses for the sake of social harmony and order? According to Chinweizu,

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even while drowning in our present sea of anarchist individualism, we have to recognize the primacy of the group interest and do all we can to promote and defend the group interest and subordinate our personal interest to it. We must learn to pursue our personal interests only in ways that are consistent with and advance the Ndigbo group interest[52].

She further says that,

in my view, our most dangerous problem is that of anarchist individualism. It needs to be identified, named and given special attention. Its pervasiveness is shown by this generation's fondness for the Ikenga concept and its statuette emblem. Ikenga, we must realize, is by its nature a totally self centered and individualistic spirit. It is not concerned at all with the interest of society. Which is why its predominance makes it an anarchist force. In fact, it is fair to say that Ndigbo are dying from the Ikenga spirit run amok. This Ikenga-anarchism is a cultural problem and requires a cultural cure[53].

From the above quotation, one sees the scholars worry. Her worry is not that the individual has no power to legislate for him/her self certain laws and ideas that guide its actions and deeds, but she is in a way appealing to the individual to carry its communal interest along side with theirs. The individual can only attain to this objective level with the help and application of *akonauche* in its dealings. This Nwoga explains when he says,

it is important to note here that the Igbo do make a distinction between different kinds of intelligence. Some tortoise stories are used to show the difference between wisdom, and cleverness "ako/uche" which are praise worthy on the one hand, and on the other trickery and treachery aghugho which deserve punishment as over-cleverness[54].

He further says that,

it is through the adult initiatory rites, however, that the community equips the Igbo person for the fullest realization of human potential. These ceremonies do have an explicit dose of social value. For example, once you have been initiated, you begin to share in the proceeds of other such initiations. Belonging to the title society is therefore some form of life insurance. Though social

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advantages may begin to take prime value in some people's consciousness, it is clear from the processes of such initiations that the rituals are expected to wake up in the initiates new levels of awareness of the extra dimensions of their humanity. The cynical Igbo yet believed that man was both animal and spirit and that the fuller the spirit in man was activitated the higher would be the status of the identity of the man[55].

Therefore, it is upon achieving the task above (of maintaining personal interest and social interests) that we see that *akonauche* has fundamental influence in maintaining and the explanation of social order.

5.8 Summary

The thrust of this chapter is a kind of exposition of the role (akonauche) creative intelligence plays in maintaining order and harmony within him/herself and the community in which he/she lives. According to Nwoga, the cosmological framework combines with the social environment to establish the context of the Igbo person's quest for fulfillment and order is found in the way one guides his/her actions and thoughts[56]. The social environment completely envelopes the individual and set the limits to the exercise of his independence, it prescribes acceptable goals of achievement for the individual, it also provides systems and facilities to aid the individual on his/her pursuit of fulfillment and assigns rewards for the fulfilled.

Even though specific kinds of goals have been set out for the Igbo person to path through, they encourage and recognize the autonomy and the creativeness, innovations from the individuals.

Within this context, there is a balance between the claims of the community and the claims of the autonomous individual. The individual is a member of the community and it is this community that sets the social and sometimes ethical goals that are acceptable within that community. The relationship between the individual and the community is based on mutuality. In as much as the

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community defines the nature and responsibility of the individuals, the *onwe* with the help of *akonauche* has the independency at certain matters to decide even for the community on the away forward. For example, an Igbo person who just left for America got to the destination and began to live according to the norms of the State. He/she does play music loudly, and does not encroach into his/her neighbor's privacy, but would not allow the State laws also to encroach into his/her personal decision, especially in matters of personal identity and interest. Laws like same sex marriage, addiction to scientific knowledge, that do not portray his/her true identity can be ignored by the individual because its personal knowledge of his/her identity and worldview do not accept such laws.

Therefore, the community is the platform on which the individual identifies its beingness and promote the interest of the community through effective and genuine and creative ideas that are elevating to the community. The community on the other hand, promotes the individuality of the person and encourages the individuals in the community to achieve self-fulfillment.

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Conclusion

The Igbo person is principally an Identity. The reflective pronouns-oneself, himself, herself, myself, yourself, are not merely compliments to emphasize statement but they are based on the pronoun, self, which a dictionary goes into great strains to define as an identical person, personality, ego: a side of one's personality: what one is :personality: identity…[1]. When the Igbo person uses *onwe m*, he/she is dealing not in imagery but in primary statement of reality. For the Igbo, it is this identity that is made manifest in the biological, social and religious activities in which the individual engages or in which he/she is involved. According to Nwoga,

> that identity has a reality of its own which has characteristics that cohere to it. The biological processes are essential to the person. He/she has to eat and drink and keep the body from harm. Religious activities invigorate the person, supplying him with help from deities and unseen external forces and also protecting the person from dangerous activities of spirits. But though the person is dependent on these activities, they do not define the person. There is still the person whose valour is aided and abetted but not subsumed under these other activities. That is the identity that sickens and /or strengthens to determine the status of the person[2].

Okere agrees with Nwoga that the *onwe* is one basic entity that defines the person. It is the basic unit of other experience. Yet it is indefinable but known through *akonauche*. In this regard, Okere says, It is not easy to figure out the complex relationship between these elements and the *Onwe*, or with each other. Cumulatively however they make up, not *Onwe* itself, but the sum total of all the functions and actions attributed to *Onwe*. And if any new functions or activities are ever found, they will still be attributable to *Onwe*. This goes to point out that *Onwe* is neither defined nor definable, but remains essentially the ultimate subject of all attributions. One can distinguish, but cannot separate, these functions, qualities and actions from their subject of attribution. Neither can this subject be reduced to any one of them or any combination of them.

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The self/*Onwe* is neither this nor that attribution, but is rather the sovereign and ultimate proprietor of all attributions of the individual[3]. The *onwe* is not just *onwe* of nothing, it is *onwe* of something. The Igbo say, *onwe* m, at this point, it becomes epistemological because, the individual is conscious and knowledgeable of self. The knowledge of the *onwe*, its functions and existence, vicissitudes and desires are arrived at and informed by its *akonauche*. Okere opines,

> It is the Muo in man that is responsible for the following activities without which the idea of Onwe/SeIf could neither emerge nor be sustained: (1) Uche, Iche echiche—Thinking, considering, reflecting with some anxiety over one's lot. Cebara ya echiche, think it over. Icheedi gini, what is it you are ruminating over? Uche awaala ya aba, His thought is split into branches, he is in doubt or he is full of thoughts. (2) Iru eruru—to reflect deeply, usually on some sad, sombre, tragic subject. Eru m uwa m—I am reflecting on my world (lot), my bad luck, fortune, destiny, comprehend, to appreciate the full implications of. Ighotala ihe m n'agwa gi? Do you understand what I am telling you? The image suggests that understanding amounts to getting a firm grip on a rather slippery object or getting some hold on a complex and confusing mass. (3) Ako—Clevemess, Wisdom, Prudence. Onve ako is the prudent one. Nwaevula ako is the wise, little ram of folk-tales who outwits the notoriously clever tortoise[4].

According to Ohia, in Igbo epistemic world view, concepts such as *Ako* (wisdom or moral knowledge) *amamihe* (dispositional or intelligence) and *uche* (thought or thinking) make up the epistemic circle which in turn expresses the ideas of knowledge as continuous[5]. The scriptures recorded in the gospel according to Mark that, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath[6]. In other words, man can in certain moments and circumstances live and act beyond the laws of the community. This situation is called for especially when the thought or action or belief in question, brings self-fulfillment and enhance communal ethos.

What the Igbo person expects as his/her right and due reward for hardwork is the ordinary life of fulfillment. Fulfillment is used here to highlight the relativity of achievement. People have

different destines and cannot expect the same levels of success. The first element of fulfillment

relates to the Igbo man's sense of self-hood. According to Nwoga,

> the Igbo person who is independent and lives in his own house
> with his wife and children and looks after them with any measure
> of satisfaction considers himself as much a man as any other. His
> identity is not subject to the will of other identities. In support of
> easy retention of the sense of self-hood, the Igbo have a system of
> beliefs that acknowledges that there are no limits to the capacity of
> the individual to determine his achievement[7].

These beliefs dependent on the key concept of the individuality of each person's ontological

commitments is captured in the Igbo aphorism which says that, *mgbali wu iriju afo: uba si la*

Eke. The dynamics and dualistic world challenged the Igbo person to make choices and

intelligent decisions, to persist in hardwork, so as to constrain this world to serve his/her goals.

He/she confronts that challenge with the will to win, to fulfill the realities that are his/her lot.

Nwoga remarks that,

> through initiations, training and ritual observances, the Igbo instill
> into members of the community the ideal of personal identity. This
> ideal involves mental and moral ability, it involves dedicated use
> of creative intelligence (*akonauche*) and physical strength, bravery
> and restraint, it involves developed contact with the innate extra-
> physical powers of the human being, finally, it involves the nature
> of, and one's access to one's ontological world[8].

In saying that the community is the maker of social identity, we do not mean to give it an all

consuming importance. We seek to state that it is important in issues of sociality. According to

Matolino, issues of sociality in themselves are important but they are not an absolute matter of

identification[9]. For instance, if I have a vehicle and people often see me drive my vehicle to

places that I would go for one reason or the other. They may be admiring me for the purpose of

having a vehicle. Some may wish to even want to be like me. So I am identified with my type of

vehicle. But there are also people in the same community that have same brand of vehicle.

Whatever respect and admiration is due to drivers of my type of vehicle is also due to me. Whatever scorn and derision due to those drivers is also due to me. If there is an identity that is constructed of drivers of my type of vehicle either as impoverished people with overwhelming desires to own vehicles or small time crooks who have arrest warrants pending over them, then that identity also applies to me. It is an identity of sorts. An identity, it is, but would be completely ill-informed of me to take such an identity as seriously constitutive of me or anyone including owners of expensive Range Rovers. In other words, the identity placed on social achievement and status attained is not something that they can take to be constitutive of whom they are. Drivers of Range Rover have a certain identity just like drivers of any sort of vehicle have their own identity (Drivers association and that entire sort of identity). But such an identity is not deeply enduring and such an identity like all other social identities must not be taken as constitutive of persons. Having said this, we propose that there is a need to develop a more positive statement of the relationship between the communal identity and the metaphysical identity from the perspective of *akonauche* in which the *onwe* is known and thought of. What is interesting is that the *onwe* is already aware of the need to live harmoniously independent of the community, but as an individual in search of self-fulfillment and social order. The *onwe* (self) knows that a disorganized society cannot help in the actualization of its potentials. The onwe is ontologically ordered. That is why the Igbo say, *a na eji ihe ana agba na nti, tiye ya na anya-*you cannot use ear ring and put in your eyes. So there is orderliness at the ontological state of the individual. This is what translates in the individual's relationship with his/her community. At this social level, the *onwe* through his/her *akonauche* seeks for harmony within its self and others. It applies the principle of live and let live. According to Chinweizu, we must learn to pursue our personal interests only in ways that are consistent with and advance the *Ndigbo* group, and the

world interest at large[10].   According to Masolo, anthropological observation makes it just obvious enough for every reflective person to realize that individual and community are so intertwined and mutually conditioning that neither one can be separated from the other in the understanding of human reality[11].

We sum up our conclusion by saying that the idea of a person or the state of personhood in Igbo conceptual scheme is relational, as both the individual and community put together forms a complete person. This relational understanding of a person is mediated and anchored on the Igbo term, *akonauche*. It is akonauche therefore that mediates between the individuals' personal desires and interests in a way that brings self-fulfilment and communal growth, order and development. In Igbo worldview, personhood is not just attained by the dictates of the community, personal ideas and creativity are also part of what makes a person as a relational being.

Akonauche is an ontological/ intelligent component of the human person capable of mediating and unifying the individual's facets of existence and is central in maintaining social order in Igbo culture.

Endnotes

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