A CRITIQUE OF AFRICAN-IGBO COMMUNALISM IN THE LIGHT OF KANT'S KINGDOM OF ENDS FORMULA

D i s s e r t a t i o n

zur

Erlangung des akademischen Grades
Doktor der Philosophie
in der Philosophischen Fakultät

der Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen

vorgelegt von

MODESTUS KELECHI UKWANDU

aus

UMUOWA-ORLU, NIGERIA

2019

Gedruckt mit Genehmigung der Philosophischen Fakultät der Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

Dekan: Prof. Dr. Jürgen Leonhardt

Hauptberichterstatterin: Prof. Dr. Sabine Döring (Universität Tübingen)
Mitberichterstatter: Prof. em. Dr. Dr. Gerhard Droesser (Universität Würzburg)

Tag der mündlichen Prüfung: 20.12.2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

A Kingdom of Ends in Kant's View

CHAPTER TWO

A Communitarian African (Igbo) Society

CHAPTER THREE

Humanistic Nature of African-Igbo Communitarian Ethics

CHAPTER FOUR

Hierarchy and Authority in African-Igbo Communalism

CHAPTER FIVE

African-Igbo Political Structure

CHAPTER SIX

Communitarian Ideals and Modern African-Igbo Communities

CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Introduction

My Intention

I intend to appreciate African-Igbo communalism and not to bury it. In appreciating it, I will present it in a positive light, indicating how it ought to be understood and lived. I will then argue that with its ideal structures, it creates a closer practical and real example of Immanuel Kant's idealistic 'Kingdom of ends'. Although not intending to bury it, I will however reject extreme or exaggerated opinions and wrong notions of it that have also informed abuses of it in practice. It is in this sense and with this intention that I used the word *critique*, that is, in terms of systematic inquiry or deliberation, rather than that of mere fault finding.

Using the African-Igbo communities in today's eastern-Nigeria as a case group, I seek in this work to philosophically deliberate on communal ideals of traditional African communitarian communities, and judging from some of the constitutive elements of the Immanuel Kant's Kingdom of ends formula- which I will argue as having to do with communal nature of moral and political principles and reasoning, I will present African-Igbo communal ideas as values or principles that could, from communitarian perspective, create a kingdom, which could also be seen as a kingdom of ends. I will analyse and accept these communities or kingdoms to be humanistic, and, paradoxically, hierarchically structured, irrespective of my opinion that such communities could offer its members, a sort of Kingdom of ends.

My work will hold that the individual without losing his individuality can still wear a communal garb or be community conscious, and *that a communitarian must always be conscious of mutuality and freedom in the pursuit of individual and community ends.*

Communalism / Communitarianism

Communalism and communitarianism, in the African sense, have been explained in various ways by different writers. Many writers have also used them synonymously. I will, in this work, use the two words interchangeably since both have their roots in the idea of a community. Both concepts seem to emphasize, in a certain sense and to various degrees, the normative idea that duties to the community have a sort of priority over the rights of the individual. In another formulation, both concepts place the definition of the individual within the context of the community, or in terms of relatedness.

Communitarianism emphasizes the connection between the individual and the community, and is understood to do with communicative interactions among a community of people who live together as a group or live in different places but have common roots and

share a set of moral, social and political values and principles. *Communitarian philosophy* is based upon the belief that a person's social identity and personality are largely moulded by community relationships[1], and so defines individuals in terms of relationships within the community. Daniel Bell summarized the major claims that could be identified with communitarianism in three sorts: "methodological claims about the importance of tradition and social context for moral and political reasoning, ontological or metaphysical claims about the social nature of the self, and normative claims about the value of community."[2] In this work, communalism is understood along the line of the above detailed explanation of communitarianism.

That *'it takes a village to raise a child'*, or that '*an individual does not alone raise a child*' is a popular saying among the Africans. This suggests that an African child is normally raised in the context of certain communal values, principles or way of life in the African communities or villages, and with the general support of other grown-ups or elders. The non-African cultures will reject this ideology. They will prefer to say, '*it takes responsible parents to raise a child', or even, 'it takes a child to decide to grow up'*. Here, the idea of parent is the direct father and mother of the child, any other person may not presume to play a parental role as far as the child is concern. To presume to do so, might earn such a person untold discomfort. There are cases where some parents take it that the child has the right to decide what to do, how and when to do it. In the African-Igbo tradition, a child is considered as a son or daughter, not only of the nuclear family, but also of the community, and therefore the community plays vital role in raising a child. It could sometimes be the case that the direct parents of a child are dead, or have lost the moral integrity to correct and properly raise their child, especially in the aspects of ethics and morals. In such cases, the child has others, especially in the extended family circles, to look up to for parental roles. This is one of the essential aspects of traditional African-Igbo communalism that needs to survive in today's Africa. It reflects African senses of community and brotherhood. One can say that Africans have a communal or communitarian (as some choose to call it) idea of raising a child. In respect of this, the cooperation of, and understanding by parents is needed.

---

[1]   "Communitarianism" Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communitarianism (The writer is not indicated)

[2]   Bell, Daniel. "Communitarianism". Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
          https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/communitarianism/

The African-Igbo

It is true that I will be discussing what applies to a higher percentage of the African society, a sort of specification is deemed necessary for the fact that generalizations about traditional Africa can be misleading mostly because of major differences that exist in the African continent, and because of the distances of time and space that are involved. The African-Igbo is a tribe in the present day Nigeria. Nigeria as a country was created by the British colonial masters in 1914 when the British protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated as one political entity for easy administration. Prior to the amalgamation and her independence in 1960, there were well-established kingdoms and organized independent communities in different parts of today's Nigeria. As an ethnic group, the Igbo occupy the south-eastern part of the Country as one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, with many other minor ones. Their socio-political activities take place at the family unit, kindred, and village/town levels. In the precolonial era, they have no supreme rulers or kings except in one or two communities, but a socio-political structure that is basically communal was in place. This part of Africa constitutes the hub of my working information, and I will be referring to the people as 'the Igbos', 'Igbo', or 'African-Igbo'. Since my treatment of communalism has African-Igbo of eastern Nigeria as reference point, one must not expect the treatment to present ideas that are necessarily true of all African cultures and traditions.

The European contact with Africa informed the categorization in African history, into pre-modern, modern, and contemporary Africa. Hence, the talk about the *pre-modern* Igbo or *traditional* Igbo (in the strict sense) would refer to the Igbo people before their contact with the Europeans through transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, and Christianity, that is, contact with the western culture. The use of the *modern* Igbo would then be referring to the Igbo after this contact. This would also include the contemporary era. This period refers much to the time of Nigeria's political independence till the time of this project. Very important is this clarification. It helps in properly situating of ideas, conceptions, and worldviews being discussed. My use of 'traditionally' or 'traditional (African) Igbo' refers mainly to the Igbo before this European contact. In its modern or contemporary context, 'traditionally African (Igbo)' would be referring to the Igbo in view of much of those traditions and customs that survived the influence of the said contact, and therefore obtain in today's life situations.

How Philosophical is this work?

Even when the study has a group as a case study, I do not intend presenting a mere sociological and anthropological description of this group. More than that, my work is an effort also to philosophically analyse and articulate its communal ideologies and thought

patterns in a way that makes them knowledgeable, and also to provide what might be seen to be a normative ideal or conceptualization of how thoughts, values and practices in traditional African-Igbo communitarian order ought to be viewed. That is, mine is an effort in presenting the ideal with which communitarian Igbo society has to be assessed, and which qualifies my calling it, when established on the structures made possible by its ideals, a kingdom of ends. In this task, my working material will be some features and facts about African-Igbo cultural traditions, values, proverbs, beliefs and narratives. This makes my work partly axiological. The philosophical analysis or implications drawn from the cultural values being analysed may however attract dissenting voices from other commentators and writers on African cultural traditions and ways of life. The debate might centre on whether these issues concern philosophy at all, or whether communalism is a philosophical theme as to attract the attention of philosophers.

All the above do concern philosophy, and therefore should also attract the attention of Philosophers. The Athenian Moral Philosopher, Socrates, had long cautioned "man know thyself". Philosophy is a love of wisdom or knowledge, beginning with the knowledge of oneself which includes one's way of life and environment. I came in contact with a working group in Germany known as *Arbeitskreis Europa – Politisches Projekt und kulturelle Tradition.* The group is headed currently, as at the time of this research work, by the renowned Philosophers- Prof. Dr. Dr. Otfried Höffe of the University of Tübingen and Prof. Dr. Andreas Kablitz of the University of Köln (Cologne), all in Germany. The group has as its target, the political and cultural tradition of the entire Europe. It gears towards an analysis of the phenomenon of Europe in its entire width. These Philosophers understand Europe as having an identity in areas of economy, society and politics, as well as cultural values, science, and philosophy. Their special concern is on the peculiarities that distinguish Europe, in terms of her essential cultural and political values that came to be in the course of European tradition. They realise that without these common values, the political Union of Europe (politische Zusammenschluss Europas) would not have been. And their worry is that without a continuous (and philosophical) reaffirmation of these common values, the future of Europe is at risk.[3] And so, they throw in their philosophical weight in the form of academic projects, aim at revaluations and rejuvenation, conferences and symposia, to see to it that these common values continue to inform Europe. Their philosophical concern on cultural values

---

[3] This is my personal translation of the aims and objectives of this group gotten from the flyer for an open Symposium "Philosophie in Europa", organised in University of Tübingen Germany, by the 'Arbeitskreis' group, 12th to 13th May, 20016. The original text in the flyer is in German language.

and political ideologies support my belief that issues of cultural values, principles and tradition are philosophically and systematically deliberated.

Along the same thought, many African Philosophers have engaged themselves arguing for the existence of African philosophy, including the manner of its existence. Common in approaching this debate is a metaphilosophical view about the nature of philosophy and especially of African philosophy. Proponents argue that philosophy involves also efforts at systematizing and reaffirming pre-philosophical ideas, values, concepts, and ways of life of humans, presenting them as coherent narratives. Consequently, African cultural values, ideas, beliefs, proverbs, and artefacts provide raw materials for a written, formal, and systematic philosophy. This is what the Ghanaian born Philosopher Kwasi Wiredu meant when he said: "It is a function, indeed a duty, of philosophy in any society to examine the intellectual foundations of its culture. For any such examination to be of any real use, it should take the form of reasoned criticism and, where possible, reconstruction."[4] Some other Philosophers approach the issue of the nature and existence of philosophical thought in African cultures and tradition in a comparative way. By this method, they do a comparison between the sense by which one can rightly talk of common themes in Western philosophy, for example, British empiricism, German Idealism, American pragmatism, etc., and the sense in which one can talk about common themes in the African culture, like African communalism.

I will not involve, in this project, the arguments in this debate. I will simply accept that this stance about philosophy is in order, and so present African communalism as a philosophical theme that has features of humanism, (epistemic and moral) authoritarianism, and politics. Although there is presently a good number of written works by contemporary professional African Philosophers, the observation of Kwasi Wiredu that "the African philosopher has no choice but to conduct his philosophical inquiries in relation to the philosophical writings of other peoples, for his ancestors left him no heritage of philosophical writings"[5] still obtains in certain sense, like when professional African philosophers try to argue for autochthonous African philosophical themes in a comparative relation to western philosophical themes, as noted above. I will, in this sense, make a critique of some of the autochthonous features of African-Igbo communitarian order in a comparative relation to the elements of the Kingdom of ends idealised by Immanuel Kant.

---

[4]   Wiredu K., (1980): Philosophy and an African Culture. p. 20. (For such metaphilosophical views, see Nicholas Rescher, Philosophical reasoning: A Study in the methodology of philosophizing, Oxford: Blackwell publishers, 2001; A.G.A. Bello, "Some Methodological Controversies in African Philosophy." In *A Companion to African Philosophy* (edt. by Kwasi Wiredu) Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, pp. 263-273.)

[5]   Wiredu K., (1980): Philosophy and an African Culture. p. 48.

I understand a Kingdom of ends to be a formal ethical community under common moral rules, but also a community where the humanity and the rational nature of individuals are respected. The Kingdom of ends formula also emphasises the communal nature of moral principles. I argued that this conception suits an African-Igbo community where the communitarian life of the members is being guided by its ideals. The formula emphasis on the communal nature of moral principle presupposes the questions, '*what ought we to do*', '*how ought we to behave*'. Such normative thinking or question is purely constitutive of African communalism. I will not support the conception that considers the question '*what I ought to do*' as a non-existent question in African communalism and as such, imply the absence of any form of autonomy of the individual. This existence of 'what I ought to do' is rather based on or underpinned by the broader question of 'what ought we to do'. This informs also the popular expression used to describe African communalism: "I am because we are". My stand would be that individual rational and autonomous reasoning cannot be denied of Africans because of the practice of communalism as some critics and writers suppose. My treatment of autonomy within the context of communalism will support this submission.

Relevance of the work

The work will make a communitarian way of life more attractive to the Igbos than before irrespective of what 'western' modernism is offering. The existence of abuses in the practice of communalism does not imply that there are no ideals. My belief is that a continuous reaffirmation of its ideals, as this work just did, will help towards perfecting its practice. Such ideals will comb the level of the tendency towards abuse, and therefore guarantee a certain level of improvement especially in securing individual rights within the conception of the communal good and interest. It has been argued by defenders of African communalism, for instance Kwasi Wiredu, that some of those individual rights, especially the basic human rights and needs, as understood in the African context, are already implied in the many traditional communitarian thought systems and practices. This implies that the rejection of liberal individualism by African communitarians is not a rejection of the value of individuality, rather, it is an effort to present an attractive and more appealing way of approaching it in the human community. This work helps in doing so.

The Structure of the work

In *chapter one*, I will be discussing Kant's principle that one ought always to act in accordance with the maxims of a universally legislative member for a merely possible kingdom of ends. That is, one ought to conform to the laws of a possible kingdom of ends

which he or she is a co-legislator. In believing that being capable of rational willing or deliberation is essential in such a kingdom, I will, in the course of deliberations on a kingdom of ends, be discussing briefly the two basic laws of rational willing according to Immanuel Kant: Hypothetical and Categorical imperatives, albeit, concentrating on the latter. I will further discuss possible demands in a kingdom of ends. This implies a look at some of its "Construction materials". We will realise that the Kingdom of ends is not only about autonomy and the emphasis on rights. Kingdom of ends demands more than this. With its attractive construction material, I will consider the type of moral legislation that is expected from such a kingdom. And finally, this chapter will expose some difficulties or worries that, according to some commentators, could be faced in adopting the Kingdom of ends Ideal as a heuristic for practical moral living. The chapters that follow will deliberate on African communalism, and will consider how African communitarian ideal will battle some of these worries in its efforts to establish Kingdom of ends.

In *chapter two*, I will discuss the communitarian nature of the relationship between the community and the individuals as understood in the African context. This will bring me discussing also the normative conception of person and personhood, which for the African is achievable within the community. This type of personhood has much to do with moral and social responsibilities of the individual. The dictates of the common rule as formulated in terms of "what we ought to do" are to help in leading individuals towards meaningful lives, self-realization and identity. Self-realization connotes already autonomy. I will discuss further the degree to which the individual enjoys this autonomy.

Chapter three is a follow up of chapter two, and will dwell on humanistic and naturalistic nature of African communalism. Humanism and naturalism used in the sense that ethical principles are addressed in a special way to the social and natural conditions of human beings. Two of the construction materials of a kingdom of ends, as discussed in chapter one, are responsibility and reciprocity. Here also, communitarian concept of life is acquired, in part, within a community through the ideas of responsibility and reciprocity. It involves having a sense of duty, so that the individual meets up with responsibilities or obligations as defined under the common rule of the community. This leads to the communal view of morality- *a view that exposes more the fact that morality has to do with a possession of a good will*. And the African-Igbo expect that good will would (if everything works out well), affect positively the practical life of humans, and makes relationships in the society more humane, so that the welfare or well-being of an individual is the concern of other moral agents.

Chapter four will treat hierarchy and authority in African-Igbo communalism. I will point out the bases and various forms of hierarchies that exist in African-Igbo context. In all, these hierarchies are mainly cultural and status-based. I will then discuss the importance of hierarchy with emphasis on its use in social harmony, governance, and for informal moral education. Premised on the kingdom of ends principles and ideals of communitarianism, I will term as an aberration, the trend (individually or collectively) towards irrational authoritarian power structure or hierarchy. And as a guide to hierarchy, I will suggest some ethics of hierarchy and authority, and argue that the ideal Igbo communitarian hierarchical structure has moral and rational basis: a sort of authoritarian structure which seeks to build communities with the help of principles of epistemic deference and respect for humanity, dialogue, and truly shared African values. Consequently, my concept of the principle of hierarchy is one that presents a structure that allows a certain setting of hierarchy that separates but at the same time provides some sort of common and equal grounds for all members. Such equal grounds make mutual corrections possible, irrespective of the separation on the basis of status hierarchy.

In spite of variations and diversities that exist in traditional Africa regarding institutions of governance, there are a number of important common elements and features. The institutions of governance are basically classified by writers under two major types: (1) A centralized political system with more emphasis on the opinion of a central body with a Head-chief or a King at the top; and (2) A decentralized political system with its emphasis on consensus opinion. This second type obtains among the African-Igbo. Thomas E. Hill Jr. construed the Kingdom of ends formula as a legislative perspective for deliberating about rule.[6] With such a conception, I will discuss in my *chapter five*, the political dimension of the African-Igbo communalism, and expose how its perspectives on moral personhood constitute the basis for its political deliberations, legislations, and structures as a whole. The African-Igbo have relevant convictions not only about what is right to do (morally or otherwise) but also about how they should decide what is right to do. On how to decide what is right to do, on the socio-political scene, they take recourse to rational deliberation or willing that is geared towards arriving at a consensus opinion. Hence, consensus decision-making will constitute a major discussion in this chapter.

Chapter six will evaluate the contemporary situation in the African-Igbo society with much attention to issues that sabotage communitarian ideals. That is to say, I will be practical

[6]   Hill, Thomas E., Jr. (1992): "A Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules." In *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 6, Ethics, pp. 285-304

in exposing and criticising abnormalities that have crept into the modern and contemporary African-Igbo society, either in the name of practising communalism or as a matter of adopting individualistic tendency that mixed up wrongly with communitarian order, thereby creating a situation of imbalance in principles and values, and invariably affecting the idea of justice, and the application of relevant convictions about what is right to do and about how to decide what ought to be done. The result is a confused kingdom, caught in between conflicting values.

In chapter seven, I will make concluding reflections on the whole work and then make some recommendations with the view of creating a kingdom of ends in the African-Igbo communitarian context.

CHAPTER ONE

A KINGDOM OF ENDS IN KANT'S VIEW

1.0 **Introduction**

Andrew Arno observed that "[i]f the broad problem in political anthropology is to understand the origin and variety of inequality, that in legal anthropology is to understand the maintenance of inequality."[7] I think, the broad problem of moral anthropology or moral philosophy should neither be the origin and variety of inequality nor how to maintain it, rather it is supposed to be a *positive worry* of how to maintain equality among human beings and thereby create a society or a kingdom that promotes mutual cooperation and the general good of every human being, recognising them not only as *means* but '*ends in themselves*'. This was the preoccupation of Kant in his categorical imperatives, precisely in his treatment of 'humanity as an end in itself' and autonomy, with 'kingdom of ends' as its variant. Such was the preoccupation, also, of many moral philosophers. It is part of my preoccupation in this work.

The notion of a Kingdom of ends is part of Immanuel Kant's effort in explaining his categorical imperative. Unlike his other formulations, this formulation has only recently drawn the interest of some philosophers in their effort to present a social aspect of Kant's moral teaching.[8] Just like other moral theories, Kant's kingdom of ends could be further developed in terms of additions and subtractions. It could also be seen as a moral project in progress and not just as a finished product. My main concern in this chapter is to reflect on some ideas around this Kant's theory, and see how ideals of Igbo communalism could be associated with it.

In discussing the Kingdom of ends, among other things, I will present Kant's previous formulas of the categorical imperative, and some of his famous ideas, like 'good will' and 'duty' as constituents of the building materials of Kant's kingdom of ends.[9] These elements will be useful in my critique of African-Igbo communalism. I will then discuss what Thomas E. Hill Jr. observed to be an ideal of moral legislation that results in a certain conception of the kingdom of ends, including some problems he raised when "we try to use the idealized

---

[7]   Arno, A. (1985): "Structural communication and control communication: an interactionist perspective on legal and customary procedures for conflict management". In *Journal of American Anthropologist*, 87, pp. 40-55 at p. 40

[8]   See Hill, Thomas E., (1992): Dignity and Practical Reason in Kant's Moral Theory, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

[9]   For further reading on this, see Hill Thomas E., Jr. (1992) Ibid

Kantian perspective as a heuristic for thinking about real world issues."[10] Some of these problems, as I will further argue in the later part of my work, lose relevant weight, but not completely eradicated, when confronted from the view point of African traditional world-view and Philosophy, as exemplified in the context of African-Igbo communalism. The outcome will be suggested as a recipe for the contemporary African-Igbo society in her effort to build truly moral and humane societies that worth the name 'kingdom of ends'.

1.1 **"Ends" of kingdom of ends**

I have been severally confronted with the demand to explain what is meant by 'ends'. One of the frequently used terminologies in Kant's moral philosophy is (*Zweck und Mittel*) 'ends' and 'means'- "... to use humanity not merely as a *means* (*Mittel*) but at the same time also as an *end* in itself' (*selbst Zwecke oder Zweck an sich*). Kant's other major usage of the word is the concept of Kingdom of ends. I take it that treating [or not treating] people as a mere means is easier to grasp than the demand of treating them as ends. This is because of what the word 'end' could stand for in English usage. It could even be understood as where a thing stops, as in 'the end of a TV program' or 'the end of a road'. Therefore, it is a big presumption to suppose that an English reader of this work will have a clear notion of what 'ends' as a translation of 'zwecke', and as used by Kant, really means. Equally, words like 'purposes', 'goals', 'aims', and 'ends' are rough synonyms in spoken English. But could any of them stand in place of "ends" as a translation of 'zwecke' used by Kant in his formula of Humanity and that of Kingdom of ends?

How do we understand 'ends' in "Kingdom of Ends" and "Humanity as ends in itself"? Johnson Robert observed that one can make up at least three senses from the idea of end, two positive senses and a negative sense. According to him, "[a]n end in the first positive sense is a thing we will to produce or bring about in the world. For instance, if losing weight is my end, then losing weight is something I aim to produce. An end in this sense guides my actions in that once I will to produce something, I then deliberate about means of producing it."[11] This type of end is synonymous with aim or goal, and operates with ends/means law of rational willing, with the "ought" statement: Whoever wants an end ought to want the means. This is a Hypothetical imperative.

---

[10]   Hill Thomas E., Jr. (1992) Ibid, p. 287

[11]   Johnson, Robert, "Kant's Moral Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/kant-moral/>.)

Being Hypothetical, Kant would not be referring to such ends either in his formula of kingdom of ends or that of humanity as an end in itself. Such a positive sense refers to contingent or subjective ends. Johnson agrees with this. According to him, even though this type of the end "lays down a law" for me, Kant would not be stating that humanity is an end in this first positive sense of the word. Were it to be, he supposes, humanity as an end will just be an aim [understood as 'purpose' or target] of a particular individual agent, which puts it in the realm of hypothetical rather than categorical imperative.[12]

Johnson's second sense of the word is an end in the negative sense, which according to him also lays down a law for me as well, and so guides action, but in a different way. He borrowed from Christine Korsgaard who offers self-preservation as an example of an end in a negative sense: "We do not try to produce our self-preservation. Rather, the end of self-preservation prevents us from engaging in certain kinds of activities, for instance, picking fights with mobsters, and so on. That is, as an end, it is something I do not act *against* in pursuing my positive ends, rather than something I produce."[13] This interpretation follows from what Kant himself said of Humanity: "Rational nature discriminates itself from the rest in that it sets itself an end. …the end here has to be thought of not as an end to be effected *but as a self-sufficient* end, hence only negatively, i.e., never to be acted against…"[14]

Humanity or rational nature is explainable as an end in this negative sense. Just as with self- preservation, such ends *limit* what I may do in pursuit of my other ends. A caveat, as observed by Johnson, is that self-preservation is a *subjective* end, humanity is an *objective* end. It is an *objective* end, because humanity is "an end that every rational being must have insofar as it is rational. Hence, it limits what I am *morally permitted* to do when I pursue my positive *and* subjective negative ends."[15]

Johnson lastly noted that humanity is also explainable as an end in a positive sense, but not as something to be produced by our actions, because humanity exist already in persons or in human beings, rather, as something that could be realized, cultivated or furthered by our actions, like in the case of perfecting one's humanity by developing one's talents.[16]

---

[12]   Johnson, Robert, (2014): "Kant's Moral Philosophy", Ibid
[13]   Johnson, Robert, (2014): "Kant's Moral Philosophy", Ibid
[14]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:437
[15]   Johnson, Robert, (2014): "Kant's Moral Philosophy", Ibid (A 'subjective end' in the thought of Kant, would be referring to what an individual agent takes to be an object of value and adopts it as a goal while an 'objective end' is one whose value does not depend upon being adopted or pursued by particular individual agents (Ak 4:428). So only an objective end qualifies as an end in the sense humanity is said to be.)
[16]   Johnson, Robert, (2014): "Kant's Moral Philosophy", Ibid

Some philosophers think there could not be any positive way of interpreting Kant's usage of the word "ends". This understanding refers to the above citation from Kant (Ak 4:437) that the end must here be conceived, not as an end to be produced, but as a self-existent end. It must therefore be conceived only negatively, that is, as an end against which we should never act. H. J. Paton, for example, interprets this to mean that "[a]n objective and absolute end could not be a product of our will; for no mere product of our will can have absolute value. An end in itself must therefore be a self-existent end, not something to be produced by us."[17] For such self-existent ends, we are left with nothing than a negative approach of refraining from jeopardising or destroying their existence, Paton would suggest. Nonetheless, humanity is not the product of our will, but could be also positively enhanced. Kant admitted the necessity of positive duties to enhance and promote the conditions of rational willing as well as negative duties not to destroy instances of rational nature.

From the foregoing discussions, the 'ends' of the kingdom of ends refers to humanity or rational beings, that is, humans themselves as objective ends that need to be preserved, promoted, or enhanced, and that limits the pursuit of other subjective ends or goals. As Kant puts it, "A rational being, as an end by its nature and hence as an end in itself, must in every maxim serve as a limiting condition of all merely relative and arbitrary ends."[18] So, the intuitive idea behind this formula of kingdom of ends is that "our fundamental moral obligation is to act only on principles which could earn acceptance by a community of fully rational agents each of whom have an equal share in legislating these principles for their community."[19] This implies that human beings in this community are not expected to behave as abstract individuals, but always in a mutual recognition of the dignity and worth of others, in respect of objectively legislated common rules. Let me give the formula a closer attention.

1.2 The Formula of Kingdom of Ends (FKE):

''Act in accordance with the maxims of a universally legislative member for a merely possible kingdom of ends.''[20]

Kant's notion of a "Kingdom of Ends" is a "systematic union of different rational beings under common laws".[21] In a detailed explanation, he said:

> By a kingdom I understand the union of different rational beings in a system of common laws. … if we abstract from the personal differences of rational beings, and

---

[17]   Paton H. J. (1947): The Categorical Imperative: A Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy, p. 168
[18]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:436
[19]   Johnson, Robert, (2014): "Kant's Moral Philosophy", Ibid
[20]   Kant, Ibid. 4:439; cf. 4:433, 437, 438
[21]   Kant, Ibid. 4:433

likewise from all content of their private ends, we shall be able to conceive all ends combined in a systematic whole (including both rational beings as ends in themselves, and also the special ends which each may propose to himself), that is to say, we can conceive a kingdom of ends. … For all rational beings come under the law that each of them must treat itself and all others never merely as means, but in every case at the same time as ends in themselves. Hence results a systematic union of rational beings by common objective laws, i.e., a kingdom which may be called a kingdom of ends, since what these laws have in view is just the relation of these beings to one another as ends and means.[22]

Guyer interprets this passage as making several claims. One of the claims is that „it is only if one sees both oneself and all others who may be affected by one's actions as having not only personal ends but also both the capacity for and interest in universal legislation that one can be sure that a systematic connection of ends is always possible, that is, that for any set of circumstances there is indeed some universalizable maxim that can be adopted by oneself and others."[23] This implies that a kingdom of ends, as conceived by Kant, will be difficult to realize if rational agents, in their actions, do not relate to one another as ends and means. This is true because the maxims of their actions would fail then the test of universality, and therefore cannot be adopted by the other agents. Thus, the necessity of the imperative:

> "act in accordance with the maxims of a member giving
> universal laws for a merely possible kingdom of ends"[24]

Kant's idea of a kingdom of ends presents a community of rational beings in which the ends of every human being are respected and none is in conflict with the other, because the form of the ends is objective and not subjective. Such a kingdom would present certainly a big and high demand in its constitutions. As the last of the various formulations of the categorical imperative, the kingdom of ends is seen as combining the other previous formulations.

In what follows, I will try to see how it combines the previous formulations plus other basic elements in Kant's moral teaching.

1.2.1 "Construction materials" of a Kingdom of ends.

To examine the construction of such a kingdom, I will borrow in part, a structure established by Thomas E. Hill jr.[25] Along the line of his thought, I will indicate how the elements, or

---

[22]   Kant, Ibid. 4:433
[23]   Guyer, Paul (1995): "The Possibility of the Categorical Imperative" pp. 383-384
[24]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:439

construction materials, of the kingdom of ends are drawn from the previous formulas of the categorical imperative, and fortified by Kant's popular ideas of a 'good will', 'duty', and responsibility. "These are the building blocks for a reconstruction of the idea that we "legislate" moral rules in a kingdom of ends."[26]

Kant's kingdom of ends has in fact been seen to be a structure resulting from the combination of his previous formulas of the categorical imperative and some popular ideas in his practical philosophy. Johnson Robert comments that this formula "combines the others in that (i) it requires that we conform our actions to the maxims of a legislator of laws (ii) that this lawgiver lays down universal laws, binding all rational wills including our own, and (iii) that those laws are of 'a merely possible kingdom' each of whose members equally possesses this status as legislator of universal laws, and hence must be treated always as an end in itself."[27] Robert links this formula first to Autonomy- a law giver, second to formula of universal law, and lastly, he relates it to Humanity as ends in itself. Let us consider necessary details according to Kant's order in presenting the formulas.

1.2.1.1 Previous formulas of the Categorical Imperative

1.2.1.1a *The formula of Universal law*

The Formula of Universal Law (FUL): "Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law"[28]

This is Kant's first attempt to move a proposed maxim of operation from just being a subjective principle to the status of an objective principle of volition. That is, the formula demands the universality of subjective maxims. By universality is meant the requirement that my reason-giving principles be ones that people who are in the same circumstances as I am have the same reasons.

J. B. Schneewind wrote: "Because the richer formulations of the categorical imperative can take us no further than the formula requiring us to test our maxims by asking if they could be universal laws, we must ask how well that principle can serve to show us the way through all of our relations with one another."[29] I suppose, one of the ways this principle serves to

---

[25]   For this section I am highly indebted to Thomas E. Hill, Jr. for the inspiration I got from his essay: "A Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules" Philosophical Perspectives, Vol. 6, Ethics, pp. 285-304

[26]   Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (1992): "A Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules" p.288

[27]   Johnson, Robert, "Kant's Moral Philosophy", Ibid

[28]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:421; cf. G 4:402

[29]   Schneewind, J. B. (1992): "Autonomy, obligation, and virtue: An overview of Kant's moral Philosophy" in The *Cambridge Companion to Kant* (edt.by Paul Guyer), p.322.

show a conscientious agent the way through all his relations with one another is for him to realise that in applying this principle, he is at the same time accepting a "form" of norms that can obtain in interpersonal relationships, by taking a stand on what moral agents, conscious of one another, may have moral reasons to do. Such a thought is already laying blocks for a possible kingdom of ends. This is for the fact that the realm of operations here has left behind considerations on mere effectiveness of policies toward desired goals of an individual moral agent as far as other individuals are concerned. That is, the goal towards having a kingdom where human beings live in conscious relations and mutual recognition. A sort of being community conscious.

This finds support in Kant's position that while FUL specifies the "form" of morally appropriate maxims, "which consists in their universality"; humanity as ends in themselves (FHE) specifies their "matter-that is, an end" to be achieved through the adoption of moral maxims; and only kingdom of ends (FKE) offers "a complete determination of all maxims" through the demand 'that all maxims ought to harmonize from one's own legislation into a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature'."[30] Hence, Kant intended *ab initio* that FUL has to culminate into the idea of a kingdom of ends. The moral agent, by accepting a "form" of morally appropriate maxims, and by taking a stand on what other moral agents, in their freedom, may have reasons to do, comes up to a level of willing common or general rules of life. This second stage, I think, is what makes kingdom of ends possible. FUL therefore, in this sense, is seen as one of the construction materials for a possible kingdom of ends.

1.2.1.1b *Humanity as an end in itself*

The Formula of Humanity as End in Itself (FH): ''Act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means''[31]

Practical or moral law can be explained as "what I ought to do" in relation to myself and/or other human beings. Kant introduces FH by stating, "Now I say: man and in general every rational being exists as end in itself."[32]

Hence, this formula is therefore Kant's effort to bring out a sense of an end that limits the degree to which all other ends can be adopted or pursued. To have humanity in your own person as well as in the person of every other always as your end demands "that each moral

---

30   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:436
31   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:429; cf. G 4:436
32   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:427

agent strive to preserve and promote rational nature in all persons or all rational agents affected by his actions, not just in himself."[33] This preservation and promotion is achieved both by avoiding what will harm the existence of rational beings in general and with it, the exercise of rational agency,[34] and by positive actions by way of promoting the development of rational nature in rational beings, that is, contributing in advancing the development of rational being's capacity to act rationally.[35] This includes the preservation and promotion of freedom.

Understanding between rational beings living in a given society is an expected practical effect of the effort towards the preservation and promotion of freedom, and that of respect for human dignity. This understanding culminates in having a kingdom whose requirement of being united by a common law presupposes the possibility of all affected agents consenting to what is objectively reasonable for the society. The observation of Thomas E. Hill Jr. is again very *ad rem* for our project, which makes it worth citing at length. He expressed the opinion that the formula of humanity as an end in itself is

> commonly taken to be a specific action guide that one can apply case by case without raising questions about the network of rules and social relations within which the initial problem arises. This approach leads too easily to conflicts of duty and simplistic moral judgments. What is needed to respect the dignity of one person often seems contrary to the dignity of another. To avoid moral paralysis it is necessary to try to adjudicate such problems at a higher level of deliberation, reflecting on what general rules and policies best reflect the dignity of all. …Rather than trying to determine in isolation whether Mary is now treating John as an end, we can try to work out what general moral rules would we reasonably urge for adoption if we had, constraining and shaping our other concerns, an overriding commitment to human dignity. Hard cases would still need to be addressed, but rather than considering them individually we would think about what broad policies are relevant and how, if at all, we can specify legitimate exception[36]

In the process of going through all the rigors of avoiding determining cases in isolation, a common rule on dealing with a community of "ends" would be collectively legislated, thereby making possible the conditions necessary for a kingdom of ends- a union of different rational

---

[33]   Guyer, Paul (1995), Ibid p. 378
[34]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:429-430
[35]   Kant, Metaphysis of Morals AK. 6:427
[36]   Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (1992): "A Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules" p.297-298

beings in a system of common laws.[37] We can now say that FHE serves as a construction material for creating a possible kingdom of ends.

1.2.1.1c *Autonomy*

Formula of Autonomy (FA) is the "idea of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal law"[38]

Autonomy of the will is "the property of the will through which it is a law to itself (independently of all properties of the objects of volition). The principle of autonomy is thus: 'Not to choose otherwise than so that the maxims of one's choice are at the same time comprehended with it in the same volition as universal law.'"[39] By this, Kant is saying that autonomous agents choose principles of action or maxims that are not conditional on anything external to the will of the agent. To do this, according to him, is heteronomy.[40] Kant was direct when he noted that the formula of Autonomy (FA) leads to that *of a kingdom of ends.*[41]

Some writers talk about autonomy with so much rigidity as if human beings have to live as abstract individuals in the exercise of their autonomy. But the fact that human beings live in a society makes human nature such that seeks harmonization and socialization. It is not therefore a contingent matter that individuals interact with one another to varied extents and degrees. For this fact, T. E. Hill Jr. argues that the formula of autonomy "obviously cannot function as a self-standing moral decision procedure. It (cannot) replace factual inquiries, and moral dialogue. …The ideal of moral agents as jointly legislating moral laws, I suggested, urges us to curb our moral self-complacency by consulting others, listening to divergent views, and submitting our own convictions to criticism….We should not only deliberate appropriately but also seek dialogue with other reasonable moral agents, especially those whose lives we will most affect."[42]

Outside the emphasis that rational beings enjoy autonomy, the issue of interaction among autonomous agents was not addressed by FA, or at least not obviously implied. In the face of this lack, it must then be asked how a multitude of agents can work harmoniously in spite of whatever individual interests they have. Harmonious and mutual living demands the formulation of some maxims of action acceptable to all. Such maxims make possible "the

---

[37]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:433
[38]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:431-432
[39]   Kant, Ibid. 4:440
[40]   Kant, Ibid. 4:441
[41]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:433
[42]   Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (1992), Ibid. 294-295

systematic combination of different rational beings through common laws," a "whole of all ends … as well as of the individual ends that each may set for himself," which requires abstraction "from all personal differences of rational beings as well as all content of their private ends."[43] Therefore, to stop at FA will create problems because it leaves the issue of interaction among autonomous agents unattended. The formula has to spill over to FKE, and in fact, it is necessary for an understanding of how FKE operates. It has to secure the dignity of the individual agents in a multitude of agents, and at the same time be the principle to premise the proposition that multitude of agents can actually formulate commonly acceptable maxims of actions.

The concept of oneself as a moral agent who act not merely in compliance with common maxims or laws, but one who is a legislator and therefore the source of these maxims or laws, characterizes the interest in complying with the common laws operative in kingdom of ends. Such interest is so necessary, and has to be so strong as to compete with individual interests. Equally, the concept of oneself as a "co-legislator" of the common rules of a kingdom characterizes the unique dignity one has as a rational being. This dignity motivates one to be an active member of the community.

On the same parlance, the conception of other rational beings as "co-legislators" and those to be affected also by one's action as a universal legislator, is a necessary demand as a member of a kingdom of ends. For it is with the thought or the conviction that those being affected by one's maxims of actions are autonomous moral agents, and thus capable of universal legislation, and therefore, are not supposed to be subjects of externally imposed maxims, that makes it reasonable to suppose that a manifold of agents can be under a common law in spite of their diverse individual interests. Thus FA is a necessary material for the construction of a kingdom of ends.

1.2.1.2 **The Good Will**

1.2.2.2a *Understanding Kant's notion of "the good will".*

In the very first Section of the groundwork, Kant began by stating that: "There is nothing it is possible to think of anywhere in the world, or indeed anything at all outside it that can be held to be good without limitation excepting only a good will."[44] According to him, talents of the mind, qualities of temperament, are good and to be wished for; but they can also become

---

[43]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:433
[44]   Kant, Ibid. 4:393

extremely evil and harmful, if the will that is to make use of them, is not good. Also possession of gifts of fortune and all that has to do with entire well-being of an individual can often lead to arrogance, where there is not a good will to correct their influence on the mind. In a nutshell, "the good will appears to constitute the indispensable condition even of the worthiness to be happy."[45] Furthermore, he (Kant) states that the good will is good "not through what it effects or accomplishes, not through its efficacy for attaining any intended end, but only through its willing, i.e., good in itself, and considered for itself, without comparison...."[46]

By saying that the good will is good through its willing is to say that the good will cannot will something bad. It wills only the laws of morality and not those of immorality. To go according to the dictates of the good will might not be a very easy task, but it is an indispensable condition for having other things that fit the qualification of being morally good. In his own contribution, Virgil C. Aldrich admitted that good will may not always 'taste' good (presumably in a short term of its effect), but it can be known to secure for men (in a long term) the goods that do taste good. That is, the things that are ordinarily called "goods", one of their most important conditions being a good will.[47]

One of the simplest explanation of Kant's concept of a good will was presented by Robert Johnson. He holds that the idea of a good will is supposed to match with the common idea of a 'good person', or … 'person of good will'.[48] A person of good will is an idea that describes a conscientious moral agent who is open to be directed by the laws of morality irrespective of other private interests. Such a person is not selfish but rather considers every other thing worthy of pursuing on the very condition that one maintains one's moral goodness or obligations. It is an idea that says that someone really 'intends good', irrespective of any outcome of his action.

There is however the temptation to misunderstand and, therefore, misinterpret Kant's idea of a good will. Some interpret him to be saying that a person of good will is a perfect being. I suspect that David Ross is in such an error for presenting the view : "that which is good without qualification must never unite with anything else to produce bad result."[49] If Ross means that 'that which is good without qualification' cannot will to unite with something else

---

[45]   Kant, Ibid. 4:393
[46]   Kant, Ibid. 4:394
[47]   Virgil, C. Aldrich (1946): "Good-Will, Good Coffee, and Bad Judgment", In *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 43, No. 5, pp. 133-135 at p. 134
[48]   Johnson, Robert, "Kant's Moral Philosophy", Ibid
[49]   David Ross (1954): Kant's Ethical Theory: A Commentary on the Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, p.10

to produce a bad result, then the view is in order. But my suspicion is that he is saying that there can never be a bad result from a person of a good will. This is not the case. Kant himself made the claim that the worth of the good will itself is never diminished by its results or by being combined with bad things. He does not say that everything that intermingles with a good will is good, or that a good will cannot be combined with anything bad.

It could happen that a good will never realise the good it willed "owing to the special disfavour of fortune, or niggardly provision of a stepmother nature."[50] Such interference has no effect on the goodness of the good will itself. In actual fact, the bad result is contrary to the result willed by the good will. Invariably also, the good results of a good will do not add anything to its unconditioned goodness, since it is good without qualification. Therefore, whatever its results might be, the good will "would still shine by itself as something that has its full worth in itself."[51]

1.2.1.2b *Good will as a Construction Material for Kingdom of ends*

Along the thought pattern of Kant, A. E Murphy observed that when we understand ourselves and the things we intend doing, we shall find it hard to deny that the good will is a great good. As he sees it, a good will is a will freely and responsibly directed to the good attainable in a community where "men cooperate freely through their reasonable acknowledgment of mutual responsibilities, as members of 'a kingdom of ends'."[52] By this Murphy noticed that a kingdom of ends presupposed a community whose members are reasonable agents committed to the directives of a good will in carrying out the obligations which they freely and mutually agreed to. It is Kant's view that rational agents should live their lives in freedom. To do this and still have a community or kingdom of ends, a good will is a necessary requirement, otherwise freedom will be abused. Such a requirement will guarantee that moral agents freely commit themselves to do what they judge to be a morally good action even at the cost of forgoing personal interests, the pursuit of which will violate this commitment.

The commitment to the overriding value of a good will, for Kantians, T. E. Hill Jr. says, "is not matter of pursuing any general end of the kinds philosophers have typically urged, such as personal happiness, self-realization, or the general welfare. Nor is it a commitment to the rules of external authorities …. Abstractly, it is a will to "conform to universal law as

---

[50]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:394
[51]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:494
[52]   Murphy, A. E. (1943): The Uses of Reason, p. 117

such." One conceives of something as a "universal law", in Kant's sense, if one sees it as a principle of conduct for everyone that is "practically necessary", a principle the violation of which one could not justify to oneself or others."[53] It would be difficult to have a kingdom of ends without such principle of conduct which a good will commits conscientious moral agents to. Therefore, a good will is a necessary construction material for a possible kingdom of ends.

1.2.1.3 **The Idea of Duty**

If good will is necessary as a construction material for a kingdom of ends, consciousness of duty should be a logical follow-up. The two concepts are so closely related, hence, Kant noticed that a good understanding of the concept of the good will requires a consciousness of the concept of duty. According to him "in order to develop the concept of a good will, to be esteemed in itself and without any further aim, ... we will put before ourselves the concept of duty, which contains that of a good will.[54] He distinguished between actions that are in 'conformity with duty' and those 'done from duty.' Actions that proceed from duty are those done for the sake of duty without any sort of inclination, but those that conform with duty are those done with some inclinations but at the same time seem to proceed from duty.[55]

The above distinction will not be considered necessary in this work since my interest is on duty in general as it relates having a good will. The implication is that, in my opinion, having a good will does not only involve acting from duty. A. W. Wood is of the same opinion. He observed that "the good will does not always act from duty, nor do all acts of the good will have this special moral worth. Even with the best conceivable will, it would clearly be impossible for a human being to act from duty on every occasion."[56] On those occasions that a human being is not acting from duty, but in conformity with duty, he has not given up his good will. Kant would rather admonish anyone in such situation "to strive with all one's might that the thought of duty for its own sake is the sufficient incentive of every action conforming to duty."[57]

This is then only an admonition to strive towards moral perfection. The courage to continue striving and struggling towards this perfection is what Kant referred to as virtue, and it does not imply, according to Kant, that when one lacks virtue, one lacks also a good will:

---

[53]   Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (1992): "A Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules" p.289
[54]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:397
[55]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:397-398
[56]   Wood W. Allen (1999): *Kant's Ethical Thought,* P.27
[57]   Kant, Metaphysics of Morals Ak 6:393

"...weakness in the use of one's understanding coupled with the strength of one's emotion is only a lack of virtue...which can indeed coexist with the best of will."[58] Robert Johnson, as stated above, matched the idea of good will with the common idea of a 'good person'.

Kant made a distinction between the good person and the evil person. The difference according to Kant cannot lie in the incentives that these persons incorporate into their maxims, because both morality and self-love are incentives for us. Rather, it "must lie in their *subordination*," i.e., which of the two incentives one makes the condition of the other.[59] Both the good and evil person adopt into their maxims the moral law as well as other incentives. The difference, however, is that the good person subordinates the other incentives to the moral law, while the evil person does the very opposite. The good man will try to pursue personal incentives on the condition that it is morally permissible to do so. But for the bad person, adherence to morality's requirements could only be considered when they do not inhibit the pursuit of other incentives.

For the kingdom of ends to be conceivable, at least, good persons who are willing to subordinate other incentives to the moral law are required. These are individuals who acknowledge that they have moral duties as people in possession of a good will. The implication of such acknowledgment or sort of reasoning is an acceptance also that there are general principles of conduct- moral principles, which hold for every rational agent, and which are not based on individual persons' interests rather model every other human action or ends. This sort of reasoning yields a sense of duty without which a kingdom of ends cannot stand. The idea of duty is therefore one of the necessary construction materials for a possible kingdom of ends.

1.2.1.4 **Responsibility and Reciprocity**

The concept of responsibility has received much diversified explanations. For this section, I am much concerned with responsibility as moral competence. This type of responsibility is the other side of a sense of duty. Here responsibility refers to 'sense of having a duty' or a role to play as well as the follow-up implications. It is also tied up closely to the ideas of inescapable *obligation* and that of *conscientiousness*. That is, the duty involved is what the agent *ought to* be conscious of. In the event of a lack of this conscientiousness, the agent is said to be very irresponsible. But a conscientious agent, according to Haydon, "[is] concerned

---

[58]   Kant, Metaphysics of Morals Ak 6:408
[59]   Kant, Immanuel (1998): Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: And Other Writings, (eds. Allen Wood & George di Giovanni) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Religion 6:36-37)

about doing what he ought to do (and not doing what he ought not to do), is generally careful to consider what it is that he ought to do, and careful to see that he does it."[60] This type of attitude presupposes also moral maturity. Zimmerman had more on this:

> Sometimes individuals are said to be responsible persons (period), rather than responsible for something. This view attributes to them a measure of moral maturity. Two types of such maturity may be distinguished. In one sense, one is a responsible person if one has a certain capacity: the capacity to make a reasonable assessment of one's prospective responsibilities (duties, obligations) ... If one is not a responsible person in this sense, one is "nonresponsible." In another sense, one is a responsible person if one takes one's prospective responsibilities seriously and endeavors to fulfill them. If one is not a responsible person in this sense, one is "irresponsible."[61]

The moral maturity in terms of making reasonable assessment of one's duties and responsibilities, in fact, of what one ought to do, is in the terminology of Kant, the moral ability to assess maxims of operations. Responsibility understood along the lines of moral maturity is something taken rather than something assigned. The community or societal context of moral action makes this type of moral assessment to have as its consideration, the agent himself or herself and other rational agents. Therefore, this type of responsibility involves at least two persons, the person who is responsible for something-the agent, and the person to whom he is responsible-other moral actors or the community as an entity. These other moral actors normally react to what the agent does or fails to do. For this fact, Peter Strawson explained moral responsibility in terms of the reactive attitudes and the follow-up consequences, such as blame (punishment) and praise (a positive moral assessment or reward). By "reactive attitudes" Strawson means attitudes that belong to our involvement or participation with others in interpersonal human relationships. These include attitudes like respect, indignation, love, forgiveness, resentment, guilt, gratitude, etc. Being morally responsible therefore is to be subject to these attitudes.[62]

Korsgaard argues that being subject to these attitudes is a demand if one must see oneself as a moral and rational agent, and as such, as one under an obligation and one who has a moral worth. According to her, "this explains why Kant refers to the kingdom of ends as an "ideal," which we might fail to promote, and, therefore, as an "obligation" …. [And] unless you hold others responsible for the ends that they choose and the actions that they do, you

---

[60]   Haydon, G. (1978): "On being responsible", In *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 28, 46-57 at p. 51.
[61]   Zimmerman, M. (2001). „Responsibility", In L. Becker (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, p. 1487
[62]   Strawson, P. F., (1962): "Freedom and Resentment", *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 48, pp. 1-25

cannot regard them as moral and rational agents, and so you will not treat them as ends in themselves."[63] This sort of 'responsibility-obligation' relations we enter with other human beings, is seen by J. M. Torralba as being so necessary that he argues that "moral law commands us to enter into a kingdom of ends, because it "has" the legality that corresponds to the relations we enter into with other human beings…." And that "the categorical imperative (in its "humanity" and "kingdom of ends" formulations) is a *consequence* of our condition or constitution as human beings among other human beings."[64]

Our constitution as human beings among other human beings requires that we relate with one another and hold one another responsible. Responsibility, therefore, is the distinctive element in the relationships rational beings enter. If I hold you responsible, that is to say that I regard you as a person with full freedom, capable of acting both rationally and morally. I can then enter with you a *relation of reciprocity*, a type of relation that takes for granted that each of us will be conscious of what we are: human beings having a dignity above price and ends which are to be respected. Such a relation of reciprocity demands as well that "I must make your ends and reasons mine, and I must choose mine in such a way that they can be yours…. Generalized to the Kingdom of Ends, my own ends must be the possible objects of universal legislation, subject to the vote of all. And this is how I realize my autonomy."[65]

"People who enter into relations of reciprocity must be prepared to share their ends and reasons; to hold them jointly; and to act together"[66] says Korsgaard, and thereby create a kingdom of ends, and a kingdom where all ends are shared. The content of the formula of kingdom of ends is therefore meant to express something fundamental about a moral attitude. It is supposed to be concerned with willingness and a strong desire to act with responsibility and reciprocity. This is supposed to be a characterization of the attitude of a conscientious member of a kingdom of ends. On this view, responsibility and reciprocity are necessary construction materials for a possible kingdom of ends.

With all the above construction materials of a kingdom of ends, an ideal of moral legislation is expected therefrom.

---

[63]   Korsgaard, C. M (1996): Creating the Kingdom of Ends. Cambridge, p. 206

[64]   Torralba, José M. (2013): "The Individuality and Sociality of Action in Kant. On the Kingdom of Ends as a Relational Theory of Action." en *Archiv für Recht- und Sozialphilosophie*, vol. 99, pp. 475-498. Footnote 37

[65]   Korsgaard M. Christen: "Creating the Kingdom of Ends: Reciprocity and Responsibility in Personal Relations", *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 6, Ethics (1992), pp. 305-332 at p. 309)

[66]   Korsgaard M. Christen, Ibid, p. 311

1.2.2 **The Type of Moral Legislation Expected from a Kingdom of ends**

When one considers the construction materials for a kingdom of ends, one can then characterize the legislators in such a kingdom. And it would be also justified if one expects an ideal of moral legislation. The kingdom of ends as presented by Kant, is an ideal kingdom, and so, it must have ideal legislators and consequently an ideal legislation. The construction materials of the kingdom of ends present members who have basic and required moral attitudes. Attitudes like respect for humanity, and by implication, human dignity- recognising one another as ends in themselves, with dignity above price; consciousness of the autonomy of oneself and other human beings; ability to abstract from personal differences, therefore not being influenced by private interests and desires; a good sense of duty and responsibility; and, above all, possession of a good will. In the presence of such basic moral attitudes, convergence of moral judgment is highly expected. I, as a reasonable moral agent would not consider the rules as externally imposed or given, but as rules legislated by myself as an autonomous moral agent, because now, I must make others' ends and reasons mine, and I must choose mine in such a way that they can be those of others. Such a perspective will in turn make me _ morally committed to conform to the legislated rules. Concerning legislators with such perspective, T. E. Hill Jr. writes that they, the legislators,

> will not make rules unless they judge that there is good reason to do so, and they are concerned with reasons that anyone falling under the rules could acknowledge. They …place a high value on preserving, developing, exercising, and respecting the rational and moral capacities of persons, and they unconditionally attribute a worth to persons that cannot be quantified and is not subject to trade-offs. Acknowledging that each valued member has personal ends of his or her own, they give weight to whatever enhances members' abilities and opportunities to pursue those ends successfully within the bounds of the moral rules they adopt.[67]

The point being made with all these characterisations is that any rational agent will not find reason not to conform to the rules emanating from such legislators and their legislation, and reason not to pursue private ends within the limits of what common rules provides. This does not however mean that the concept of kingdom of ends does not present certain worries that make its adoption somehow difficult.   Among the worries below are those indicated by

---

[67]   Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (1992): "A Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules" pp.295-296

Thomas E. Hill Jr.[68] They are some of the problems he envisaged when one tries to use this idealized kingdom as a heuristic for thinking about real world issues.

1.2.3 **Difficulties that could be faced in Adopting the Kingdom of ends Ideal**

Having as its construction material the basic issues in his moral theory, Kant presented his idea of a kingdom of ends as an ideal for a community of moral agents, that is, of rational beings. The problem, then, is to see whether the ideal can be of a practical use, or in a loose way, in what ways and to what extent can the ideal influence a community of moral agents. Could it be that this ideal would remain a mirage? Among other problems envisaged by Philosophers, those of Thomas E. Hill Jr. attracted my interest.

      i.The worry of what sort of issues are appropriately placed under moral rules.

In the first place, Hill Jr. presented kingdom of ends as a perspective for deliberating about rules. His worry then is that "…its use requires us to make judgments about what sorts of issues are appropriately placed under moral rules."[69]

The situation is like when a legislator in a kingdom of ends asks the question: 'To what extent' or 'what and what' is our concern on this issue? In advocating rules, a likely way out as noticed by Hill Jr., is to find agreement within the relevant group on how to handle the issue in question. With regard to many moral decisions, he says, reasonable people can move on well enough without waiting for public agreement on rules. This they do by "relying instead on the individual judgments of people who internalize some basic moral attitudes."[70] However, concerning matters like recurrent questions of life and death, "it seems essential to work towards a widely accepted common framework for decisions". This, as Hill Jr. sees it, may present no problem, but his worry is that "Kantian legislators …must face prior questions about what issues call for treatment by rules and then about what types of rules are

---

[68]   Thomas J. Hill Jr. considered the Kingdom of ends principle as one of Kantian perspectives considered as a way of framing and guiding the moral reflection of conscientious and sincere moral agents when they are deliberating about how to resolve certain practical questions. His project was purely on normative level. The context of his discussion is not like a metaethical debate about the reality and nature of moral properties, or 'the project of a Cartesian moral philosopher who, doubting all his previous moral opinions, now seeks to build an entire moral system from sparse but indubitable premises.' The context was that of seeking possible frameworks to use in shaping one's moral reflection on practical issues. P. 286

[69]   Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (1992): "A Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules" p.299

[70]   Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (1992): "A Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules" p.300

appropriate."[71] The first question is: Does this issue call for a rule or rules? If yes, the second question is: What type of rule or rules?

My stand is that this problem is an issue in a society where there is much emphasis on rules; where every single issue must be tabulated under one rule or the other. However, there will be less need of this worry in the Ideal African-Igbo communitarian order. This is because, in such constellation, no much emphasis is placed on formal rules. Such led to the opinion, by some writers, that Africans have no need of formal rules. However, the fact is that Africans, in their relationships, rely much on the good will of one another and not much on rules. Although there exist abuses of the said status quo. The African-Igbo also believe that the territory of personal relations is continuous with moral territory, and therefore do not operate with strict and well demarcated social versus moral rules. That is to say that moral and social rules overlap each other. That is why at times, the same cream of leaders could handle both social and moral issues.

Often, Africans operate much with proverbs or wise sayings that cannot be defined as rules. For example, "*it takes a whole village to raise a child*" is not a rule, but it imposes serious obligations both on moral and social spheres. Nonetheless, for the African, though there exist moral rules, he does not consider it necessary or the best option, always to be thinking primarily of a moral rule in every situation, even if such situations fall under moral rules. So the worry about what sorts of issues are appropriately placed under moral rules loses much weight within the African context.

ii. The worry of the danger of utopian thinking.

Another observation of Hill Jr. is that the kingdom of ends principle, unless qualified, is in danger of encouraging utopian thinking.[72]

On this Hill Jr. cautioned that unless we are wary, the kingdom of ends principle "may lead us to draw unreasonable inferences about how we should act in our very imperfect world from our thought experiments about ideal agents in a more perfect world."[73] That is, when we hope to realise a kingdom of ends, in which all citizens would conscientiously obey the laws, then we are not facing the true fact that such strict compliance is not achievable in the phenomenal world. This is however not a problem of the principle itself as an ideal, but that of a wrong notion on how ideals are to be understood and applied.

---

[71]   Ibid, p.300
[72]   Ibid, p.301
[73]   Ibid

iii. The worry about moral dilemmas, gaps, and disagreements

Lastly, let me mention another worry of T. E. Hill Jr., which is that the kingdom of ends ideal, like any rule-generating procedure, must face the possibility that, in practice, it will produce moral dilemmas, gaps, and disagreements.[74] I would not like to go into the debates on moral dilemmas and moral disagreements. I simply accept the possibility of having them, for example, in the process of abstracting from personal differences. Hill Jr. himself further argued that the above situation is to be expected when we try to bring down this ideal to a practical level. This is because of the inevitable human ignorance, fallibility of judgment, weakness of the will, and impurity of heart. Therefore, even with the sincerest good will, conscientious deliberators are likely to disagree about some significant issues. How deliberators react to occasions of disagreement should rather be the worry in a kingdom of ends, and not whether such occasions will arise.

iv. My worry: Absence of possible coordination of individual legislations

A problem about the principle itself as I observed is that every rational will is legislating individually in this possible kingdom of ends, but Kant left us with no clear idea of a possible coordination of all those individual legislations as to effect harmonization.

The idea of a kingdom leads, intuitively, to the necessity of defined common rules, as Kant himself also acknowledged. But the process of a common or combined legislation that will lead to having the common rules is left unattended by Kant. He mentioned only the demand that individuals abstract from personal interests. Is this enough for harmonious coordination that will give rise to a common rule? It is highly doubtful to suppose that individual decisions *sui generis* are sufficient enough to yield common rules that will lead to coordinated actions within a kingdom of ends. Common rule is a demand for the fact that moral progress or the morality of any community or kingdom is assessed not only from the individual's way of life but also from the nature of common rules of such community- what got passed by common legislation.

A common rule, above all, is there to ensure coordination of actions of individuals. However, a possible reply to this objection is to hold that from the onset, the principles Kant was looking for are those that can serve plurality of agents. This is implied in his demand for universalizability of moral principles. That is to say, principles that cannot serve plurality of agents in a certain kingdom of ends, according to Kant, cannot serve as a moral principle, and therefore should be rejected by the moral agent himself or herself. This could then imply that

---

[74]   Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (1992): "A Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules" p.300

in such a kingdom, when every moral agent rejects non-universalizable principles, only those principles that serve plurality of agents would survive. And therefore, individual moral decision would have served for coordinated action.

Such a reply is over presumptuous, as it has been often pointed out. In the first place, it presumes that the individual moral agent is always in the best epistemic position to make the best rational or moral decision, unguided. On this, Rawls' supposition is helpful:

> I also suppose that men suffer from various shortcomings of knowledge, thought, and judgment. Their knowledge is necessarily incomplete, their powers of reasoning, memory, and attention are always limited, and their judgment is likely to be distorted by anxiety, bias, and a preoccupation with their own affairs. Some of these defects spring from moral faults, from selfishness and negligence; but to a large degree, they are simply part of men's natural situation.[75]

The truth is this: Given these individual natural limitations, it would be difficult for individual agents to arrive at universalizable principles all the time without someone or group of individuals doing the work of "moral midwifery" as in Socratic midwifery. The Socratic "midwifery" as we know it, does not pretend to create a new knowledge, but only a process through which the "midwife" brings to light something that is expected or that is already in the other, but which this other individual, due to certain epistemic hindrances, could not alone bring to light.

Secondly, it is evident that even the best of laws need custody and therefore protection. Hence, even when it is taken for granted that everyone would legislate for himself or herself laws that can serve plurality of agents, life in a kingdom demands a sort of publicity or a coordination of the universal legislations, in the form of what 'we' as individuals making up a certain kingdom have come up with. Therefore, a kingdom of ends requires common rules formulated in terms of "*what we ought to do*" or "*how we ought to behave*", and that this formulation limits, protects, and be a guide to "*what I ought to do*"

This requirement commits Kant in his kingdom of ends formula to an implied idea of a *communal* legislation in terms of "*what we ought to do*". "What we ought to do" presupposes also what I will call "*communal rational deliberations on maxims of action*". This communal rational deliberation checks or takes care of dangers posed by weakness of will of an individual moral agent. It could also be understood as "*group rationality*" without which a kingdom of ends would not be built on a solid foundation. This idea of *communal* legislation circumscribes also a further idea of "*communal* autonomy". This is for the fact that legislation

---

[75]   John Rawls (1999): A Theory of Justice (*Revised Edition*), §23 p. 110

without autonomy is a joke. It sounds however paradoxical to talk of individual and communal autonomy within the one kingdom at the same time. That notwithstanding, I understand the kingdom of ends formula as one that demands that a system of common moral rules be worked out in the form of "what we ought to do", as one of the conditions that fine-tunes and makes the realization of "what I ought to do" possible. Its target is also to serve as a standard in reviewing proposed actions of members of an ethical community. My critique of communalism will present consensus decision making as a good option in working out these common rules.

My idea is similar to some aspects of Rawls' idea of an original position in his theory of justice. As summarized by Samuel Freeman, according to Rawls, original position is to be used "to help us work out what we now think"…; it incorporates "conditions…we do in fact accept"… and is a kind of "thought experiment for the purpose of public- and self-clarification."[76] This is the point. There is need, in a kingdom of ends, for a public or communal knowledge of "what we ought to do", "how we ought to behave", the moral convictions that we commonly share, even if individuals have already legislated for themselves such rules. Rawls deems it as necessary, the condition in which everyone accepts, and knows that the others also accept the same principles of justice. The publicity condition in Rawls says that the parties are to assume that the principles of justice they choose will be publicly known and recognized as the basis for social cooperation among the people whose relations they organize and regulate.[77]

In the chapters that follow, we will see how African communitarian order will battle some of these worries in its efforts to establish kingdom of ends.

---

[76] Freeman, Samuel, "Original Position", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/original-position/>.
[77] John Rawls (1999): A Theory of Justice (*Revised Edition*), §23

CHAPTER TWO

A COMMUNITARIAN AFRICAN (IGBO) SOCIETY

2.0 **Introduction**

"What we ought to do" or "how we ought to behave" presupposes relationships between individual members of a community or a society who are committed to being governed by common norms. And norms of interpersonal relationship are not all that simple to put into practice. That is to say, application of norms often involves complexity of factors, ranging from knowledge and understanding to the question of values. In the African context, there are some opinions that hold that African cultural values and traditions are so diverse that it will be incorrect or impossible to make a fair generalization. On this claim, they suggest that values and thoughts in African culture should be analysed and treated separately according to different cultures.[78] On the other hand, some hold the opinion that it is plausible to generalize about what is African because of dominant cultures and values that are shared in common.[79] The first opinion is better seen as a caution. I believe that in as much as there are some differences, there exist much similarities that warrant a certain methodological approach in discussing norms, beliefs, thoughts, culture and tradition in the African continent.

Methodologically, one can use one ethnic group as a case study of that which is truly African, even if there are parts of Africa where such is not the case. In my case, as already stated, I will make use of the African-Igbo as my major case study. Hence, in my effort to make a theoretical and normative abstraction relevant for philosophising, data or facts from this ethnic group in the present day Nigeria will serve a useful purpose. My project will not stop at a description of the way of life of this ethnic group, but involves also a sort of theoretical normative abstraction that is aimed at re-establishing how communitarian life ought to be lived, and how things ought to be viewed and understood. My treatment of the relationship of the individual with the community in the African-Igbo context may not strictly apply exactly to all cultures and traditions in Africa, but I suppose that there are similar features in those other cultures that designate their internal relationships as communalistic or communitarian.

---

[78]   see Segun Gbadegesin, (1998): "Eniyan: The Yoruba Concept of Person." In *The African Philosophy Reader*, eds., P.H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, p. 175.

[79]   See Gyekye Kwame (1995): An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), pp. 129-138; Wiredu Kwasi (1980): Philosophy and An African Culture, (London: Cambridge University Press), pp. 6-7

2.1 **Individual and the Community**

2.1.1 **Community in African-Igbo context**

Communitarianism is a system of socio-political operation that obtains within the context of a community. C*ommunity* in our context is understood as constituted by *people of one kinship or pedigree* that share the same values and are identifiable within a geographical location, although members can live outside the confines of the geographical location. This makes it understandable to talk of, for instance, the Igbo community in Germany, in America, in Britain, in Ghana, etc. Each community in abroad relates, and is in a direct communication with the homeland Igbo community. This act of remaining in direct communication and relationships points to the strength of community ties existing among the Igbo people. P. Iroegbu buttressing this fact said: "The most basic structure unit is the village community. People of the same village continue to interact no matter where they live. Those living in urban areas share in constant common life and activities. This makes them remain one as a people coming from, and belonging to, their village community at home. Their home is not where they are living in town. It is their village far away in the countryside. One day they will go back to it, alive or dead. So they maintain serious regular contact and pay their dues in the village."[80] The patrilineal family system makes it difficult for a non-Igbo man to be part of an Igbo community understood as '*Umunna*'- one kinship, and this irrespective of how long the non-Igbo has lived in the geographical location of Nigeria called *Igboland*. A non-Igbo woman can only be part of this community by being married into an Igbo family.

There is a common opinion among writers on African society that the way Africans conceive of community is different from the way it is conceived in the Western cultures. The above would have said it all, but one more major difference is that, in Western culture, community is conceived as a mere secular institution, but in Africa, as observed by W. Emmanuel Abraham, it "is conceived as having sacral unity, which comprises its *living members, its dead (the ancestors) and its yet unborn children*."[81] Iroegbu P. explains this view further: "the human being is born, lives and dies in this expressive natural community. Later, as the people believe, he reincarnates. That is, he returns to his family as a new-born and continues to share the natural, joyful and uncomplicated life of being-with, kith and kin. The theatres of the various expressions are the family, kindred, village, clan and the entire ethnic

---

[80]   Iroegbu, P. (2000): Kpim of Personality: Treatise on the Human Person, Nekede, Owerri, p.99

[81]   Abraham W. E. (1992): "Crisis in African Cultures" In: Wiredu K, and Gyekye K (eds.). *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*. p. 25(bracket and italics not in the original))

group. These have, at their various levels, community-building elements which make the people the one people that they are."[82]

With such conception of an Igbo community, certain offence in the family or the community is believed to affect, not only the living members of the community, but also to have a disruptive effect on the link that binds the living members of the community to their ancestors- the dead relations who are now alive in the spirit world, and are believed to be active in the affairs of the living members of their families and communities. Some Igbo names like *Nnamdi* expresses this belief. *Nnamdi* is a combination of two Igbo words and an alphabet: *Nna-m-di* (nna= father, m= my, di= exist or being around). This gives us its literary meaning: my father exists, or my father is around. The father being referred here is not any living human being, otherwise the name becomes unnecessary since it asserts nothing that is not evident. Christianity now gives this name a new meaning as it now tends to refer to 'God the Father' as being present in the family. Traditionally, this is not what is meant. An effort towards seeking a rational justification of the belief in the active influence of the ancestors would be fruitless. Fruitful however is that such belief helps in bringing the living members of the community to order, in the sense that it motivates individuals to go for right behaviours that give a good account of themselves before their watchful ancestors.

The African-Igbo concept of community is also *ethical or normative*, in the sense of being directly associated with the existence and custody of certain norms. In this sense, it is an ethical community. It is, as noted already, a people of the same pedigree, having structures that define socio-political norms, and moral expectations or responsibilities with which the metaphysical self is morally evaluated.

2.1.2 The normative conception of personhood of the Individual

To better understand, in the African context, relationships between the individual and the community, a good understanding of the concepts of personhood and the community is helpful. On personhood, a distinction is made between metaphysical (descriptive) and normative (evaluative) conceptions. The normative conception follows from some accepted normative standards used to assess the morality of the metaphysical self. That is to say, a normative conception presupposes the metaphysical one. This is true in the sense that an object or an irrational being cannot be morally assessed or recognized. These normative standards reflect "what we ought to do", and "how we ought to behave". It is a communal

---

[82]   Iroegbu, P. (2000): Ibid p.98

moral view which the individual person reflects, an identity that is acquired in the course of social interaction within the community- an interaction that meets up or fails to meet up with moral and social expectations.

In traditional African-Igbo culture, *the dignity and worth of the individual is mostly determined by the normative personhood* acquired within such a community. That is, the level of morality with which the individual relates to others. One with a loose moral life is not regarded as a "human person". Referring to such a metaphysical self, the Igbo say, *onye a abughi mmadu-* (this individual is 'not a human person'). This expression is found not only among the African-Igbo, but also in many other African communities. K. Gyekye, from the background of Akans in Ghana, explains this evaluative statement further and maintains that it is fundamentally African. According to him:

> The judgment that a human being is 'not a person', made on the basis of that individual's consistently morally reprehensible conduct implies that the pursuit or practice of moral virtue is intrinsic to the conception of a person held in African thought. The position here is, thus, that: for any p, if p is a person, then p ought display in his conduct the norms and ideals of personhood. For this reason, when a human being fails to conform his behaviour to the acceptable moral principles or to exhibit the expected moral virtues in his conduct, he is said to be 'not a person'. The evaluative statement opposite this is, 'he is a person' means, 'he has good character', 'he is peaceful-not troublesome', 'he is kind', 'he has respect for others', 'he is humble'. The statement 'he is a person', then, is a clearly moral statement. It is a profound appreciation of the high standards of the morality of an individual's conduct that would draw the judgment 'he is truly a person'.[83]

This view is similar to an idea in Kant's moral thought that "morality is the condition under which alone a rational being can be an end in itself, since only through this is it possible to be a law-giving member in the kingdom of ends. Hence morality, and humanity insofar as it is capable of morality, is that which alone has dignity. …thus it is our moral dimension that makes us ends in ourselves."[84] However, Kant talks of the capability of morality as decisive for the individual's being an end in itself, but the African sense emphasizes, not only being capable of morality but also the actual moral characteristics that could be ascribed to the individual. Those being referred to as 'not being persons' surely are capable of morality, but in actual life, are morally irresponsible.

---

[83]   Gyekye, Kwame (1997): Tradition and Modernity, p. 50
[84]   Kant, Groundwork, Ak.4:435-436; cf. 4:437-438

The demand of a moral personhood seems not to be exclusively African. What is exclusive might be the degree of emphasis and importance. Not only Kant draws my attention here, John Rawls also linked the demand for justice with a certain moral capacity on the part of the individual, which also is the ground of respect for persons. He argues that those who are capable of a sense of justice are those whom the duties of justice are owed to. He writes: "Equal justice is owed to those who have the capacity to take part in and to act in accordance with the public understanding of the initial situation. One should observe that moral personality is here defined as a potentiality that is ordinarily realized in due course. It is this potentiality which brings the claims of justice into play. . . The sufficient condition for equal justice [is] the capacity for moral personality.[85]

The potentiality of moral capacity in a child is very basic in the notion of moral personhood. This view brings out also the fact that moral personhood involves a process. It is achieved in due course within a normative community. Only those who have reached the age of moral capacity can be evaluated in terms of morality. Ifeanyi A. Menkiti talks of a sort of progression or classification of the human person. Such classification distinguishes a child from an adult human being, and represents the child as an "it". A shift occurs when the child acquires personhood. According to him: "Fundamentally, it is the emergence of moral, or quasi-moral, qualities considered useful to the enrichment of the human community, or at least useful to the internalized rejection of attitudes directly inimical to community, that accounts for the shift in classification."[86]

We saw earlier that a moral agent performs within a normative community of other moral actors. These other moral actors supposedly react to what the agent does or fail to do. And for this fact, Peter Strawson explained moral responsibility in terms of the reactive attitudes and the follow-up consequences, such as blame (punishment) and praise (a positive moral assessment or reward). We have seen also that by "reactive attitudes" Strawson means attitudes that belong to our involvement or participation with others in interpersonal human relationships. These reactive attitudes help, in part, in acquiring moral personhood. It is the actions of human beings that define them as moral persons. One may try to argue here that an agent is not acting morally if what is informing the agent's behaviour is what other moral agents will say. In that case, it could be the case that the agent is not convinced of his actions.

---

[85]   Rawls, John (1971) A Theory of Justice, pp. 505–508.

[86]   Menkiti A. Ifeanyi (2004): "On the Normative Conception of a Person" *A Companion to African Philosophy* (edt. by Kwasi Wiredu), pp.324-331 at p. 325

This objection is not plausible because reactive attitudes come only after an action is performed, and moral assessment presupposes moral maturity of an agent, in the sense that the agent makes individual decision regarding his actions. Not to be forgotten is the fact that these reactive attitudes are inevitable for people who care. And more importantly, for the Africans 'who care', these reactive attitudes help in the virtuous struggle of the individual, as Kant would say, against yielding to demands of a weak will. Psychology recognises it as the voice of the *superego* helping the *ego* in personality formation. This consciousness is deep in the African culture, and says much about the value placed on the community, in which and through which an individual is morally (and socially) assessed and defined, and moral personhood is acquired.

2.1.3 **The Relation of the Individual and the Community**

The individual is conscious of the fact that acquiring a moral personhood is normatively tied to the community. As already noted, such personhood is so important that a person's moral obligations and responsibilities, respect, rights and duties derive from it. This makes the community to acquire also such importance to the extent that a person is defined or described in terms of his community. That is, he becomes inseparably tied to his community- the community that offers him his personhood. In line with the African conception that *it takes a whole village to raise a child* (to become a person in the normative sense), an Igbo philosopher, and professor at Wellesley College Massachusetts, I. A. Menkiti stressed that:

> In the stated journey of the individual toward personhood, let it therefore be noted that the community plays a vital role both as catalyst and as prescriber of norms. The idea is that … [t]he project of being or becoming persons, it is believed, is a truly serious project that stretches beyond the raw capacities of the isolated individual, and it is a project which is laden with the possibility of triumph, but also of failure. Since triumph and failure have their consequences, and the consequences cut beyond the life cycle of the assignable individual, affecting others in the community as well, it follows that societies, both large and small, are in need of recognizing that they are caught up in an inextricable dance with their component individuals. And one of the ways to act on that recognition is to join the task of transforming the individual into a true person, in other words, a moral being or bearer of norms.[87]

---

[87]   Menkiti A. Ifeanyi (2004): "On the Normative Conception of a Person*"* p.326

Menkiti recognizes that the community cannot but be involved in making her members true moral persons, since success and failure of the individual has long time consequences on the community, even beyond the life span of the individual. Hence, the normative conception of personhood and the community, and the connection between the two is an important factor in African-Igbo communalism.[88] In their relationship, the normative conception of personhood is meaningful because of the normative conception of the community. That is, in the absence of such a conception of the community as an ethical one, namely, that it plays a vital role both as catalyst and as prescriber of norms, the normative conception of the personhood will have no weight, because other members of the community would have that attitude of 'who cares'. Having gained such a conception, the community is the foundation on which most African values, beliefs, ways of life, and mood of reasoning are grounded. The community helps to shape and streamline one's way of life, attitudes, understanding, and activities. The family being a micro unit of the community, enjoys also this conception.

On the sphere of relationships, this conception portrays any Igbo as "a being-with-others", "a being with a group consciousness" or "a being in a community". It is most often referred to as a common feature of African traditional societies. This feature has been expressed in various ways by African scholars themselves and non- Africans who focused on African studies. Famous among them is the expression of John Mbiti. Reflecting on individual's relation to the community in African cultures, Mbiti writes:

> 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. . .. 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.[89]

Notice that Mbiti put this expression in the first person- 'I am…' This underlines a certain awareness, freedom and acceptance on the side of the very individual making the assertion. And the fact of its being made in the first person brings out in its purest form, the positive sense in which the statement should be understood. Its sense and meaning might be polluted

---

[88]   Here, I write African-Igbo since there could be slight differences in conception in some other African cultures.

[89]   Mbiti, J. (1969): African Religions and Philosophy, p. 108–9

when made in the second or the third person. Consider another person telling you: "you are because we are" or "he is because we are". Such assertions, however correct they might be, are open to misunderstanding. The person telling you "you are because we are" might mean that you are our slave or servant, or that you do not have any freedom of your own. Other negative interpretations can justifiably be drawn from such an assertion.

Such an awareness, acceptance and freedom with which an African moral agent makes the assertion "I am, because we are" makes also the communal legislation "what we ought to do" or "how we ought to behave" not to be an infringement on the individual autonomy. This expression explains what I mentioned earlier that there exists a smooth combination of individual and collective autonomy in African communalism. One corroborates the other. This is what Mbiti meant by noticing that for the African "whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual", and Menkiti's observation that consequences of triumph and failure in African communities cut beyond the life cycle of the assignable individual, affecting others in the community as well, and therefore societies, both large and small, are in need of recognizing that they are caught up in an inextricable union with their component individuals. Such an inextricable union and responsibility is portrayed in the South African *Ubuntuism* as a philosophical theme. Consider this story:

An Anthropologist proposed a game to the South African tribal children. He placed a basket of sweets near a tree. And made the children stand 100 metres away from the tree. Then he announced that, whoever becomes the first person to reach where the sweets are, would get all the sweets in the basket. When he said: 'on your mark, get set, ready go.......!' the children all held each other's hands, ran together towards the tree, and got there at the same time. As a result, they shared the sweets equally among themselves, and happily enjoyed themselves very well. When the Anthropologist asked them why they chose to reach there together? They all answered "Ubuntu". Which means 'how can one be happy when the others are sad?'[90] *'UBUNTU'* in the Xhosa culture of South Africa actually means: "I am because we are". It is often also translated as "humanity towards others". In a more philosophical sense, it is "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity". In Southern Africa, it has come to be used as a term for a kind of humanist philosophy, ethic, or ideology, also known as *Ubuntuism*.[91] Michael Onyebuchi Eze summarised the core of ubuntu as follows:

---

[90]   See UBUNTU (PHILOSOPHY)
         https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu (philosophy)

[91]   Ibid

'A person is a person through other people' strikes an affirmation of one's humanity through recognition of an 'other' in his or her uniqueness and difference. It is a demand for a creative intersubjective formation in which the 'other' becomes a mirror (but only a mirror) for my subjectivity. This idealism suggests to us that humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; my humanity is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other. We create each other and need to sustain this otherness creation. And if we belong to each other, we participate in our creations: we are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am. The 'I am' is not a rigid subject, but a dynamic self-constitution dependent on this otherness creation of relation and distance[92]

Just as implied in the saying 'I am because we are…' Ubuntu expresses the general African humanism which is also the view that people are not isolated, and through mutual support they can help each other to complete themselves.

It is important to mention that for the African-Igbo, and in fact, for the African, a human person exists in the community in relation with the present, the past and the future. This is to say that his or her relatedness also goes back to the past and farthest past, that is, to the ancestors, and extends to the future and farthest future, that is, to the yet unborn. The consciousness of this relatedness influences the values, thought pattern, semantics, and actions of the African-Igbo, in the sense that no individual will like to disappoint or be a disgrace to his or her dead relatives- the ancestors. Along the same reasoning, no individual will like to be, when dead, an object of disgrace for the coming generation- the yet unborn. People mostly take pride on being good representatives of themselves, their families, kin, and communities in the sense of being role models for the living, and the yet unborn. One of the reasons is that *'it takes the whole village to raise a child'*, and this is mostly done by adults being role models- teaching indirectly and forming the morality of the young through actions.

Another reason why most individuals take such pride in having a good name is this tendency of defining the individual in terms of relatedness. Most times, in the traditional Igbo setting, in trying to know the identity of a child, the tendency is to ask "whose child are you?"- (*I bu nwa onye*?), instead of "who are you?", or may be, when referring to a third person, it is not unusual to first ask questions like "where is this person from?", "whose child is he?" Hence, the manner of definition reflects the phraseology of the question. With such manner of demanding identity from a child, Ikenga Metuh observes that the child is meant to

---

[92]   Eze, Michael Onyebuchi (2010). *Intellectual history in contemporary South Africa*. pp. 190–191.

understand from the onset that 'I am because I belong'.[93] Even when the question is with "who are you?", there is also the tendency to begin with "I am the child of Mr …" The consciousness of being role models and that of acquiring a moral personality that worth being identified with, is contrary to a non-African culture of 'who cares about my moral life', and the attitude of 'it is my life, and I have to live it the way I like'.

A major feature of this communitarian sense of relatedness is the practice of extended family system, characterised by a very strong sense of collectiveness, brotherhood, togetherness, mutual support, and interdependence. For the African-Igbo, as observed by Ezekwonna, F. C., the sharp distinction between brother, half-brother, sister, half-sister, cousin, half-cousins, etcetera is irrelevant. In traditional Igbo, people treat and call their kinsmen or women brother or sister using the terms '*nwanne m*' or '*nwanna m*'. And the belief that there is a common ancestor makes mutual relationship in Igbo community a sort of life organ.[94] C. Ukeh elaborated on this point with his analysis of the Igbo word '*nwanne m*'- meaning literally, 'the child of my mother'. In his submission he said: "Although the proper meaning and use of this Igbo term Nwanne m refers to the same as the English genderless word 'Sibling' or the German '*Geschwister*', the Igbo use it more extensively and in such a way that surpasses any figurative suggestions. Thus, *Nwanne m* stands for Brother, Sister, Uncle, Niece, Aunt, Cousin and Nephew…. [This] goes to affirm the frantic effort the Igbo make, to unlimit their reaches of intimacy, interpersonal communication and relationship in the society. All these find a practical confirmation in the fact that for any Igbo, any fellow Igbo met anywhere outside Igboland is simply for him or her *Nwanna m* – child of my father. This underscores his conviction that the same ancestral blood courses through the veins of both of them, that all Igbo share a common paternal ancestry. They all share in the same ancestral vital force."[95] This belief of common ancestry explains further why it is not much a problem for the African-Igbo when duties to the community of brothers and sisters take priority over emphasis on individual right.

---

[93]   Ikenga Metuh E., (1991): African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes: The Problem of Interpretations, p.113

[94]   Ezekwonna, F. C., (2005): African Communitarian Ethic: The Basis for the Moral Conscience and Autonomy of the Individual, Igbo Culture as a Case Study, p. 33

[95]   Ukeh, C.O., (2016): Spirit – Between Man and God: An Igbo-African Christian Appreciation, pp.179-180

2.1.3.1 **The Bamboo Plant Analogy**

Let me present a picture of the importance or significance of this relatedness with a Bamboo analogy. This analogy explains two important expressions among the Igbo: '*Igwe bu ike*' (united we stand, or togetherness is our strength) and *'ogbuturu ojuturu'* (unavoidable involvement in the fate of your neighbour). Bamboos are among the fastest-growing plants, or, as one could say, giant grasses in the world. Within a single growing season, each new shoot grows vertically into a culm or stalk, with no branching out until the majority of the mature height is reached. Then, the branches extend from the nodes and leafing out occurs. In some regions of the world where Bamboos are specially cultivated, given also the specie, they are very much spaced out to avoid much intertwining of the roots and the branches of one culm with the other. But the species found in sub-Sahara Africa grow mostly in clusters. At least in the African-Igbo religion, they grow in clusters of hundreds of them. This condition makes the underground rootstocks that send out roots and shoots to be so tightly intertwined, and given their great numbers in one cluster, uprooting them as to get rid of them in the occupied place, is a hazardous task ('Igwe bu ike'- togetherness is our strength). And because the branches from different culms interlock each other, pulling off cut out culms is normally difficult for the harvester- a point also to the strength of togetherness.

The interlocking nature of branches of one culm with that of others makes it impossible to pull off cut out culms without noticeable effects on the rest of the standing culms. Such effects rang from a fall of some of their leaves to a damage of some branches or even some culms - ('ogbuturu ojuturu'-unavoidable involvement of others in the fate of one person). And when not pulled out, cut off culms, because of this interlocking nature of the branches and therefore supportive in nature, might remain vertical, that is, without falling down, although already cut out, hence, the supposed supportive nature of the community in difficult times. This being-in-clusters by Bamboos makes them, in the face of a hefty wind, "stronger" than any single standing big tree, in the sense of safety or protection. With whirlwind any other single standing tree can lose part of its branches, including the Iroko tree.[96] But Bamboos in clusters survive hefty winds mostly. This is the advantage of being in clusters and having the support of others. This support reflects also in the notion that *'it takes the whole village to raise a child'*. Under such a notion, children bereaved of their parents are never 'orphans'

---

[96]   In West Africa, Iroko could be referred to as 'king of the trees'. It is a large hardwood tree from the west coast of tropical Africa that can live up to 500 years. The tree is known to the Igbo people as oji wood, very thick and is capable of growing more than 160ft or 50 metres.

since the roles of mother and father are by definition not vested in a single individual with respect to a single child. Furthermore, a man or a woman with this understanding will never allow any child around them to be an orphan. The Southern African *Ubuntuism* portrays a strong sense of this mutual support.

It is, however, not only the community that supports the individual, individuals also support the community. This is achieved through the readiness of individual members to cooperate and interact with one another in a brotherly and honest manner, thereby reducing instances of conflicts and tensed moments within the community. This is necessary for communal progress, and in line with the obvious fact that the maintenance of order in a given community is also to be understood as the maintenance of mutual relationships between individuals. It is a type of relationship that could be expressed in terms of actions and attitudes capable of knitting together individual members of the community. We have already observed that the community, with its cultural values and tradition, shapes the individual's values and actions. On the other hand, the culture, values and tradition of the community are also shaped by individual's rational contributions, in terms of experiences and personal creativity and ingenuity. That is why it is possible to talk of cultural changes, by way of incorporation of new values in place of not so good or outdated ones. This is one of the ways of sustaining a community through different generations because traditional concepts and values survive for the fact of finding new dimensions and applications in the modern situation.

Irrespective of this clear mutual advantage of togetherness, there is always the worry of the place of the individual in this African communitarian web, and\or the worry about matters that call for priority attention.

2.1.4 **Individual Recognition and the Priority Question**

2.1.4.1 **Individual Recognition**

African communalism, irrespective of the emphasis on the community, is not oblivious of the individual. According to the Igbo philosopher, Eze, M. O, "communitarian philosophy … induces an ideal of shared human subjectivity that promotes a community's good through an unconditional recognition and appreciation of individual uniqueness and difference."[97] An Igbo proverb was clear on this: *Ihe nile lachaa, ka osiri so onye, agaghi ala* (If everything goes extinct, individual uniqueness will not go extinct). This proverb encourages diversity of

---

[97]   Eze, M. O. "What is African Comunitarianism? Against consensus as a regulative Ideal". 2008, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 27:4, pp. 386–399.

opinions and recognizes individual uniqueness as fundamental. However, as already indicated, the urge, in African-Igbo communitarians, to see to the welfare of the community is because of the end-beneficiary, that is, the individual. K. Gyekye has argued that although the individual is part of the community, individuality is of great importance to his Akan tribe in Ghana. To buttress his point, he argues that the expression common among his people that 'the clan is like the cluster of trees which, when seen from afar, appear huddled together, but which would be seen to stand individually when closely approached' points to the fact that a person has, irrespective of community identity, a unique individuality that cannot be subsumed totally by community effect.[98] This is Gyekye's effort to assert the metaphysical autonomy or individuality of every person. But in spite of the truthfulness of this, the fact of being in a cluster, as with my Bamboo analogy, presents unavoidable constraints and implications for the individual trees. But at least, Gyekye's analogy supports the position that the individual, irrespective of the community, has a personal identity. Individualism is when a single Bamboo tree acts as if it were not part of the cluster. This is contra communalism. In support of the recognition of the individuality of individuals in African-Igbo communalism, the forms of representation of one of the Igbo major cultural symbols- the *Ikenga*, comes to mind, and elaborates further the nature of the understanding between the community and the individual.

2.1.4.1a **Cultural art symbol of individual recognition - the *Ikenga***

Ikenga is an Igbo word which literally means "place of strength". As a word, it is an answering name for human beings, either as their real names or as title names. But according to Igbo Mythology, the very first man who has the named *Ikenga,* was a bold warrior and fantastic wrestler. The natural strength of this Icon motivated other uses and artistic representations of the word '*Ikenga*'. And so, *Ikenga* became one of the most popular symbols of strength and achievements among the Igbo tribe. The symbol is also used to represent a horned deity (*Alusi*). As a deity, *Ikenga* is a god of human endeavour, achievement, success, and victory. Generally speaking, it is a symbol of industry, individually or communally.[99] And the fact that such prominent Igbo cultural symbol has both individual and community representations, attracts my interest as far as this project is concerned.

The individual *Ikenga* is perhaps the most famous type of *Ikenga*, and is known as the warrior *Ikenga*. Its artistic representation depicts, among other features, a very fierce looking

---

[98]   Gyekye K., (1995): An Essay in African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme, p.143

[99]   Bentor, Eli (1988): "Life as an Artistic Process: Igbo Ikenga and Ofo". In *African Arts*, Vol. 21, No. 2. (Feb., 1988), pp. 66–71+94

and mature human figure with horns. This type of *Ikenga* depicts the ideal young and robust man- a man in the vibrant stage of his life, a stage, when men are expected to demonstrate their military prowess.

Community *Ikenga* is another famous *Ikenga* type that incorporates the warrior form and other additional images. It is a superstructure with a seated human figure with a staff in his right hand. This community *Ikenga* stands for group rather than individual achievements and prestige, and demonstrates continuity between the individual and the community.[100] The immense sizes of the sculptures point to community ownership and from the motifs and symbols, it is possible to decipher what the community does, for instance, trading, hunting, farming, etc.[101]

The staff at the right hand of a community *Ikenga* signifies the power, not of an individual, but of community. It also signifies the strength and ability to support individual members of the community. Commonly, a staff is a symbol of power and authority, and naturally a staff supports the hand and arm, and through them the whole body. In the context of the community *Ikenga*, the whole body is made up of individual members of the community seen as a body unity.

The fact of having a cultural provision for individual and community *Ikenga* is a cultural evidence that individual status of every human person is highly recognised in the Igbo society. That is why, in the Igbo society, there are various ceremonies within titles are conferred to certain people. Such gesture aims at recognising, encouraging, and appreciating the individual person's successes and achievements.

2.1.4.2 The Priority Question

Communitarians, Daniel Bell draws our attention, have noted that: "Whereas the assertion of rights was once confined to matters of essential human interest, a strident rights rhetoric has colonized contemporary political discourse, thus leaving little room for reasoned discussion and compromise, justifying the neglect of social responsibilities without which a society could not function, and ultimately weakening all appeals to rights by devaluing the really important ones."[102] The point here is that communitarians notice an obsession, in liberalism, about issues of rights (of the individual), in that the assertion of rights has widened its horizons.

---

[100]   Bentor, Eli, Ibid, pp.68-71

[101]   Cole, Herbert and Aniakor, Chike (1984): Igbo Arts: Community and Cosmos, (Los Angeles: University of California Press), pp.31–32.

[102]   Bell, Daniel. "Communitarianism". Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/communitarianism/

Such an obsession makes liberals severely critical if there is anything that does not depend on the right of the individual even when socio-political duties are endangered. However, regarding the debate and the questions about prioritizing of rights, D. Bell observed what he labelled an aspect of East Asian arguments on the issue:

> Cultural factors can affect the *prioritizing* of rights**,** and this matters when rights conflict and it must be decided which one to sacrifice. In other words, different societies may rank rights differently, and even if they face a similar set of disagreeable circumstances they may come to different conclusions about the right that needs to be curtailed. For example, U.S. citizens may be more willing to sacrifice a social or economic right in cases of conflict with a civil or political right… In contrast, the Chinese may be more willing to sacrifice a civil or political liberty in cases of conflict with a social or economic right.[103]

The point being emphasized is that certain rights weigh differently in various cultures. Regarding the African culture, there has been wide spread opinion that African communalism assign little or no weight to individual rights. This is a wrong notion. The fact is that, in its ideal form, Igbo communitarian culture assigns more value to rights that tend to affect common welfare than those that serve individual welfare. This is informed by the fact that the functioning of the community guarantees the welfare of the individual. It is not a non-recognition of individual rights as an individual person. On this, Kaphagawani N. Didier writes that "…to assert African communalism is not in any way to imply the denial of the recognition of individual human beings qua individuals. African communalism, in fact, takes cognizance of ontological pluralism; and to start, as Mbiti does, with the assertion that we are presumes prior recognition of the individuality of those making up the "we."".[104]

From this opinion, Kaphagawani takes the 'we' to be the aggregated sum of individuals comprising a community or a group. That is to say that the 'we' is reducible to individual human beings, and so, he argues that there exist individuals prior to the community. But that would not necessarily imply, in the African context, the priority of the individual rights over his or her duties to the community. The priority in question here is that of rights of the individual verses duties to the community. Hence priority of rights and duties is quite different from order of existence. However, K. N. Didier's reducible thesis is understandable in a theoretical sense, because the talk about the individual and the community is already a pointer to the fact that the two can be separately conceived and discussed. But in another sense,

---

[103]   Bell, Daniel, Ibid

[104]   Kaphagawani N Didier (2004): "African Conceptions of a Person: A Critical Survey" In *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Edited by Kwasi Wiredu, pp. 332 -342, at p. 338

African communities are considered indissoluble. This means, that a situation of disintegration of individual members is almost not possible because an Igbo community is not an association. This is a good interpretation of the submission of Verhoef and Michel that the individual is the community.

Ifeanyi A. Menkiti was clear on this. He explains that the 'we' as a referent to community in African culture is a thoroughly fused 'we'. It is in this sense that the self of the individual person is interpreted as the community.[105] Before this, he has argued that "One obvious conclusion to be drawn from this dictum ["I am because we are"] 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."[106] He insists that priority is given to the duties which individuals owe to the community, and that the rights of individuals are seen as secondary to their exercise of their duties to the community.[107]

The idea here is that the community structures have to stand in order that individuals can also stand, since the community is the mainstream for the continuous existence of the individual. Consider the following instances. A young man of about 29 years wished to get married. He sat down and put the situation of the whole family into consideration. And because he was still helping his younger siblings considerably, and not wishing to add to the load, at least for that moment, he postponed the wish of getting married. Another young man who finished his university program in Germany wished to return back to Igboland, his family members beckoned on him to stay back and get a good job there in order to assist them for a while before finally coming back, and he gave up the wish to return at that point in time. On a larger scale, one successful banker never had any interest in politics. His community came up to him and begged him to vie for the Governorship position of their state. The first reply from the young man was negative. But after much consideration, he left behind the personal wish, and went for the service of the community. There are also instances of suspension of private welfare and projects in favour of community ones. This is not strange!

Apple once used "think different" as its advert logo in United States of America. Such logo is informed by the American pattern of thought and prioritizing of rights. I think it will not be very attractive to use such logo in many African societies. This is because, African societies tend towards carrying everyone along, shared values, and consensual rational ideas and beliefs that transcended any individual's thought. It is very common, in the Igbo society,

---

[105]   Menkiti A. Ifeanyi (1984): "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought," in African Philosophy: An Introduction, pp. 171-181, at p.172)
[106]   Menkiti A. Ifeanyi (1984): Ibid, p. 171 (words in bracket not in the original)
[107]   Ibid, p. 180

for any individual to ask others about what they think concerning what one is thinking himself or herself. Such prevalence of the communal thought, and occasional reference of one individual to others, demands that the continual and collective existence of the community be emphasized as against individual rights or well-being. Factors like attitudes, mental or epistemic and moral dispositions that are required in self-identity definition and prioritizing of rights are acquired by virtue of the individual belonging to a community. Hence Menkiti insists that the sense of self-identity which the individual come to possess cannot be made sense except by reference to these defining factors made possible by the community.[108]

All these make the collective interest of the community to have *priority* over that of a particular individual in any situation of conflict. In a normal circumstance, the rights or interest of the individual are balanced or moderated to take such a shape that they would be mutually beneficial both to the individual and the collective, and so, equilibrium is achieved. *But in those rare cases of conflict between the right of the individual and the interest and good of the community, it is in the interest of the individual that the duties to the community be attended to first.* If not, the individual interest might be weighed down by the loophole in the community. But when secured, the community interest will guarantee future interest of the individual. This is evident since the group is a sort of foundation that sustains and makes meaning the interest and good of the individual, and it cannot be the case that there is always a conflict of interests, unless an individual agent, from childhood never imbibed community sensibility.

Julius Nyerere creates a picture of this relationship of preference. He observed that: "In traditional African society we were individuals within a community. We took care of the community, and the community took care of us…Nobody starved, either of food or of the human dignity, because he lacked personal wealth; he could depend on the wealth possessed by the community of which he is a member."[109] Notice that Nyerere placed the interest and collective good of the community first, and that of the individual, which drew from the community, as second. There are, however, situations in which practices, values, choices, and interests of the individual have no effect on the community. In such cases, no one is talking about preferences or priority.

Kwame Gyekye affirms the fact that, "Africans see a human person as a being who is inherently and to the core communal and who is entrenched in social relationship and in no

---

[108]   Ibid, p. 172
[109]   Nyerere, Julius (1968): "Ujaama- The Basis of African Socialism" in *Freedom and Unity*. New York: Oxford Univ. press, pp. 165-166).

way as an isolated individual who acts alone."[110] This being the case, the human person is always expected to be part of the whole. And since there cannot be a healthy or strong eye in a sick body, it is logical that the whole takes preference over its part. But the whole is also wounded when its part suffers. This situation demands nothing but a high level understanding between the whole and its part.

Some Igbo proverbs assert this preference of the community. For instance, it is a common saying that *E kechaa n'obi eke na mkpuke* (after sharing on the basis of the extended family or community, there will be further sharing within nuclear families). The nuclear family is where individuals will have the chance of having a share. The preference given to the community further explains why individuals are punished. Punishments are not fundamentally there to inflict pain on the offender, but to heal the wounded whole.

2.2 **Autonomy within a communitarian system**

As earlier noted, the exercise of autonomy is an important element in constructing a kingdom of ends. I have also argued that the existence of a kingdom of ends would be questionable in the absence of "what we ought to do", and "how we ought to behave". These ´collective oughts´ present hindrance when an individual, under the guise of exercise of personal autonomy, tries to go contrary to "what we ought to do" or "how we ought to behave". Let me refer to Immanuel Kant to whom one can rightly attribute the consciousness of moral autonomy. In the Groundwork, we read: "The principle of autonomy is thus: 'Not to choose otherwise than so that the maxims of one's choice are at the same time comprehended with it in the same volition as universal law.'"[111] The use of the expression "not to choose" is a constraint on choice, and makes *constraint to be constitutive of a good use of autonomy*. So, autonomy in Kant should be understood in line with this constraint, otherwise, autonomy is misconstrued.

Morality itself has constraints, at least, in Kant, it sets aside maxims of action that could not be adopted by other moral agents. As we have seen, to show how important this constraint is, Kant begins his discussion on autonomy by claiming that the idea of the will of a rational being as one capable of universal legislation is necessary in order to explain the possibility of "the renunciation of all interest" required for action on a categorical rather than hypothetical imperative.[112] The demand on renunciation of interest, in its first step, is a demand that

---

[110]   Gyekye, K., (1992): Person and Community in African Thought: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, p. 104.
[111]   Kant, Groundwork, Ak. 4:440
[112]   Ibid, Ak. 4:431

autonomous moral agents be more inclined or interested to use their reason for universal (or communal) legislation than for the pursuit of individual subjective ends.

As noted in chapter one, autonomy forms the core of Kant's conception of human dignity: the idea of a rational being obeys no law other than that which he himself legislates.[113] Thus, in Kant, the basic attribute of moral agency is autonomy, and as noted earlier, it is an essential feature of a possible kingdom of ends. I suppose, it will be interesting to know how moral agents are self-legislators in a communitarian order.

Before going into that, let me first express my take regarding self-legislating. The question has been: Does self-legislation imply necessarily authorship of the law? Does it commit Kant to mean to say that a moral agent must be the author of the law he or she has to obey in terms of creating such law? It might be very revealing to note that Kant has at least two ways of applying the word 'author'. One notices these different applications in the Metaphysics of Morals. There he writes:

> The one who commands (imperans) through a law is the legislator (legislator). He is
> the author (autor) of obligation in accordance with the law, but not always the author
> of the law.[114]

Patrick Kain comments that here Kant "draws a distinction between two kinds of authorship: between the author of obligation in accordance with a law and the author of a law. A legislator of a law, he says, is an author of obligation in accordance with the law, but not necessarily an author of the law."[115] This makes clear the fact that one can actually legislate for himself a law of which he is not the author. Legislation is understood here in the sense of obligation in accordance with the law. Having understood this sense of authoring the law, I will, in this work, understand autonomy simply as self-legislation in the sense of declaring a law fit for one's observance and at the same time wish that such a law be a universal or communal law. It will also imply making a free choice or decision to act in such and such a manner.

Kain submitted also to this opinion. He holds that a rational being may be considered a legislator of a law because his will declares the law to be fit for compliance, though he does make or create the law.[116] A self-legislator, as far as my discussion is concerned, is one who freely declares that a law is good for his observance. If I notice that someone's rule of life accords to my will, and I legislate such rule for myself and at the same time wish that everyone concerned act in such a manner, or if I accept someone's rule of life or advice on the

---

[113]   Kant, Groundwork, Ak. 4: 434
[114]   Kant, Metaphysics of Morals, Ak. 6: 227
[115]   Kain, Patrick (2004): "Self-Legislation in Kant's Moral Philosophy" In Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie 86 (sect. II) pp. 257-306, at p. 262
[116]   Kain, Patrick (2004): Ibid, sect. IV, p. 288

basis of the person having an epistemic authority over me as far as that aspect of life is concerned, I am acting autonomously. Such an acceptance makes me fully responsible for my actions.

That having been established, it could then be asked: To what extent has the individual autonomy within a communitarian system? The observation of an Igbo born philosopher, Pantaleon Iroegbu, is a good start. In his view, the "possibility of people being able to challenge the structures in place shows how the traditional Igbo communities value the individual autonomy and how in practical terms free and autonomous people are."[117] We have seen that the individual identifying with the community or allowing communitarian influences on issues of values and volition does not deny the individuality of each person. It does not also imply that individuals do not and cannot act autonomously. But the type of autonomy being enjoyed here is not without the constraint of "what we ought to do" and "how we ought to behave." It is not the autonomy of "who cares" about the way I live or the way I decide to live. It is also not the type of autonomy of self-legislation understood only in the sense of authorship of the law.

Generally, in the communitarian system, maintaining a position that brings the individual in opposition with the "what we ought to do" of the community, is often not the best option or way of stressing autonomy. This is because clinching to such a position usually has discomforting effects on the individual and on other members of the community. Such effects are as a result of the interrelated nature of life in African-Igbo culture, and the fact of a continuous interaction of dependence on the community by the individual, so that, the individual will not be acting rationally by being a loner. This is to say that there are communally posed constraints regarding the exercise of freedom by the individual. The reason is that, having formed a unity with the community, it would be irrational for the individual to act without considering the whole of which he is a part of.

On the other hand, it is the work, in fact, the duty of every individual to see that the community exists without frictions, and so, having been schooled in the values of the community, it is expected of the individual to wish also for himself, or to consider rationally, the general or consensus will of the community which must have passed a process of rational willing. This does not jeopardise the metaphysical autonomy of the communitarian self, or the freedom of individual rational deliberations. Gyekye observed that: "Even though the communitarian self is not detached from its communal features and the individual is fully embedded or implicated in the life of her community, the self is nevertheless, by virtue of, or

---

[117]   Iroegbu, P. (1996): Kpim of Politics: Communalism Towards Justice in Africa. p. 52

by exploiting, what I have referred to as 'its mental feature' can from time to time take a distanced view of its communal value and practices and reassess or revise them."[118]

One might like to know how the communitarian self would react to the outcome of his assessment or revision of the communal values. We have already observed that such revision is necessary for a culture to avoid being anachronistic. Therefore, the communitarian self would be doing a favour to the community by bringing up the result of his assessment in a forum for communal deliberations. However, constraint posed by the community is also in recognition that no individual is always in the best epistemic condition for rational deliberations and decisions. In moments like this, the rationally established belief of the community is appealed to, for instance, that parents, *ceteris paribus*, know better what is good and right for their children. This implies, on the part of the children, a willingness to obey their parents. We might call this a perfect obedience. Perfect obedience understood in the sense of 'doing what someone tells you' on the grounds of having rational grounds for following what an informed person of good will says. And one of those rational grounds is the fact of the informed person having an epistemic superiority over me, and of being a person of good will, in the sense of having a moral personhood. Acting on obedience or trust in such a situation is a rational option. So when one is not in the best epistemic condition to make rational and moral deliberations, to hold on to self-legislation in the sense of authorship would be irrational.

A human life, according to G. Reddiford, "is a social life and it is not a contingent matter that individuals share a common life (to varied extents and degrees). Claims for the value of autonomy are not weakened by such considerations. What they do show is that individuals should always act with regard to the autonomy of others."[119] Being sharers of a common life with other members of the community, individuals are expected to pursue their various interests within the context of the community in which they live. However, it does not always follow that their self-ascribed interests should be dominant in the determination of the common life of the community, or the society. All sorts of individual interests, plans, and aspirations that must affect others should be deliberated upon, and if necessary, modified before they are met or satisfied, thereby, not endangering the collective autonomy, or the normative structure of the community.

---

[118]   Gyekye K., (1997): Tradition and Modernity, p. 56

[119]   Reddiford, Gordon (1993): "Autonomy and Interests: The Social Life of a Curriculum." *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 265-275 at p. 274

2.2.1 **On being morally responsible in a communitarian system**

The situation as being presented so far does not exonerate the individual, as a moral agent, responsible of his actions. We saw in chapter one that moral maturity, in terms of making a reasonable assessment of duties and responsibilities, is demanded of moral agents in a kingdom of ends. In the context of a communitarian system, the community presents certain moral and non-moral options, goods or duties to the individual to freely and willingly assess and choose from. This includes the obligations stated in "what we ought to do" and "how we ought to behave." One still retains and exercises autonomy as a metaphysical self to choose or not to choose from the available moral options, hence, being a subject to the reactive attitudes from other moral agents or from the community, and also of the follow-up consequences, such as blame (punishment) and praise. Such reactions, as we have noted, determine the acquisition of a moral personhood. We also saw that unless individuals are held responsible for the ends that they choose and the actions that they do, you would not regard them as moral and rational agents, and so you will not treat them as ends in themselves.[120] It is expected however, that through the acquisition of communitarian consciousness, the individual freely chooses rightly in the context of communalism. Such an acquisition is an advantage for a communitarian moral agent.

The possibility of a culture presenting such an advantage, regarding the observance of duty, has been argued for by Kant in reference to the culture of 'loving one another' as preached and practiced in Christian religion. According to him: "Christianity has the intention of furthering love out of concern for the observance of duty in general; and it produces it too, because its founder speaks not in the quality of a commander demanding obedience to his will, but in that of a friend of humanity who appeals to the hearts of his fellow human beings on behalf of their own well-understood will, i.e. of the way they would of themselves voluntarily act if they examined themselves properly."[121] The African sense of respect for elders or one's senior, of obedience, of hospitality, of togetherness, and of brotherhood, are examples of the cultural support that optimizes the individual's ability to freely make moral and non-moral decisions that are not individualistic in outlook, rather, decisions that wear a collective or community garb. A decision that also favours the community is expected because "the communitarian self [the individual] is not detached from its communal features and the individual is fully embedded or implicated in the life of the community"[122] But in making

---

[120]   Korsgaard C. M (1996): *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*. P. 206
[121]   Kant, Immanuel (2001), Religion and Rational Theology, Ak, 8:338).
[122]   Gyekye, Tradition and Modernity, p. 56

such rational and moral decisions, the individual acts as a moral agent, and is morally responsible for those decisions.

The capacity to reason is something innate. It is a natural attribute of rational beings. But it is also true that some context helps in moral reasoning, like the example of the culture of Christianity. This implies that an individual cannot always do it alone. There is need to have others doing the work of *moral midwifery*. The ethical community and other individual mature moral agents are such midwives, helping to educate and mould the moral reasoning of the morally immature, and at the same time assist the morally mature individuals to remain conscious of moral demands. Removed from the African-Igbo perspective, and interpolated into a liberal and individualistic culture that does not emphasize the above discussed cultural values, the individual would be in a serious conflict when expected to make decisions that would wear a communal garb, and certain personal decisions might seem to have alienated the individual himself. And therefore, the individual tends to consider himself not acting autonomously and not being responsible for his actions. This is to say that thought or reasoning and the resultant action have a contextual aspect. The truth of this is generally held and 'exploited' not only by the communitarians but also by the liberals. But how?

2.3 Societal Influence on Thought and Action

The communitarian view that moral reasoning is not without the influence of the community context derives from the general view that practical reasoning is an act better done in a context. By this, I mean the type of reasoning that leads an agent to act. Abstract or theoretical reasoning need not be contextual. In 1997, the Los Angeles office of advertising agency created for Apple Inc., (then Apple Computer, Inc.) the advertising slogan, "Think different". The slogan was used in a television commercial, several print advertisements, and a number of TV promos for Apple products. As an advertising slogan, "think different" was a success. Its success was because it was created and used in the context of the American liberal and individualistic society, where there is, in individuals, a natural instinct to think different. In an interview with PBS' 'One Last Thing' documentary,[123] Steve Jobs, a co-founder, chairman, and chief executive officer (CEO) of Apple Inc., said the following:

> When you grow up you tend to get told the world is the way it is and your job is just to live your life inside the world. Try not to bash into the walls too much. Try to have a nice family life, have fun, save a little money.

---

[123] The **Public Broadcasting Service (PBS)** is an American public broadcaster and television program distributor with the Headquarter in Arlington, Virginia

That's a very limited life. Life can be much broader once you discover one simple fact, and that is - everything around you that you call life, was made up by people that were no smarter than you. And you can change it, you can influence it, you can build your own things that other people can use.

The minute that you understand that you can poke life and actually something will…pop out the other side, that you can change it, you can mould it. That's maybe the most important thing. It's to shake off this erroneous notion that life is there and you're just gonna live in it, versus embrace it, change it, improve it, make your mark upon it.

I think that's very important and however you learn that, once you learn it, you'll want to change life and make it better, because it's kind of messed up, in a lot of ways. Once you learn that, you'll never be the same again.[124]

In the above speech, there is the push from S. Jobs for individuals to outsmart the other. He was much interested in how the individual will or can conquer and change the society with personal and individual energy and output; and how the individual, on his own, would strive to make his marks on the society, instead of receiving from others; including how one will make to the top, and so, letting every other person know he or she is better. There is however nothing wrong with having such personal challenges and aspirations, but this is a type of message that will sale fast in a liberal and competitive society, where that atmosphere is so much suffused with a strong air of competition and personal achievements as against where there is a concern for carrying the other along. And therefore, after its release, "the "Think Different" Campaign proved to be an enormous success for Apple…. Critically acclaimed, the spot would garner numerous awards and accolades, including the 1998 Emmy Award for the Best Commercial and the 2000 Grand Effie Award for the most effective campaign in America."[125]

"Think different" as a Logo, would make more meaning, and as such, more success in cultures that extol an individualistic attitude to life, than in communitarian cultures. This is where the advantage of having an idea of a Folks' narrative is very important. The initiator of this advert slogan knows the American narrative, and knows therefore that "think different" will be warmly embraced. Regarding such influence of culture, Will Kymlicka indicated that "the liberal values of freedom and equality must be defined and understood in relation to such societal cultures"[126] The interest to 'think different' will be high in cultures where individual's or folk's narratives are replete with personal marks as against collective goals and

---

[124]   "Think different" From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Think different (The writer of this article was not stated)
[125]   Ibid
[126]   Kymlicka Will (1995): Liberalism, Community, and Culture, p.53

achievements. The knowledge of the folks' narrative informed the choice of the concept "think different" for the American people. It has been argued that the narrative an individual construct for himself through his life is supposed to be part of a larger narrative, incorporating other actors in a given culture. Bernard Williams brings out what this implies. In his view, it implies that in deciding what to do, I must consult my narrative environment. He referred to MacIntyre who held that one can only answer the question "what am I to do?" if one can answer the prior question "of what story or stories do I find myself a part?"[127]

This strengthens my argument that it would not be easy for an individual to decide to "think different" in an environment that has the culture of "think with", and in a culture that considers the larger norm of "what we ought to do" in order for the individual to correctly answer the question of "what I ought to do." This means that the interest in group thinking, collective thought or reflection, which is a strong factor in African cultures, will hinder the success of the logo "think different". It is not that an individual African does not or cannot think different, or that Africans do not have any view of individual thought, but using such a concept as an advert logo within a certain society, speaks for the type of society being considered. P.O. Bodunrin suggests the notion of a group mind as what could describe the practice of collective thought or group rationality in African cultures.[128] This gives an idea of the type of individuality possible in African culture. It is a type that is not isolated, rather one with a communal or group consciousness, one that reflects the theories and values of communalism.

Writing on the influence of culture on life narratives, Jerome Bruner observed that "life narratives obviously reflect the prevailing theories about "possible lives" that are part of one's culture."[129] He went further to note that "one important way of characterizing a culture is by the narrative models it makes available for describing the course of a life."[130] It is within a culture where the narrative model supports "think different" as an advert logo, that one can expect making a huge success. It is however in such a culture that western communitarians struggle to impart the manners of life and thought of the people according to communitarian ideology. This venture cannot be easy, and has not been. It is my interest also to consider further, some factors that distinguish communitarians in African and Non- African cultures.

---

[127]   Williams B., "Life as a Narrative" In *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 17: no. 2, 2007, pp. 305–314 at p. 305
[128]   Bodunrin P.O (1984): "The Question of African Philosophy", in *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, edited by Richard A. Wright, pp. 1-23.
[129]   Brunner J., "Life as a Narrative" In *social research* Vol. 71: No 3: Fall 2004, 691-710, at 694.
[130]   Brunner J., Ibid p. 694.

Such distinctions will enable critics to properly articulate and direct their objections where they belong.

2.4 **Any Difference between Western and African Communitarians?**

Daniel Bell wrote that communitarian critics of liberalism are mostly motivated "by certain pressing political concerns, namely, the negative social and psychological effects related to the atomistic tendencies of modern liberal societies. However the soundness of liberal principles, in other words, the fact remains that many communitarians seem worried by a perception that traditional liberal institutions and practices have contributed to, or at least do not seem up to the task of dealing with, such modern phenomena as alienation from the political process, unbridled greed, loneliness, urban crime, and high divorce rates."[131] He further noted that communitarians generally are "more inclined to argue that individuals have a vital interest in leading decent communal lives, with the political implication that there may be a need to sustain and promote the communal attachments crucial to our sense of well-being."[132] This is true also from the African perspective. Equally true is that whether in the western or African perspective, proponents of communitarian order maintain a general view that the political and moral community not only has rights independent of those of the individual but also that these rights of the community are important enough to warrant, in most cases, the adjustment of individual choices in the pursuance of the good or welfare of the whole community, which now, remotely or proximately, includes that of all individual members. Taking off from philosophers like Hegel, Western communitarianism maintains that the collective can have rights that are independent of, and even opposed to the rights of individuals.

The Hegelian conception of the state is one that consists of three conceptually distinct but interconnected entities. There is the ''political'' state, consisting of institutions of government including legislations. There is the ''civil'' state, referring to arrangements between individuals, such includes contracts, marriages, formation of associations and corporations. Such things could have been possible even if the political state never existed. There is thirdly, what could be called the 'ethical' state, consisting of ethical values, all the shared experiences among members, and the consciousness of belonging together through a common history, supported by religious and cultural homogeneity. This last concept of a state is of great value

---

[131]   Bell, Daniel. "Communitarianism". Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
         https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/communitarianism/
[132]   Bell, Daniel. Ibid

for Hegel. The individual, according to him, through active participation in terms of interaction within the ethical state, achieves his freedom and self-fulfilment.[133] In its ethical sense, Hegel considered the state as the actualization of freedom. The individual's expression and actualization of his right as an individual is through the state and not outside the state. His or her embeddedness in the state is therefore, the one and only prerequisite of the attainment of particular ends and welfare. Hegel appreciates also the fact of individual freedom and of the value of the individual. He noticed however, the possibility of having an evil or oppressive state.[134]

Other Contemporary Western communitarians have argued in line with this Hegelian idea of the individual as part of a larger whole within which he attains his freedom by embodying or reflecting a historically creative Mind. In this sense of the state, individuals, in order to attain freedom, were expected to participate in a life of mutual dependency with others. Ideal society is conceived as resulting from the relations of particular individuals. Some of the thinkers who held this view include Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, and Michael Walzer.

Writers observed in Hegel that the German use of the concept of individuality differs from the characteristically French use of it. In the opinion of Steven Lukes: "While the characteristically French sense of 'individualism' is negative, signifying individual isolation and social dissolution, the characteristically German sense is thus positive, signifying individual self-fulfillment and . . . the organic unity of individual and society."[135] According to Lukes, the German understanding is the "Romantic idea of "individuality" [Individualität], the notion of individual uniqueness, originality, self-realization – what the Romantics called Eigentümlichkeit – in contrast to the rational, universal and uniform standards of the Enlightenment, which they saw as "quantitative," "abstract" and therefore sterile.[136]

The African notion of *community* does not deny this Individualität of every individual. That is to say, the African while emphasizing the communitarian nature of human existence, does not deny individual uniqueness and liberty. Some African writers often exaggerate when they stress the idea of social cohesion in the traditional African society. They present it in such a manner that denies or fails to recognize the uniqueness and self-realizing efforts of the individual. This is an exaggeration, as I have tried to argue in this chapter.

---

[133]   Hegel, G. W. F. (1967): The Philosophy of Right, trans. T. M. Knox. pp. 279–80
[134]   Ibid. p. 280
[135]   Lukes, Steven (1973): Individualism, p. 22.
[136]   Lukes, Steven (1973): Ibid. pp. 17–18

This positive expression or understanding of individuality is noticeable in the writing of some western authors on communitarianism. They accept that even in this uniqueness, the individual realises his full potential in a shared life through a sort of interactive connections or relation with others. Although they recognise the autonomy of the individual, however, they place more emphasis on the importance of his participation in, as well as unavoidable dependence on the community, for instance, for his sense of self, and agency. According to this view, individuals are constituted by the institutions and practices of which they are part, and their rights and obligations derive from those same institutions. MacIntyre argued that the individual's construction of self-identity and agency is a result of participation in narratives of which the individual is part of. In After Virtue, talking about virtues, unity of life and the concept of tradition, he writes:

> I can only answer the question "What am I to do?" if I can answer the prior question "Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?" We enter human society, that is, with one or more imputed characters – roles into which we have been drafted – and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses to them are apt to be construed. It is through hearing stories . . .that children learn or mislearn both what a child and a parent is, … I am someone's son or daughter, someone else's cousin or uncle; I am a citizen of this or that city, a member of this or that guild or profession; I belong to this or that clan, that tribe, this nation. Hence what is good for me has to be the good for one who inhabits these roles. As such I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations, and obligations.[137]

Including against what MacIntyre identified as a social obstacle, his effort is channelled also against the philosophical obstacles that confront any contemporary attempt to envisage each human life as a whole, as a unity. He observed that these obstacles "drive from two distinct tendencies, one chiefly, though not only, domesticated in analytical philosophy and one at home in both sociological theory and existentialism. The former is the tendency to think atomistically about human action and to analyse complex actions and transactions in terms of simple components. … [invariably] the unity of a human life becomes invisible to us when a sharp separation is made between the individual and the roles that he or she plays."[138]

MacIntyre subscribed to the view that taking particular actions as driving their character by being parts of a larger whole is a point of view alien to dominant western ways of thinking,

---

[137]   MacIntyre, Alasdair (1984): After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, 2nd edt. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press), p. 216–220
[138]   Ibid. p. 204

but he takes this point of view as worthy of consideration given, according to him, the obvious reality that a self separated from his role loses that arena of social relationship in which the Aristotelian virtues function….[139] An extended version of this MacIntyrean view is the understanding that particular life or actions of individuals derive their full meaning, and therefore make sense by being parts of a larger whole, that is, of the community or society. It is therefore an important communitarian claim, that the real individual is one who is socially embedded, having interconnected relationship with others both in the aspects of history, culture, and tradition. This sense of interconnectedness of the communitarian person extends his idea of welfare beyond his own self, and informs his sense of duty. For him, the assessment of right or wrong takes into consideration not just his own self but also the community within which he is identified.

However, the Ghanaian born philosopher, K. Gyekye, from his African perspective, criticises the Western communitarian conceptions of M. Sandel, Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor. In his opinion, these conceptions are too radical in distinguishing between the individual and the society, and further stress the importance of the community to the detriment of individual's autonomy and rights.[140] This will surprise many, because it is expected that an African philosopher will throw his philosophical strength behind such conceptions. In my opinion, the western culture by itself, as I presently experience it, creates a radical distinction between the individual and the community. The African conception of the process of acquiring moral personhood might have influenced Gyekye's criticism of these authors. Under 'a moral conception of personhood' in the African context, Gyekye explained that personhood has to be attained gradually in direct proportion as one participates in communal life.[141] This implies that the individual is gradually well permeated by community spiritedness, and as such, moral personhood is not achieved in a radical way. So, in the African context, the type of union existing between the individual and the community makes it improper to have a radical distinction between the two, in terms of autonomy and rights. But in a society where this union is non-existent, individuals live in a relation of radical distinction to the community. And as such, stressing the importance of the community to the detriment of individual's autonomy and rights might seem radical. However, my own understanding of MacIntyre, as treated above, does not consider him being captured by the net of Gyekye's criticism. This is for the fact that, in the first instance, MacIntyre himself is not

---

[139]   Ibid 204-5

[140]   Gyekye, K., (1997): Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience. p. 62

[141]   Gyekye, K., Ibid. pp. 48-49.

oblivious of the fact that 'taking particular actions of the individual as driving their meaning by being parts of a larger whole' is a point of view alien to dominant western ways of thinking, but he takes this point of view as worthy of consideration. Secondly, he is a defender of a unity of the human life, and therefore warns against the danger of making this unity invisible to us by having a sharp or radical separation or distinction between the individual and the roles that he or she plays in the community.[142]

As it stands, community in the western perspective can be seen as nothing but an aggregation of individuals who, for one reason or the other, choose to come together to make up a group. In this sense, what brought them together is mainly the individual free choice to belong and associate. *There are no natural constraints in terms of common ancestral ties and pedigree*. The individual's disconnect with such a community will be without much effect. This state of affairs does not make possible, moral personhood to have much to do with the community. What counts is the individual's rational and moral autonomy. Understood in this way, the community is not supposed to wield sufficient influence on people's moral behaviours, decisions and activities. In the African-Igbo context, a community is not a mere organisation or an association, rather, it is usually a natural big family in which the individual is born into or adopted. That is, membership is not a thing of choice, and not to belong is unnatural, and would imply not having a root and/or being without definition. I have mentioned earlier the observation of I. A. Menkiti that community in African culture is a thoroughly fused 'we'. Ikenga-Metuh observed rightly that the Igbo race is one big family. In his words: "Every segment of the Igbo society is regarded as and functions as a family…."[143] Corroborating with this view, C. Ukeh wrote: "In fact, the basic principle of societal understanding and organisation are the family and family spirit, the family consciousness, the sense of belonging to a group,… The basic linking factor is blood-ties and the motivating principle could be said to be the drive for tribal survival or the ensuring of the continuances of the life of the group."[144] It would therefore be considered a mistake to criticize African communalism from the point of view of western nature and conception of a community.

Contrasted with their western counterparts therefore, African communitarians appeal first to African understanding, concept, and constitution of the community, and then to the traditional African socio-political order as groundings for their submissions. That is, for the African-Igbo, communalism is a way of life rooted in his experience of his community. It is

---

[142]   MacIntyre, Alasdair (1984) Ibid p. 204

[143]   Metuh-Ikenga, (1991): Ibid p.114

[144]   Ukeh C, (2016): Ibid p.177

not just a mere theoretical idea or suggestion. It is the way the Igbo grew up, and has informed their feelings, thought, and actions. In other words, in traditional Africa, communitarian attitudes are informally and easily acquired in the course of day to day living. This means that the Igbo are naturally communitarian in their social-political thought and culture without losing sight of the individuality of each person. That is why it is mostly taken for granted, and therefore, there were no much defence and analysis of this claim. The upsurge of recent philosophical enquiries is only geared towards a systematization. It is also an effort towards creating its ideal and combing its aberrations.

The African-Igbo proverb which says: 'the right hand washes the left, and the left washes the right' (aka nri kwuo aka ekpe, aka ekpe kwuo aka nri) is a communitarian adage, and asserts that the promotion of human well-being is a collaborative and reciprocal endeavour. This is a major and pure communitarian gesture which sticks in the consciousness of the Igbo as he or she grows up. The issue of human welfare is a demand of communalism and will preoccupy us in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Humanistic Nature of African-Igbo Communitarian Ethics

3.1 **The Welfare of one is the Concern of all**

Humanism as used here is the sense that ethical principles are addressed in a special way, to the social and natural conditions of human beings. A community-spirited person, in the African-Igbo context, is one for whom the well-being of any other individual is his or her concern. That is the Aristotelian virtuous man. According to him: "As the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also, for his friend is another self."[145] On welfare, African communalism tends towards rule-utilitarianism.[146] Well-being or welfare might be generally understood, but what is important is the debate on 'whose welfare is sort or promoted', the giver or the receiver, or the giver and the receiver? For an ideal communitarian Igbo, welfare is a two-way directional arrow. To understand this assertion, a general knowledge of well-being is necessary, coupled with the view that considers welfare as a one-way directional arrow.

3.2 **Well-Being and Utility**

3.2.1 **A summary view**

To discuss well-being in the context of African-Igbo communitarian order, I have chosen to, first of all, discuss it generally. It seems that well-being is better described than defined. As

---

[145]   Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics IX.9 1170b 6-7. From the translation by W.D. Ross in The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 1090.

[146]   A major difference is that Igbo communitarian welfare ethics goes beyond the Act-utilitarian concern that focuses exclusively on how to maximize welfare, or satisfaction of actual or set of informed desires and preferences of those concerned, that is, of individual members of the community involved. To note is that here, the emphasis is always to seek to produce the most utility, without prior constraint regarding its distribution or the means of arriving at it. On the contrary, these constraints concern deliberators in Ideal Igbo traditional society, that is, constraint regarding the means of maximizing the welfare of individuals and the community as a whole without neglecting the respect for one another. This is shown in their efforts at consensus decisions on moral and socio-political issues, which is an effort, by deliberators, to come to a decision that can be reasonably endorsed under the constraint of their overriding commitment to the view and dignity of each person.

we shall see, Utilitarian understands it as 'utility'. It includes our happiness, life satisfaction, physical condition, and in fact, general outlook on life. It is all about the quality of life and the capacity of feeling good with it. Jeremy Bentham has defined utility as "that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness, or to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered: if that party be the community in general, then the happiness of the community: if a particular individual, then the happiness of that individual."[147] This implies that the degree of utility of anything whatsoever is determined by the extent to which it approves or disapproves of something or an action in relation to how the action affects the happiness or well-being of those concerned.

Aristotelian theory is that *the quality of life is determined by its activities*. Well-being could be said to be determined partly by the individual notions of and activities in life- that is, one's value system imparts his or her well-being. To express this idea in another way, Amartya Sen suggests that well-being should be considered in terms of valuable human functionings. His view of living is one that incorporates "a combination of various 'doings and beings', with quality of life to be assessed in terms of the capability to achieve valuable functionings". He observed that some of these functionings are very basic, for instance, "being adequately nourished, being in good health, etc.,", and that these basics "may be strongly valued by all, for obvious reasons". Some functionings, for example, achieving self-respect or being socially integrated, according to him, "may be more complex, but still widely valued."[148] I suppose that functionings should imply what an individual does, and is, or tries to be. That is, the individual's activities, state of being or aspirations. That is why Sen expresses them as various 'doings and beings'. What the individual does could be what he does to himself or to other individuals. Important then, is the ability or the capacity of the individual to achieve these functionings. When achieved, they impart his life and living, in a way that should promote well-being.

3.2.2 Whose Welfare is sought?

The questions concerning whose welfare is sought or promoted, the giver or the receiver, or the giver and the receiver, and how utility has to be promoted, have led to divided opinions even among the utilitarian camp. In my treatment of these issues, I will make a critique of James Griffin's essay: "Well-Being: Its meaning, measurement, and moral importance." In

---

[147]   J. Bentham, Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation. 1781.

[148]   Sen A, (1993): "Capacity and well-Being" in Nussbaum, M., and A. Sen (eds) The Quality of Life. Pp. 30-53, at p. 31

this essay, James Griffin concerned himself with one of the issues facing utilitarian Philosophers like Bentham, Mill, Sidgwick, and others. It has to do with the analysis of well-being which they identify also as utility.[149]

In his own account, J. Griffin among other things noted troubles with the mental state and the actual-desire accounts. He argued further that the informed-desire account needs a restriction in order to stand the test of a good account of well-being that reflects whose welfare is sought. One of the ways he thinks he can succeed in this task of restriction is to succumb to the view that totally drops before now mental state accounts of utility. Such restrictions and the jettison of the mental state account created problems for the understanding and practice of well-being in African-Igbo communitarian order, especially as it concerns the African understanding of whose welfare is sought.

But as we shall see, the fact that J. Griffin succumbed to this view, and in an effort to restrict informed-desire account, made him unavoidably step into a quagmire, in the form of self-contradiction. After all, if the desire or one's preference is a well -informed one, there will be no need of talking of a restriction in the first place. To present in a positive light, well-being in African-Igbo context, amounts to my acceptance of the relevance of mental state account of utility. In other words, I will argue that informed –desire can also lead to psychic utility, which is a form of 'being well'. Let us consider some important concepts in J. Griffin's essay. He identifies two main traditions about 'utility': State of the mind and state of the world.

3.2.2.1 **Mental state (or state of the mind) accounts**[150]

Utilitarians like Bentham, Sidgwick, and Mill incorporated a psychological account of utility. According to this account, happiness (pleasure) and pain are presented as 'states of feeling'. And utility is then measured by determining the amount of this mental state. James Griffin objected to this view. He questioned the kind of mental state that runs through, for example-eating, reading, working, creating, helping, in virtue of which we rank them as we do. He thinks that taking utility to consist of several different mental states creates a difficulty of making these several states into a set, or linking them with one another.

He rejected Sidgwick's compromise that utility combines a psychological element and a preference element, resulting in a sort of 'desirable consciousness'- a consciousness that we actually desire or a consciousness that we would desire if we knew what it would be like to

---

[149]   See Griffin J., 1986 pg.1
[150]   See Griffin J., 1986 pp.7-9

have it. Griffin's argument is that we do seem to desire things other than states of mind, even independent of the states of mind they produce. I will respond later with some practical experiences.

3.2.2.2 The informed-desire account[151]

There is an overwhelming objection to *actual-desire* account due to the occurrence of logical mistakes in practical reasoning in adapting means to ends, and for lack of information, in the sense that we often mistake our interest so that when even some of our strongest and most central desires are fulfilled, especially pleasure-seeking ones, we are no better off, and sometimes what we prefer is obviously not beneficial to us. Philosophers and economists now talk of improved- or informed-desire. Some authors prefer to use the expressions "preference satisfaction" and "informed preference satisfaction". An example of such a situation in which ordinary or actual desire account fails to enhance well-being and which is similar to other examples given by different authors runs this way: Suppose in a dry season (a season of the year without rains, as opposed to a raining season when much rain falls), I have the option to choose between two or more housing accommodations and I prefer one of them thinking that everything is in a good condition and therefore will enhance my well-being, but when it started to rain, I realized that the roof is leaking water from several points. My desire or preference has been satisfied, but my welfare is quite obviously *not* enhanced, but decreased and endangered.

The above example brings clearly to light that my preferences can at best lead to my welfare, but there is no guarantee of that. Mere preferences are therefore not my welfare itself. They may or may not lead to the desired good or intended welfare. So my welfare consists, not in having my preferences come true, but in the realization of those preferences I would have, given all relevant information about them.[152] In believing that the accommodation I chose is a good one, I do not have all the relevant information. James Griffin hence noted a way to avoid all the faults that matter to 'utility': namely, by understanding completely what makes life go well, in other words, by being well informed about our desires. According to this option, utility is understood in the sense of an 'informed desire'. Griffin however considers utility as having to enter into our experience, what he called 'experience requirement'. In his view, informed-desire does not require that the fulfilment of desires translate itself in every case into the experience of the person who has

---

[151]   See Griffin J., 1986 pp.11-17
[152]   See also Robert N. Johnson, 1996, Primer on the Elements and Forms of Utilitarianism, Phil. 213 http://web.missouri.edu/~johnsonrn/utilnote.html

the desire. Such 'lack', he says, is what gives informed-desire account its breadth and attraction as a theory of what makes life valuable. He now sought to remedy the said 'lack'.

3.2.2.3 **Enjoyment account considered**[153]

Irrespective of the attractiveness of informed-desire account, Griffin was not satisfied. Among the things most worrisome to him is what he recognized as the breadth and attraction of the theory- *the fact that the account drops the Experience Requirement*. That is, allowing my utility to be determined not only by things that I am aware of, but also by things that do not affect my life in any way. He noted a consequence of this: "The trouble is that one's desires spread themselves so widely over the world that their objects extend far outside the bound of what, with any plausibility, one could take as touching one's well-being".

In an effort to strike a balance between mental state account, which is considered too narrow, and informed-desire account which is seen as being too broad, Griffin came up with a consideration of enjoyment account. *For an individual to have enjoyed anything whatsoever, presupposes having to experience the thing itself.* In that sense, enjoyment, Griffin says, "is not anything so narrow as experiencing a single mental state or one of a range of states, … In similar spirit, …it is nothing so broad as merely having desires (even informed ones) fulfilled". The major difference to notice between informed-desire account and enjoyment account is that enjoyment account tried reinstating the experience requirement, with the intention of avoiding being guilty of, according to Griffin, over-wide desire accounts. So, in the mind of Griffin, the best prospect for a utilitarian account of well-being is to hold on to the over-wide desire account (informed-desire) and look for good reasons to rein it in (perhaps through enjoyment account). But there is no need looking for how to restrict the desire account which is already considered to be an informed –desire account. Its breadth remains its attractiveness and beauty. This is the stand I am now going to argue for. This stand will form a rational basis for appreciating welfare in African-Igbo communitarian ethics.

3.2.2.4 **Griffin's self-contradicting argument**

In one of his sub-sections captioned 'How may we restrict the desire account?' Griffin noted that the informed-desire account will be abandoned unless we can find a way to restrict the desires that count. The trouble according to him comes from examples like the following: I

---

[153]   See Griffin J., 1986 pp.18-20

want the sympathetic stranger I met on the train to succeed; I want people in the twenty-second century to prosper; Leonard wanted humans to fly. All of them informed-desire, but the trouble is, according to Griffin, their fulfilment cannot be part of my well-being.[154]

The project of Griffin is how to force informed-desire account to fit into his narrow conception of what he takes 'well-being' to be. But it was just like forcing a square peg into a round hole. Consequently, he could not get to his endpoint without leaving bruises behind, in the form of a blurred and contradictory picture of his conception of well-being. He did not consider it a better option to broaden his narrow conception, and escape the contradiction. This contradictory notion of well-being is glaring, in the sense that, at one point, he represents a narrow idea of well-being, and at another point, he paints a picture of a wide notion of it.

In the first instance, Griffin made it clear that the notion he is after is the narrower notion of life's being valuable solely to the person who lives it or experiences it, hence, his 'experience requirement'. And according to him, the examples he gave above do not. For example, the desire that the sympathetic stranger he met in the train succeeds. What he is saying is that the desire that a stranger succeeds does not add anything to my well-being; it is just a mere desire of mine that does not enter my life. In an effort to make his point clearer, he considered the difference between his desire that the stranger succeeds and his desire that his children prosper. The first desire, he says, does not become one of his aims. The second desire, on the other hand, is one of his central ends, on the achievement of which the success of his life will turn.

His acceptance of this second desire as being capable of bringing a turn in his own life commits him to the broader view of well-being as being also derivable from the prosperity of other individuals, his son, for instance. This is what he was geared towards side-tracking. Griffin however argued that the prosperity of his children becomes part of his life's being successful in a way that the prosperity of the stranger on the train does not. But this does not suggest that well-being is not derivable the other way round. Experience has proved that some individuals' life has been touched by desiring strangers' prosperity. This occurs in form of imparting one's life psychologically. Not only that, "my son" today can relate to me tomorrow as a stranger to the point of even fighting me or wishing my death, and the stranger I met in the train can be my husband or wife tomorrow, or the wife/husband of one of my children, thereby being an aspect of their prosperity which eventually becomes part of Griffin's life being successful.

---

[154]   Griffin J., 1986 pg. 21

The contradictions can be considered from his three points of view. In the first place, the contradiction is obvious when one considers Griffin saying that 'the success of his own life hangs on the achievement of his children's prosperity' and the follow-up contradictory statement that 'what he really wants is not his own achievement', or that 'his children's prosperity is not supposed to be a means to it.' By this, he denies what he has already accepted, that his children's prosperity will bring a turn in his own life. A turn in one's own life should be seen as an achievement influencing one's well-being.

In the second place, he contradicts his earlier stand that the success of the stranger is not part of his (Griffin's) well-being or aim, denying the possibility of other's successes being capable of having an influence on another individual's well-being/welfare. His children are also other individuals after all. Lastly, Griffin contradicts his earlier total rejection of mental state accounts, which deals with psychic income or utility. By claiming that his children's prosperity will bring a turn in his own life, he subscribes to a sort of psychic income- a psychological or mental satisfaction he derives from the prosperity of his children.

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, informed-desire need not be restricted, as Griffin has tried to do but failed. What is required is to appreciate the notion of well-being in its broader sense that will accommodate a non-restricted informed-desire, incorporating among other things, psychic utility or income. This I think, is Sidgwick's compromise mentioned above. That is, the submission that utility combines a psychological element and a preference element, resulting in a sort of 'desirable consciousness'.

3.3 Informed-desire, Mental States, and Desirable Consciousness

The attempt to make a wholesale disassociation between informed-desires and mental states, understood also as psychic income or utility, led Griffin into a contradiction by accepting that the prosperity of his children can bring a turn in his own life. This "turn in his own life" is best achieved by having a feeling of satisfaction. Daniel M. Hausman had clearly distinguished satisfaction of preferences from feeling of satisfaction.[155] Satisfaction of preferences implies here 'informed-desire' which is satisfied, and 'feeling of satisfaction' is the mental state after the preference is satisfied, a sort of desirable consciousness of the satisfied preferences.

It is unusual to have situations in which an individual's preferences are satisfied without the individual having the feeling of this satisfaction. Also doubtful is whether a preference

---

[155]   See D. M. Hausman, "The Impossibility of Interpersonal Utility Comparisons", In Mind, New Series, Vol. 104, No. 415, (Jul., 1995).

satisfaction would affect well-being when not accompanied with a feeling of satisfaction or fulfilment. In his own opinion, Frank A. Fetter considered distinguishing the two as unnecessary, since one ought to imply the other. He observed that "as we develop intellectually it comes about that judgment dominates our desires to a very considerable degree. Now if we have a desire for a thing, and succeed in securing it, a change takes place in our desire. This change we call *gratification.* (Or if the desire is completely met, we speak of the change as the *satisfaction* of the desire.) It is the sensation (feeling) which accompanies the getting of the thing desired".[156] Here, satisfaction of desire is understood also as a sensation or feeling that accompanies desires fulfilled. That is, a psychic or mental state after realising one's desires.

F. A. Fetter further held that "[t]he magnitude of the stream of psychic income depends in large measure on the natural temperament, on acquired habits of life and thought, and on the state of health of the individual. One person gets delight from small things; another is miserable in the midst of luxury. In 1913 the richest man and wife in Switzerland committed suicide together because they felt that they had nothing to live for; whereas the mass of the hardworking Swiss with their scanty material incomes, are as joyous and contented as any people in the world."[157]

Fetter noticed here that satisfaction of preferences or desires depends also on values, the nature of upbringing, and education that led to acquired habits in one's life. This in turn determines the understanding of well-being and its impact on individuals. John Rawls had a similar opinion. According to him, "all individuals have similar capacities for satisfaction ... Other things equal, great social utility results from educating people to have simple desires and to be easily satisfied; ... They are pleased with less and so presumably can be brought closer to their highest utility.[158]

In holding the view that "great social utility results from educating people to have simple desires and to be easily satisfied", Rawls joined Sidgwick and Fetter in conflating preference satisfaction and mental state views of well-being. This conflation is very important if we are to avoid the risk of neglecting things that are very important to some individuals' well-being. Rawls was right in advocating for a certain degree of mental disposition and cognitive capacities if satisfaction of utilities must necessarily lead to the individual's optimal well-

---

156   Frank A. Fetter, Economics, vol. 1, 1915.
157   Frank A. Fetter, Ibid.
158   Rawls, John 1971: A Theory of Justice. p. 323

being. Such mental disposition could also be explained as the capacity of having one's well-being promoted through psychic income understood also as desirable results produced by feelings or by mere consciousness of a valued status quo.

An instance of these desirable results which is supposed to be in the realm of feelings is Griffin's desire that his children prosper, not excluding also the desire that the sympathetic stranger he met in the train succeeds. And both desires, as we have seen, belong to psychic income, which could be understood as flow of satisfactions that makes life worth living. If Rawl's suggestion that "great social utility results from educating people to have simple desires and to be easily satisfied" is taken, there is then the need that Griffin and those along his thought pattern be educated to derive a psychic utility also from having the desire that a stranger succeeds. And such income will definitely add in making life worth living, or simply put, add to well-being.

In one of her series of interviews recorded in her book "The Heart of Altruism: Perceptions of a Common Humanity", Kristen R. Monroe asked one of her candidates: "…Someone tells you, or you read something in the paper, about some welfare mother who's had a real hard time, and you gave her some money. Then they don't appreciate it very much. Would you give them again?"[159] The answer is interesting for our discussion, and it goes: "…I like to think that I'd help them because they need the help, and I feel real good about it…I always have felt that if I did a good thing or did a good job, or I did the right thing, I don't have someone to tell me. I knew it. And that was always the important thing in my life."[160]

The person being interviewed, after being "well informed", decided to help strangers. To do that makes her feel good, and is also considered as the most important thing in her life. Griffin's restriction of informed-desire considered such desire to help strangers as being outside of what impacts well-being. But it is a fact that there are people who attach much importance on the accomplishment of good and noble acts they do not have any obligation to do. And they derive their life's fulfilment in such acts. Such individuals will be bracketed if we are to adopt Griffin's restriction of informed-desire. There cannot be a better description of well-being than deriving fulfilment from the accomplishment of one's informed-desires.

It is even true that there are some people whose happiness or comfort, if you like, whose welfare or well-being are jeopardized just by seeing anybody, I mean anybody, irrespective of any affiliation or not, in a wretched condition. Such scenes create a horrible discomforting situation for such people leaving them with two options. The first is a temporary solution of

---

[159]   K. R. Monroe, The Heart of Altruism: Perceptions of a Common Humanity. 1996, pg. 39
[160]   K. R. Monroe, Ibid

not doing more than just leaving the scene. The second and satisfactory option is to offer assistance, even if it does not change the life situation of the individual involved, but there is this feeling of having helped. There is a story told about Thomas Hobbes passing a beggar and giving the man money. Hobbes's companion comments on this with some surprise. Hobbes had argued so convincingly that people pursue their individual self-interest, and yet he himself had just demonstrated such charity to another. He corrected his companion's misimpression, explaining that he gave to the poor beggar not just to alleviate the beggar's suffering but rather for his own welfare because it made Hobbes too uncomfortable to see the poor wretch in such a miserable condition.[161]

The above story is revealing. And that is, there are cases in which some people satisfy their desire to help a stranger, not with the intention of prospering the well-being of the recipient, rather, the well-being of the giver. This comes in the form of our already described psychic income: it is the giver's feelings that are critical, not the recipient's improved situation. It is a sort of an action an individual performs for another person in order to feel good personally. It could be described as 'instrumentalizing' the recipient for selfish purposes. It is contrasted with situations in which one's feeling of satisfaction comes from being the agent causing the increased well-being of another person. Such cases affect well-being in both directions- *for the giver and for the receiver*, just as in the case of K. R. Monroe's candidate interviewed, where the donation made increased the well-being of the benevolent better-off giver as well as that of the destitute. Had it been that our friend Griffin had the up-bringing such like that of the individual interviewed, his desire that the stranger he met in the train succeeds, would have also brought the needed turn in his life.

A clinical Psychologist once recommended his patient the following therapy: Do acts of charity; think good of others and wish others well irrespective of relationships. This is prescribed with the intention of improving the health conditions, and as such, the well-being of the patient. Some people even took it upon themselves furthering the well-being of others as a way to alleviate their own past guilt. If I did something bad to someone, some other time in the future, I may try to engage in some kind of compensating action towards the same person, the needy, or towards a stranger. Without such a psychological therapy, with the concomitant psychic income, life will be meaningless to me.

A man once came to me and expressed his strong desire to donate to the poor, but first he wanted to make sure that he helps those who are really in need. I directed him to a charitable

---

[161]   I am indebted to Kristen R. Monroe for this story

organization I know. He made all necessary inquiries, and got detailed information about two poor orphans. He took up training them up to university level. This man once told me, "I believe that my life is prolonged whenever I get a phone call from any of them thanking me for making life meaningful to them." He later said: "It is really true, what goes around comes around." This man's desire is a "full informed-desire" because he had the needed information before he proceeded to act. In the end, the feelings of satisfaction (a mental state) for having done something good contribute immensely to his well-being. This proves my point that a conflation of mental state and informed-desire accounts is a better account for welfare.

Although without success, Griffin tried restricting informed-desire because he considered its range as being too wide as to influence the individual's well-being. I have tried to prove that such restriction is not what is needed because it is harmful to a certain class of people. Rather the individual has to be formed, educated, brought up or cultured in a way to accept well-being as derivable from the wide embrace of informed-desire. This is in recognition that human beings can, through formal or informal training, be more community-spirited than individualistic. Such training would make one recognise the relevance of mental/psychic utility. Community-spiritedness will see to it that the individual is able to consider the welfare of others alongside his or her well-being. That is, being able to work for communal welfare. On this basis of communitarian-spiritedness, 'the welfare of one, is the concern of all'.

3.4 **Well-Being and Utility: African-Igbo context**

3.4.0 **The Welfare of one being the Concern of all – African Humanism**

"As the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also, for his friend is another self." With this saying Aristotle supports the stand that welfare can go both sides- to the giver and to the receiver. The argument is that if it is possible to consider your friend as another self, then what you give to a friend could be likened to what you give to yourself. By extension, when one considers his neighbour or kinsman as another self, a good done to one's neighbour or kinsman could be likened to a good done to oneself. It is all about a question of what you take the other to be or to represent. This is the logical grounding for holding to the socio-ethical principle of the welfare of one being the concern of all. It is also the basis by which *it takes a whole village to raise a child*, for it makes sense to see the welfare of the child as the concern of all adults. To the extent that human welfare is at the basis of African morality, it is said to be humanistic. Humanism, in the African sense is understood as "the doctrine that sees human

needs, interests, and dignity as fundamental."[162] The preservation of the community is a means to realise the end in view, and that is, the realization of human needs, welfare and dignity.

In traditional African-Igbo society, the act of sending children to carry messages across villages to kin, friends of the family, and to neighbours is a humanitarian gesture that benefits both the child (the giver of the message) and receiver of the message. On the part of children, it has a very central communal benefit to their training and development. Apart from availing them the chance of getting pieces of good advice, blessings, praise or chiding from other people, it helps also in sharpening their ability to listen carefully, understand, remember, and precisely transmit verbal messages. Above all, it affords them the opportunity of knowing people in their environment, teaches them good manners, courtesy and other virtues, such as greeting before delivering the message, obedience, and rendering service to others. By such act, parents and guardians gradually steep their little ones in the communal ethic, which includes the fundamentally altruistic impulses underlying African humanism and social existence, for instance, the understanding that in giving, one also receives. On the other side, the receiver of the message benefits in a way that is self-explanatory. Such an act presents an ideal of African-Igbo communalism.

It is an act that presents morality as being strengthened more by fact of practical necessity. That is, a type of morality that has much to do with matters of practical reasons, including social and humanistic needs of human beings. This necessitates another important aspect of the communal view of morality- a view that construes morality as having to do with a possession of a good will towards oneself and towards others. This good will, the Igbo believe, is expected, *ceteris paribus*, to affect positively the practical life of humans, and makes a more humane way of relating with one another possible. This is implicit in some Igbo proverbs. Proverbs that come to mind include: *anya bewe, imi ebewe* (when the eye is crying, the nose starts running), and that of *ogbuturu ojuturu* (what hits an individual affects his neighbour). Good will is needed to arrive at such an extent of involvement in the fate of others.

Elaborating on this, K. Gyekye rightly observed that African moral values derive mostly from the peoples' experience living in the community; informed by the peoples' understanding of what is appropriate when relating with the other. These moral values were not understood to be revealed to them by the Supreme-being. The formula is practical and

---

[162]   Gyekye K., (1995): An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan conceptual Scheme, rev. ed. p.143.

simple: Behaviours that are not geared towards the well-being of the individual and the community are considered, in the African context, morally wrong.[163] This is defensible. The purportedly bad effect of a morally good act is witnessed mostly when the moral agent is individualistic in consideration. On the basis of being social, naturalistic and humanistic, and not individualistic, Gyekye observed that such basis of African moral values "enjoins a moral system that pursues human well-being. Thus, in African morality, there is an unrelenting preoccupation with human welfare. What is morally good is that which brings about – or is supposed, expected, or known to bring about – human well-being. This means, in a society that appreciates and thrives on harmonious social relationships, that what is morally good is what promotes social welfare, solidarity, and harmony in human relationships."[164]

Equally, in such a society, the well-being, and the interest of the individual is coextensive with the well-being of the community in general. This fact, as already noted, makes the rights of the individual and duties to the community to be mutually reinforcing. This demands that the individuals ought to have a sense of duty, so that they meet up with responsibilities or obligations as engrafted in African moral values. The African moral values demand that the individual has it as a duty to perfect himself and his welfare, and to seek help from others when faced with problems that threatens his welfare. This is not just because of himself, but because of others, that is, the community. This follows from the fact that the welfare of an individual imparts on the welfare of the community. For the same very fact, an individual has also an obligation to help and direct others in promoting their welfare. Therefore, moral persons do not act in ways that threaten either the general welfare of the community or that of any individual, himself inclusive.

On this view, in the Igbo society, laziness is abhorred, industriousness is a virtue, and suicide is a sacrilege against the land. It is then fallacious to argue in a communitarian system that "it is my life, and I will live it the way I want". It is fallacious given the fact that African-Igbo communitarian order seeks to maintain valuable social and moral relationships, and, in effect, what happens to one person may have long term effects on others and the community. This is why individuals are being brought up to be conscientious of the fact of being in a social and moral relationship with others.

In the process of being brought up in the context of traditional Igbo culture, communalism presents the individual the belief in the principle of practical altruism as an

---

[163]   Gyekye K., (1996): African Cultural Values: An Introduction, p. 57
[164]   Gyekye K., (1996): Ibid.

important social virtue. In its emphasis on humanism, the communitarian order principally encourages sharing with others as an important characteristic feature of being human. As such, it is a principle for guiding the practice of everyday life in ways that aim at creating a humane society which offers individuals a veritable ground for realizing their interests and welfare, conceived as being also in *en courant* with the interests and welfare of others in society. One witnesses here, the strength of cultural influences on the feelings, desires, thoughts, and actions of individuals within a cultural milieu. Moody-Adams have argued that: "A culture may be thought of as a way of life in a given social group, that will be shaped by more or less intricate patterns of normative expectations about emotion, thought, and action. These patterned expectations will typically take the form of social rules that give distinctive shape to the group's practices."[165] Here she accepts the view that people are shaped by the cultures in which they grew up. It does not however, obliterate the fact that two or more persons raised up in the same culture and tradition can turn out to have different characters and personalities. This fact presents cultural principles only as inclinations and as guides to actions. Welfare of one being the concern of all is a product of culture and tradition, and could be logically explained in a sense that the welfare of the other guarantees one's own welfare. This is understood in a context of inescapable answerability and responsibility for one another - the *ogbuturu ojuturu* analogy.

3.4.1 **Relating with the Poor / the Needy:** *Ogbenye*

Such answerability and responsibility is manifested in the manner the Igbo address the poor in the community. The poor is seen as 'the Needy'. The Igbo word, '*Ogbenye*' refers to a needy member of the community. And this is the only word for the poor. Etymologically, it comprises two Igbo words: *Ogbe* (neighbourhood) and *nye* (give). *Ogbenye* then literally means one who receives from the neighbourhood. This refers to an individual, who, because of his economic situation, has become the responsibility of relatives. Most of the times, an *ogbenye* expects his relatives to live up to their responsibilities on him. He does not see himself as a hopeless beggar, thanks to his understanding of the cultural values of his society. This implies also that well-to-do members of the family are expected to understand and perceive the situation of the needy members of their kindred or village, and then extend help to them. This makes such a village *clan vita*- a lively clan, where 'there are no beggars'. In this sense, *Ogbenye* is not considered a beggar, but one with a sort of right of earning from the

---

[165]   Moody-Adams, Michele M., "Culture, Responsibility, and Affected Ignorance." Ethics 104 (January 1994), 291-309 at pp. 294-95

wealth of his kinsmen or extended family members. Irrespective of this understanding, a person whose laxity or foulness prevented him from making a living for himself and his family or community, might be deprived of the fruits of others' labour. But as a norm, the extended family sees to it that its own members are not starved.

This proverb explains further the cultural sensibility: "*Onye ji akwu toolu nchi na nchi adighi ali elu*" (whoever has palm nut let him drop some for the Grasscutter, since the Grasscutter (cane rat) cannot climb a palm tree, although has palm nut as its favourite food). This proverb has within itself a justification for the help due to the less privileged or the poor. The Grasscutter is, in its nature, incapable of climbing, and therefore any individual privileged to climb has a moral duty to make available to the Grasscutter palm nut which is gotten mostly on top of palm trees, unless on rare occasions when the nuts drop from the tree. The implication is that, it could be seen as a demand of justice to render help to the needy and helpless members of a communitarian system. In recognition of a fact, the desire to live communitarian ethics is nursed gradually and continuously in the life of members of a communitarian order by the society. And as observed by David Sussman, "whether and how we should care about some things often depends, in part, on whether we desire to do so",[166] This nursing is, in its most part, informal. Proverbs and other manners of day to day communication are so formulated in a way that they gradually activate the required desire.

The need to keep such a desire alive, and as such, the custom of having welfare to impart both directions of the giver and of the receiver is the important culture of reciprocity.

3.4.2 Reciprocity

Reciprocity, as observed in chapter one, is expected to be an important feature of a kingdom of ends. The Igbo communitarian spiritedness is acquired, in part, within the community through the effects of the concepts of responsibility and reciprocity. The two concepts are highly valued and necessary in the definition of moral personhood of the individual. As I have already emphasized, responsibility and reciprocity demand a sense of duty and a possession of a good will. Reciprocity equally informs the African-Igbo sense of hospitality. On this, V.C Uchendu has the following: "The Igbo are nothing if not hospitable. To them hospitality is a major social obligation. Inability to meet it is a humiliating experience for the Igbo. The general complaint of farmers after the planting season concerns the scarcity of yams with

---

[166]   Sussman David, 2003: "The Authority of Humanity" Ethics, Vol. 113, No. 2 The University of Chicago Press, pp. 350-366, at p. 355

which to feed their guests. Hospitality is based on two principles: *direct* reciprocity and *indirect* reciprocity."[167]

The culture of reciprocal giving and taking finds its meaning also in the understanding of the two-way effect in welfare promotion- the sense that the giver promotes both his or her welfare and that of the receiver. In this sense, the mere fact of accepting with a good heart the assistance of the benevolent helper is understood as a way of reciprocating the good gesture of the helper. This is indirect reciprocity. Hence, reciprocity is indirect when the benevolent giver is conscious that in giving, he is improving also his own welfare through the conscious awareness of the warm acceptance, by the receiver, of his assistance, or at least, its presumption. It is also indirect when one understands that in helping the needy in the community, one is also improving the general condition of the community from which the giver is also sustained.

Over and above being indirect, reciprocity is direct when the receiver of a kind gesture does something substantial, sooner or later, in a direct exchange for the gesture received. Both types of reciprocity are necessary in defining moral personhood of the individual. They leave impressions on how social and ethical an individual is. This culture is equally sustained by the fact that the interest in promoting human well-being informs people's reasoning and motivation for actions. That is, to make life more friendly and humane, the Igbo make serious efforts towards finding ways and means of reciprocating every favour.

Reciprocity should not be understood as existing only between individuals. We have already seen the type of reciprocal existence of the individual and the community. The observation of Julius Nyerere is also helpful here, and applies also in Igbo communities. He noticed that: "In traditional African society we were individuals within a community. We took care of the community, and the community took care of us…Nobody starved, either of food or of the human dignity, because he lacked personal wealth; he could depend on the wealth possessed by the community of which he is a member."[168] This observation expresses in a simply way the reciprocal relationship of the individual and the society. It is also Nyerere's way of expressing the African-Igbo concept of an *Ogbenye*, who, although without personal wealth, is not expected to go starved. Note that Nyerere placed his observation in the past, that is, the time of pre-modern Africa. That is to say, such practice is fast becoming a thing of the past. The Igbo word for the poor- *Ogbenye*- also finds its real meaning and conception within

---

[167]   V.C. Uchendu, The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria, Forth Worth, 1965, p. 71.
[168]   Nyerere J., (1968): "Ujaama- The Basis of African Socialism" in Freedom and Unity. New York: Oxford Univ. press, pp. 165-166.

the same time frame. Today, the condition of an *Ogbenye,* generally speaking, is almost different.

The Igbo proverb: 'aka nri kwuo aka ekpe, aka ekpe kwuo aka nri' (the right hand washes the left, and the left washes the right) is communitarian and reciprocal. It asserts that the promotion of human well-being is a collaborative and reciprocal endeavour. Such reciprocal endeavours, in form of acts and obligations, help in holding African-Igbo families together. Instances of them are in form of mutual sharing, mutual aid, and caring for one another. They are also witnessed between extended family relationships, between couples, and also between parents and their children. By extension, they are equally witnessed on the community level as already observed.

The fact that most people are ready to reciprocate does not imply that every act is directly reciprocated, or must be directly reciprocated. Often, a benevolent giver demands no sort of direct reciprocity. This is praise worthy. But it will be wrong, in the Igbo communitarian system, for the benevolent giver to think that the needy have no sort of right to expect kindness from others. That would contradict the values of communitarian life. We have already noted that the *Ogbenye,* in the strictest sense of the word, is not a hopeless beggar, but one who demands the right to be helped. To avoid false benevolence manifested in an expectation of a dehumanizing condition from the needy, the donor needs to have some degree of a sense of obligation or commitment towards the needy member of the community. Such commitment or obligation is a dormant feature of traditional Africa, and is strengthened by a sense of brotherhood. The Igbo scholar, Egbeke Aja captured this advantage of the sense of common progenitor among individuals in various African communities when he held that,

> the first element that impinges on the case of traditional Africa is the ability of the members of the community to trace their origins to the same blood. This explains why in the thickening and thinning sense of blood relationship which each African feels with regard to units of social action, there is also a deepening and weakening sense of loyalty and commitment.[169]

The consciousness of such common ancestry makes it possible for the benevolent donor to give to the needy of his community or neighbourhood, and this, most of the times, irrespective of personal feelings toward the receiver. It is therefore common to hear individuals express, at times, the fact that they are contributing or rendering assistance in respect of cherished traditional values, and not because of this or that particular beneficiary. Kant also concurred to

---

[169] Egbeke, A., "Individuality in an African Communal Universe" In Oguejiofor O. (edt.,), *African Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Proceedings of an International Conference held at Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu, 1998, p. 390

this necessity of a sort of a sense of obligation on the side of the benevolent donor. This is in order to assure that the receiver is not reduced to a status of a mere thing. According to him: "Many people may take pleasure in doing good actions but consequently do not want to stand under obligations towards others. If one only comes to them submissively they will do everything; they do not want to subject themselves to the rights of people, but to view them simply as objects of their magnanimity. It is not all one under what title I get something. What properly belongs to me must not be accorded to me merely as something I beg for."[170]

It is really true that many people do not want to stand under obligations towards others as regarding assistance. They do not want any sort of commitment. They prefer to give freely and take pleasure in doing so since their magnanimity will be very clear in the absence of standing under any form of obligation. This is what makes it a different case in giving to *Ogbenye* in Igbo communalism. There is the sense of standing under obligation to help coupled with the awareness that the *Ogbenye* expects such assistance as something he or she has a sort of right to. This explains why an *Ogbenye* can complain of being neglected by neighbours who are at the same time his or her relatives. I accept that this state of affairs has its negative effect, in the sense that it may lead to laziness and lack of industriousness.

The remark by Kant concerning the pleasure taken by some superiors in seeing that those who are to gain their assistance or services wear a submissive and self-humiliating garb brings me to the next topic of consideration: Hierarchical structure and the authoritative influence of elders and superiors in the African-Igbo communitarian system.

---

[170]   Kant, Immanuel: Gesammelte Schriften, Berlin. Ak 19:145

CHAPTER FOUR

Hierarchy and Authority in African-Igbo Communalism

4.0 Introduction

One cannot deny that in almost every culture, there are threads of continuity linking the past with the present. There is also, in some aspects of the culture, a discontinuity with the past. Recall that my concern in this project is about how autochthonous Igbo values can exist in modern Igbo society and still create a sort of kingdom of ends. This might, in my opinion, necessitate discontinuing some aspects of the culture, or a reinterpretation of them. Practices that are traditional to a culture could survive, as I suppose, if they find meaning and relevance, and therefore application in the modern situation. I consider cultural hierarchical structures and authority as aspects of Igbo culture that need to survive. Some writers have considered traditional Igbo communities as egalitarian. But I think it has a sort of hierarchy which might be called "cultural or status hierarchy". By the time one considers some of the views that support egalitarian conception, one realises that this conception incorporates my cultural hierarchy with its concomitant *ethical and rational authoritarianism*.

Ethical authoritarianism here implies a practice by which a custodian of "what we ought to do" from which "what I ought to do" and "what you ought to do" flow, has a cultural mandate to see to it that the 'oughts' are observed. Rational authoritarianism is to be understood as the practice of exercise of authority rationally and justifiably by "what we ought to know and do" Such exercise of authority is needed for the passing on of wisdom. In other words, it is the moral obligation of an elder or a leader, who is supposed to be well informed, to make use of his or her status position in fashioning, directing, and fine-tuning the interest of the juniors, be it within the family circles or on the community level. I will be arguing in this section that this cultural or status hierarchy needs to survive in modern African-Igbo society in its ideal form. Such survival would not jeopardise my stand that individuals in Igbo communities should be seen as ends in themselves, thereby allowing the community to be a kingdom of ends. This sounds like a paradox: hierarchy in a kingdom of ends.

4.1 Traditional African-Igbo as Culturally Hierarchical

4.1.1 Delineating Cultural-Status Hierarchy

I agree with J. W. Hendricks that "few, if any, societies are without some form of domination, whether it is based on age, gender, kinship, or some more institutionalized form of domination."[171] In traditional African-Igbo societies, hierarchy as a form of domination was not understood in political and economic terms, as an extreme case of social stratification. It was rather a cultural or status hierarchy that is sustained, on the one hand, by the African sense of respect for elders by their juniors; and on the other hand, by the practice of recognizing special cultural roles and achievements of certain individuals within the traditional society, this understanding informs the penchant, in Igbo society, for giving and receiving of different traditional and cultural titles. This is not the general understanding of social stratification. In its common understanding, social stratification has to do with a social structure in which class relations for instance, according to Claude Meillassoux "are created, not out of categories like 'elders' and 'juniors,' but through the dominance of entire, organically constituted communities which endow all their members, irrespective of age and sex, with prerogatives and privileges over all the members of the dominated communities."[172] My use of cultural hierarchy does not include this description of stratification.

As subject matter of anthropology, much could be found in the literature concerning culture and cultural differences. But not much has been done on cultural hierarchy from a philosophical view point. In cultural hierarchy, the emphasis is not on social class defined by economic power or strength, like the hierarchy of unequal *classes* of bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It is also not on racial differences, but rather on age and status differences, and on respect accruing from one being an occupant of a certain position in the service or maintenance of cultural and traditional values, like in the family and in other cultural groups and institutions. In other words, in traditional Igbo, individuals were also differentiated hierarchically to the extent they represented the defining, that is, autochthonous features of Igbo tradition and culture. Age differences and culturally determined positions of honour cut across the relational class distinction between the poor and the rich. It is precisely this type of hierarchy, in my own opinion, that addresses directly my concern on creating a kingdom of ends. The consciousness of such a kingdom on the level of culture will, I suppose, affect the

---

[171]   Hendricks, J. W. 1988. "Power and knowledge: discourse and ideological transformation among the Shuar", In *American Ethnologist* 15, pp. 216-238 at 217

[172]   Meillassoux, C. 1981. Maidens, Meal and Money. p. 81

atmosphere in which social as well as economic life operates. Such an atmosphere is one where, irrespective of such hierarchy, there are no group of individuals seen as powerful 'lords', and the other individual seen as mere instruments at their disposal.

At this point, it might be necessary to note that cultural hierarchy has more to do with status hierarchy than with a mere power hierarchy. The two are not exactly the same. Status hierarchy has to do with an ordering of individuals according to the level of respect accorded them by other members of the community given also their services, achievements, and contributions in their communities. On the other hand, power hierarchy presents a picture of an ordering of individuals according to their occupation of different positions that have different levels of authority attached, positions that make them lords and masters. It would then be an abuse of respect for an individual enjoying a high level of status in his or her community or family to consider himself or herself not on grounds of status hierarchy, but from the outlook of power hierarchy, an attitude that usually lead to power intoxication. Hence, one hears such people making expressions like 'I have all the powers to…', 'it is within my powers to…' Although instances of this abuse abound, what status hierarchy enjoys is a good mass of influence within the society.

Power hierarchy does not necessarily imply status hierarchy. This is because power could be grabbed or usurped. Hence, power hierarchy must not also necessarily imply a good moral personhood, but although status hierarchy could be misused and therefore morphed into power hierarchy, moral personhood is normally part of the initial considerations. Some writers on the Igbo society argue that in the absence of power hierarchy, the society is non-hierarchical.

4.1.2 Traditional African-Igbo Society Considered Egalitarian but Hierarchical

Hierarchy in an egalitarian society, what a paradox! Some writers have strongly argued that there could not be a truly classless society, in the sense that there is no presence of hierarchical structure in any of its forms. Marshall D. Sahlins is among these thinkers. He argued that "[t]heoretically, an egalitarian society would be one in which every individual is of equal status, a society in which no one outranks anyone. But even the most primitive societies could not be described as egalitarian in this sense."[173] He however recognised some universally employed minimal stratification criteria as those of "age, sex, and personal

---

[173]   Sahlins, M.D., 1958. Social Stratification in Polynesia, p. 1

characteristics."[174] This view is what Hendricks re-echoed in the citation we saw earlier that "few, if any, societies are without some form of domination, whether it is based on age, gender, kinship, or some more institutionalized form of domination." In his conviction that "truly" egalitarian societies in the above sense do not exist. Sahlins suggests that we reserve the term stratified for societies in which criteria other than the above listed three or in addition to them exist.[175]

In Sahlins model, a traditional African-Igbo society is not stratified. But there exists also in Sahlins, a sense of minimal stratification, and for that, in my own sense, we can talk of certain forms of hierarchical structure in a traditional African-Igbo society. It is a sort of hierarchy that is necessitated, *inter alia*, by the existence, also, in Igbo communities, of 'certain personal characteristics', of age differences, and of gender. Morton Fried's definition of an egalitarian society supports the view that considered traditional African- Igbo as being one. In his opinion, "[a]n egalitarian society is one in which there are as many positions of prestige in any given age-sex grade as there are persons capable of filling them."[176] In Igbo communities, title-taking brings an individual in a prestigious status hierarchy or position, and there is no limit as to the number of people that can go for it. Whoever is considered qualified by the community, is invited and invested with a title, as far as his age is ripe for it. Considered along this line of thought, Igbo society could be considered egalitarian.

Gyekye K., and Motala Z., argued for egalitarian elements in some traditional African societies from the point of view of the possibility of consensus decision making in those societies. They noted that in a situation of decision making on matters concerning the community, the people or their representatives gather together, and decisions are expected to be taken only after every individual contribution has been considered. All participating adults have absolute freedom in expressing their opinions on the issues being deliberated. Intimidations and suppression of any contributing voice is discouraged. No one is punished for holding opposing views on issues, even if they were those of the Head-chief or a wealthy man.[177] Sithole presents the situation thus: "Things are never settled until everyone has had something to say. African traditional council allows the free expression of all shades of opinions. *Any man has full right to express his mind on public questions.*"[178]

---

[174]   Ibid
[175]   Ibid p.2
[176]   Fried, M. (1967): The Evolution of Political Society, p.33
[177]   Gyekye K., (1996): African Cultural Values: An Introduction, p. 153
[178]   as cited in Gyekye K., (1996): Ibid (emphasis in original)

This observation applies also in Igbo communities, but that is not to say that within the Assembly, there are no hierarchies of status, even though not repressive ones. There are titled-men, heads of families and villages, elders, and other community functionaries. All these categories of people are recognised as effective hierarchies in their own rights. I therefore hold to the opinion that the Igbo traditional society was not and is not egalitarian in a real sense of absence of any form of hierarchical institutions. It is not as simple a society as some tried to present it. However, there were and there are egalitarian contexts, scenes, or situations, like occasions of consensus decision making. These scenes and contexts, and the relationships of which they are composed, are as much constitutive of the type of hierarchical structure that I called cultural-status hierarchy. With this, I have the support of M. Fried who has warned that the usage "egalitarian society," is only an ellipsis, "the missing word being 'relatively'."[179] 'Relatively' ordinarily means 'somehow'. So, the Igbo society, which is 'somehow' egalitarian, has certain forms of cultural-status hierarchy. Let's consider them.

4.2 Forms of Cultural-Status Hierarchy in Igbo society

I have just acknowledged that in Igbo communities, there are different status that give individuals certain hierarchically associated prerogatives in certain occasions and situations. Among such individuals are traditional heads of different families or groups, role models or elders, priests, titled men, etc. Many of these individuals take part, in a special way, in ensuring peace and justice, and in educating, in an informal manner, other members regarding the values of the community and different forms of activities on which the communal as well as the individual welfare of the people depend. Some forms of these hierarchical status are conferred upon their possessors by the community through their heads or chiefs, while others are hereditary.

4.2.1 First born lineage / Right of Primogeniture

Primogeniture is a form of seniority right. As in most African societies, it carries with it a lot of rights and privileges. Among other things, it is generally accepted that in Igbo families, the first son is next in hierarchy after his father. The privileges of his position in the family make his opinion on family issues to have much weight. In the first instance, he has the privilege of

---

[179]   Fried, M. Ibid. p. 28

making a preferential claim to the wealth of his father. Outside the domain of wealth, the eldest son demands that his brothers and sisters accord him also the respect due to their father, especially, in the absence of their father.

In another instance, the position of the first son gives him the privilege of better knowledge of the laws and customs of the land, and therefore is expected to be wiser than others in matters of tradition and culture. With the awareness that his first son takes after him the mantle of leadership, a father stays and discusses more with his eldest son. Within the course of such discussions, proverbs and traditional stories that are full of wisdom are made use of. It has to be clear to the eldest son how his father acquired all his landed properties, in case of land disputes. It is therefore common to hear elders begin their speeches with, for instance: "I heard from my father that …", "My father once told me that…", "The elders use to say…", or "according to our forefathers…" etc. The act of mentioning the opinion of passed elders or forefathers is a sort of reference or appeal to authority on the issue being discussed.

4.2.2 **Title-taking (traditional recognitions)**

The reason why I shared the opinion that an African-Igbo society is 'somehow' egalitarian is Morton Fried's definition as noted above. In his view, "[a]n egalitarian society is one in which there are as many positions of prestige in any given age-sex grade as there are persons capable of filling them". As I mentioned already, this definition comes close to what still obtains presently in the African- Igbo communities. Writing on this, Onwumechili C.A. also observed that the Igbo have "title societies open to all free born of the community."[180] That is to imply that the titles could be received by any individual considered qualified. It is a status that is not inherited but conferred upon on individual merits. Individuals do not usually receive titles merely for the fact that their fathers had traditional titles. Onwumechili helped in mentioning some of the necessary qualifications for holding or taking titles among the Igbo. Although there may be some variations depending on each community, his list includes "age, virtuous life style, contributions to development of the community, dedication to truth, peace and service, prowess in some human affairs, and of course sufficient wealth to pay the cost of investiture of the title."[181] The necessity of the contents of this list is because of the very fact

---

[180]   Onwumechili C.A., Igbo Enwe Eze: The Igbo have no Kings [The 2000 Ahịajọkụ Lecture] (http://ahiajoku.igbonet.com/2000/.
[181]   Onwumechili C.A., Ibid

that having been conferred with a traditional title, the individual now possesses a cultural status that attracts high respect, *ipso facto*, the individual finds himself or herself within the hierarchical structure of the community, and enjoys a status hierarchy with all the honour and prestige attached. Onwumechili also added that such an individual has recognized rights, duties and responsibilities. He went further to mention some of these duties and responsibilities. According to him:

> Certain traditional duties and functions are reserved for elders and/or title holders. These include: conducting funeral rites, marriage ceremonies, libations, kola nut ceremonies; communing with ancestors, etc. … It is noted that title holders are also members of their appropriate age grades. But even within their age grades, they enjoy their respect, honour and prestige. In the above ways, the elders and title holders enjoyed greater participation in Igbo traditional government than others.[182]

Enjoying greater participation in traditional governance makes title holders and elders to take up the function of legislators in a kingdom of ends. The demand, on their part, for maturity of age, virtuous life style, contributions to development of the community, and dedication to truth, peace and service is to ensure the right attitude for their function and responsibility. It is to enable them, as Kant demanded, to be able to abstract from the personal differences, and from all content of their private ends, so as to have the interest to look beyond subjective ends and work for objective ends for the welfare and good of the entire community. Virtuous life style, dedication to truth and peace is a demand that title-holders be people of good will, an idea which, according to Robert Johnson, is supposed to match with the common idea of a 'good person'[183] who is morally conscious irrespective of private interests.

The demand that they make contributions to the overall development of the community, and that of their readiness to render service would be in response to the stand supported by Thomas E. Hill Jr. that legislators in a kingdom of ends place a high value on preserving, developing, exercising, and respecting the rational and moral capacities of all persons in the kingdom, and in acknowledgment of the personal ends of others, legislators give weight to whatever enhances members' abilities and opportunities to pursue those ends successfully within the bounds of the moral rules they adopt.[184]

---

182   Ibid
183   Johnson, Robert, Ibid
184   T. E. Hill Jr. Ibid, 295-296

4.2.3 Elderhold

It might be asked: Who is an elder? When African-Igbo answers the question with the proverb which says that "it is one's moral deeds that are counted, not one's years,"[185] it suggests that to be old is not the only factor that counts in determining who is an elder. There are instances where relatively young men of high probity are considered among the elders, thereby making it possible to talk of 'a young elder': Young used in the sense of an adult age but not yet old enough as to rank with other elders. Yet, he is referred to as an elder in respect of his moral status and high sense of responsibility. Instance of this is when a young man takes the position of the head of the family in the event of an early death of his father, and exhibits such characters and wisdom that could be identified with elders that witnessed old age. The view I already expressed above about moral status and the idea of moral personhood being an important consideration in cultural hierarchy might also imply that if all the elderly people, chronologically speaking, are automatically among revered elders, as people possessing the social and cultural status, they all, in virtue of their old aged, possessed also a good moral status, good will, and therefore are good people. This is far from being the case.

As just noted, the African-Igbo talk of a 'young elder'. This is supported by the Igbo proverb that says "when a young man washes his hands well, he dines with the elders". 'Washing one's hands very well' is figurative here. It implies the possession of strong and virtuous characters identifiable among elders, or being morally mature to the extent of being a role model or a model for a good character. 'Dining with elders' is a way of saying 'having the privileges of becoming an elder'. So, literally, the proverb means that when a young man acts with wisdom and a sense of responsibility, he becomes an elder, a young elder. In such a case, the demand of a certain chronological age is waved off. Being an elder in this sense is not necessarily 'being old' as calculated by years of one's birth. It is also in this manner of understanding that in the Catholic Church tradition, a priest is referred to as an elder in the church irrespective of his age.

K. Gyekye tried to differentiate the nuance 'elderly people' from 'elders in the true moral sense'. He argues: "For, surely there are many elderly people who are known to be wicked, ungenerous, unsympathetic: whose lives, in short, generally do not reflect any moral maturity or excellence. In terms of a moral conception of personhood, such elderly people may not

---

[185] Dzobo, N. K.: "African Symbols and Proverbs as Sources of Knowledge and Truth," in *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*1, eds., Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye (Washington D.C.,; Council for Research in Values and Philosophy), 1992, p. 97

qualify as persons."[186] In this sense, being an elder is a moral status that has with it certain authority to teach and correct others especially the younger ones in terms of young age. An elder, in our own usage in this project, must first of all be a person and not a non-person in the sense of moral personhood. And since moral personhood is acquired, the moral status of being an elder is also acquired or earned. It is not automatically conferred by the mere fact of growing old. A person without reason does grow old after all. An elder must be a moral and rational person.

A complete package of being an elder incorporates being a rational adult and having a moral personhood. As we saw early, moral personhood is cultivated or earned within the context of the community. It is a social and moral assessment of an individual's activities in relation with other members of the community. So, an adult individual earns for himself or herself the status of an elder by proving to be averagely consistent in morally right decisions and actions, and in activities that promote the welfare of the community and her individual members. Such an elder is reasonably seen by others, especially the young people, to be in possession of justifiable beliefs, traditional wisdom. And invariably, such an elder is considered as being capable of making correct judgements, and therefore worthy, not only of respect but also to be listened to in matters of morals. Such an elder is qualified as an authority in matters concerning ethics of living. I will refer to such authority as '*ethical authoritarianism*', which I consider an answer to the criticism of authoritarianism against communitarian ethics, whereby elders have the authority to determine right actions.

The above does not imply that no respect is accorded to old age. All elderly people are respected. And many a times, all of them are presumed to be elders too. Those who manifestly exhibit acts that lack moral probity, lose gradually the prerogative of being, in a normative and cultural sense, fathers, mothers, or role models to their juniors. Only those who have proved their moral and rational integrity are taken to be role models and also seen to be the repository of justifiable beliefs and good judgement. These beliefs, it behoves on the elders to transmit to the young ones through an informal process of day to day interaction, corrections and admonitions. The state of affairs that makes an elderly person not to belong to the class of elders is a shameful one. Such an elderly person is a failure, and the chances of his or her losing the general respect accorded to old age are very high.

To be an elder is an automatic condition to belong to the rank of leaders, superiors, and/or decision makers in the Igbo families and communities, and almost in all African societies.

---

[186]   Gyekye K., (1997): Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience, p. 49

This status is not conferred, rather, it is naturally earned as pointed out already. It is considered advantageous for any family or group to have an elder- man or woman- in their midst. From such an elder are expected wise and reasonable opinions on matters concerning the group and its members. There could be situations in which adult members of an extended family group listen and show more loyalty to their grandfather or grandmother, or to other elders in their kindred than to their own parents. Such scenarios are strengthened by the belief of the Igbos that *what an elder saw sitting down, a young man may not see standing*. This proverb presupposes a standing position as an advantage for a clearer sighting of the object in question. It now says that the wisdom that is acquired with long years of experience of an elder outweighs the supposed advantage of a standing position of a young man.

The powerful influence of elders is strengthened by the expectation that elders seek justice and righteousness in all their dealings, and possess qualities like gentleness, freedom from greed and jealousy. Words uttered by elders, either blessings or curses, are considered to have powerful influences, and therefore are taken seriously. With respect to this, in African traditional religion, generally, elders are considered the best situated to offer sacrifices to the ancestors. From this notion originated the saying among the Igbo that *when an elder performs a sacrifice, it looks as if it was placed directly on the palms of the ancestral spirits*. With such a high status, it amounts to a heavy disappointment to see an elder telling lies or being greedy. It is a taboo.

Generally, African-Igbo believe in a sort of continued relationship of dead members of the family, and by extension of the community, with the living. This belief combined with a second belief that these dead members remember vividly treatments they received in their old age, makes it understandable the caution with which the aged are treated. It is also strongly believed that the manner an individual treats and respects an elder or his or her seniors, is how such an individual will be treated by his juniors. Individuals, on account of this belief, try to be good and obedient to elders, and treat them with respect and caution.

4.3.0 Appreciating Status-Hierarchy in Igbo Society

A functional account of anything whatsoever helps in explaining why that thing exists. The function of various hierarchies in Igbo society explains why such hierarchies exist. The appealing function of cultural-status hierarchy in general, and in particular, respect for elders, is the reason why it still obtains in the Igbo communities.

Generally, in a normal situation, administrative or social hierarchy establishes and maintains social order, coordination or cohesion. It gives individual members of the society a psychological reassurance for social security and stability. This is also the case in the Igbo society. Above that, the fact that in traditional Igbo, cultural status hierarchy has much to do with the moral personhood, makes this hierarchy to have also an effect that goes back to a state of its worthiness, that is, the effort at acquiring a good moral personality, or the effort at becoming not only an elderly person but also an elder. This goes to say that such status hierarchy can serve motivational purposes for individuals for acquiring a good moral character. Individuals are also motivated to be more community oriented, and thereby acquire a recognition that imparts on their status in the community.

4.3.1 Social Cohesion and Administration

On the aspect of social cohesion, a typical Igbo society is made up of different villages, kindred and families. Life is normally lived not as individuals but in groups. All these groups are welded together and given cohesion through a certain form of administrative hierarchy that serves to remind individual members of 'what everyone ought to do' in order to avoid and/or to resolve conflicts and misunderstanding among members. The various levels of authority are graded within this form of hierarchy. Beginning from the family unit, the head of a family unit is directly subordinate to the head of an extended family group, who in turn is directly subordinate to his kindred-head. Furthermore, the kindred-head is subordinate to the village head. The village head or chief is then finally subordinate to the community head. Each hierarchical head is expected to protect the rights of his subordinates, provide justice for everyone, reconcile differences between individuals, prevent crimes, and bring wrongdoers to face the consequences of their actions. Although there are consequences of disobedience and disrespect, usually, there is no much of formally instituted external body to guarantee adherence to the orders of a higher authority than the demand of wilful respect for the authority that be.

The respect accorded to elders and their opinions reduces emphasis on the use of law enforcement agents in matters of social control. For example, even in the present day, it is considered too ugly to make family misunderstanding a police case, or a matter for the judiciary. In a family where such things happen, one wonders whether there are no elders or whether there are only elderly people who have lost their moral personhood, and therefore,

'are no persons'. The majority of the misunderstandings between individuals or group of individuals are settled within family, or small group circles. In all, caution is taken to avoid vindictiveness in the application of corrective measures. In cases of anti-social crimes or behaviours that concern the larger community, it behoves on the hierarchy in place to restore and promote social relationships. Reconciliation and the restoration of social harmony were the targets in crisis settlements, not retribution, hence the importance attributed to compensation. To achieve this, a hierarchical figure with correct reasoning and moral reputation that is above price is a necessary demand.

4.3.2 Moral Education

Moral education in Igbo society and in most traditional African societies takes place mostly in an informal way in the sense that moral principles are taught and learned in a communal context. This happens in the forms of daily corrections, guides, admonitions, chiding, and praise geared towards helping one another to have a sense of moral obligation and therefore acquire moral personhood. As such, these forms constitute the facts by which moral principles and beliefs are acquired. That is, acceptable and reprehensible behaviours are known through reactions of other moral agents within the community. This could be seen as a form of justification of knowledge through the use of practical reason. But in this case, the reasoning is a communal activity. Most of those communal thoughts are couched in different forms of narratives, parables, folklores, and proverbs from which is expected that children and young adults can draw moral lessons and knowledge.

This form of morally educating people goes on for a long time even till early adulthood in forms of constant and serious chiding, and persistent ribbing- friendly or unfriendly. It is accepted to be a duty of everyone to help one another in learning the "oughts" or the "does". Therefore, every individual is expected to understand it when, because of reprehensible behaviour, he or she is chided, upbraided, or ribbed. More so, the communal nature of life in African societies provides multiple opportunities for this kind of community prodding. It is almost unavoidable in the sense that an individual would always find himself or herself in one form of communal gathering or the other, and right there, come the moral punches from the people. This practice is however conceivable only in societies where individuals see themselves as committed to the community and are also not highly litigious.

As noted above, elders, having proved their moral and rational integrity are taken to be role models and also seen to be the repository of justifiable moral beliefs and good judgement.

The role of elders in the moral education of the young makes status hierarchy to be much appreciated. Elders transmit beliefs to the young ones through an informal process of day to day interaction, corrections and admonitions. Let us call this process 'the informal process of moral education'.

4.3.2.1 The Informal Process of Moral Education

To determine how people may be morally educated regarding moral principles and values, and their application to everyday life's situations has been part of the concern of moral philosophy. How do we effectively educate people to know how they ought to make moral decisions, think, behave, and in fact, generally live a moral life? This concern is of great importance in traditional African-Igbo communalism. This is for the fact that the moral personhood necessary for the continual existence of a normative community is determined by the exercise of moral virtues, and the effective means of educating people, in order that they may acquire these virtues, should be a matter of great concern.

In Igbo community, as in most traditional African societies, the imparting of the knowledge of traditional and moral values mostly takes the form of informal education, especially in form of admonitions and good examples of elders from within and outside one's own family unit, not forgetting the readiness of the younger ones to accept and follow these good examples. The informal education method was effective given the fact that *the African grounds morality and moral education on practical experiences and actions*, and not on mere theoretical conceptual ideas and principles. For its effectiveness, basic good family up-bringing of a child in his or her unit family plays an important role. However, as already noted, one of the basic concepts in moral education or formation in African communalism is that "*it takes a whole village or community to raise a child*". Conceptualized in this manner, the community, through its elders, considers it fundamentally a duty to guide people, especially growing ones, to achieve moral personhood, and therefore become 'persons' in the best interest of the individual, his or her family, and the entire community.

The strong consciousness of communal ethics of life as a feature of communalism presents this duty to educate the young as a high priority. Such consciousness is informed by the fact that a family or a community is defined in relatedness. That is, a community is defined in respect of the domineering character of the majority of her members. Such manner of definition has far reaching consequences. Individuals from a community or family with a bad name or reputation hardly find acceptance outside their environment. In some cases, bad

community reputation could even deny individuals job opportunities elsewhere outside their communities. Although this attitude leads to over generalisation, it is however not strange. Even today in the global world, people from a particular nation or country could be disadvantaged or favoured merely because of how others take their country. Consequently, in Igbo families or communities, one often hears such warnings as "we cannot allow you to drag our name and reputation to the mud", "be careful, you are spoiling the name of this family or community", or "you are making our community a laughing stock". To avoid landing in such a situation, adults take it as their responsibility to educate the younger ones in moral principles, in terms of 'what we ought to do', which is supposed to represent acceptable behaviours. Usually, people including children, tend to take pride in being good ambassadors of their communities and families. Being a good ambassador can brighten the way for your kinsman coming after you.

Elders, understood as the morally and rationally matured members of the African communities, could be seen as legislators in the Aristotelian and Kant's usage. Aristotle observed that legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them. He indicated that this should be the wish of every legislator, and that they would be failing in their duties if they approve norms that tend to form bad habits in the citizens.[187] In the African-Igbo communitarian system, the fundamental basis for deliberations on moral principles and ideas by elders, were from learned experiences, stories, narratives, proverbs, and by reference to the practical life of elders who are seen as moral personalities. It is in this sense that elders help in the formation of moral personhood of the young, and they would be failing in this duty if they themselves, through their own activities, mislead or misinform others.

Paul C. Vitz observes that "a child's understanding of moral issues is an interpersonal, emotional, imagistic, and story-like phenomenon."[188] This opinion is supportive of the effectiveness of informal method of moral education. The imparting of moral principles, through the use of stories and narratives, targets helping young people to acquire the skill of abstracting from experiences. This method has been also adopted in formal education. After narrating a story or folklore, children are expected to abstract the relevant moral principles or values in the story. They are asked by elders or the narrator to summarize the message of the story. By this, their cognitive abilities are enhanced. They also learn that actions have consequences, and that certain moral duties and responsibilities are expected of a good man.

---

[187]   Cahn S. M; Markie P., [2002]: Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues, 2nd Ed. P. 140
[188]   Vitz Paul C. "The Use of Stories in Moral Development: New Psychological Reasons for an Old Education Method." *American Psychologist* 45, no.6 (June 1990): 709-720 at p.711

Accordingly, stories serve, especially for children, as arguments or premises backing moral stands or conclusions. Such stories therefore convince them on certain attitudes and habits necessary for moral personhood. All through his ethical thought, Kant never stopped emphasizing the *pedagogical* importance of presenting the moral law in all its purity.[189] He further suggested the use of stories of moral heroes to bring a "ten-year old boy ... to a lively wish that he himself could be such a [virtuous] man."[190] Such story-telling is expected to be one of the methods of teaching morals in Kant's ethical community. In African-Igbo communities, elders being the repositories of these stories, narratives, folklores and proverbs, are taken therefore to be the repositories of knowledge, and so, have the responsibility of transmitting (moral) knowledge and principles to their juniors through informal means. For this fact, an elder is normally sensitive of his actions since he is looked upon as one who knows what is right. There is here however, at least, a minimal presumption that to know what is right is to act accordingly. So, when an elder act, he is, *ipso facto*, informally teaching others and modelling their behaviours at the same.

Hence, by the informal way of educating oneself in moral principle and values, not much is achieved theoretically but practically. So, in the African communal situation, a theoretical moral reasoning that lacks practical implications and applications is not so helpful. Therefore, to reason morally is understood as to reason how one has to morally face a practical situation. In this sense, the concept of 'goodness' has to do with the activities of a good person. This is also Aristotelian. Aristotle argued that the function of a good man is to perform the activities that others also perform, but in a good and noble way, so that, states of character arise out of similar activities. By doing the acts that we do in our relationships with others we become just or unjust.[191]

Generally, and normally too, majority of people like to influence the manner others perform the acts they do. Along that tendency also, elders in African-Igbo society feel a certain sense of fulfilment when the young copy or imitate good moral behaviours from them. This is seen as part of their fulfilling their moral responsibility in the community, and also, it is interpreted as an act of respect for them, and for cultural values and laws. A young man once narrated how he, during his university days, with the help of the thought of his family's high moral reputation, and the respect he has for the moral ideas of his parents, overcame the

---

[189]   See Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals 4:390, Critique of Practical Reason (KpV 5: 156)
[190]   Kant, KpV 5:155-6
[191]   Cahn S. M; Markie P., [2002]: Ibid

pressure to join a dangerous cult group that operated in his university. This young man respected, though indirectly, the law which he sees embodied in the moral ideas of his parents. By so doing, he has represented his family very well. This is one of the practical ways of keeping to the acceptable moral behaviours- to ask whether the course of ones intended action would be acceptable by one's role models, or moral ideals.

In what we call a normative community, there are no formal gathering or lessons in order to teach the moral principles and values. They are imparted in the course of day to day upbringing of a child through socialization, admonitions, corrections, imitation, etc. In being role models or moral ideals, and by being imitated, adult individuals teach morals and good behaviours even without the consciousness of doing so. That is, by their doing what ought to be done. This is however a general technique of teaching young ones especially children. In the African communalism, the young are not left alone to determine for themselves in matters of moral behaviour and ethics of socialization, since their decisions on such issues affect not only themselves, but also their families and by extension, the entire community.

As a result of this all-embracive effect, every responsible adult sees it as a moral duty to help others, especially children, with respect to morally and also socially allowed practices. An Igbo proverb points to this responsibility. It says: *Okenye agaghi anoro n'ulo ewu amuo n'ogbori* – "*An elder cannot be at home and the she-goat gives birth on a tether*". The background of this proverb is the fact that the Igbo have the culture of tethering goats and sheep. As expected, the pangs of giving birth, or a heat period puts a female goat in a restless and distressed condition, accompanied with uncontrollable bleating and crying in pains. An adult individual around when this happens is expected, first of all, to know and understand what the female goat is undergoing. The first thing to do is to untether the goat if still fastened to a post, and then assist her to give birth. It amounts to compounding the pains of the goat to let her go tethered through this experience. More so, an adult or an elder present himself or herself stupid if he or she does not know what to do at that moment.

This proverb conveys a message: An elder should not be at home and see things go wrong or done in a wrong way. Elders are expected to have knowledge, and make practical use of it. Similar to this proverb is another that says: *Okenye agaghi anoro umuaka erie Udele kpo ya Egbe- "An adult cannot be around, children stubbornly or mistakenly eat vulture, mistaking it to be a hawk"*. Vultures and hawks belong to the class of giant birds. Their species found have some similar features that might confuse children. But an adult is expected to pick their differences. While, as supposed, hawks could serve as meat, vultures are considered, for

certain reasons, non-edible. An elder should not keep quiet where children are preparing vulture as meat. That is, elders ought not to keep quiet young ones do the "don'ts".

I just indicated that in traditional African-Igbo societies, proverbs form part of the fundamental bases for deliberations on moral principles and ideas by elders. Proverbs are wise sayings formulated out of concrete experiences of life, and understood within a context. So, they are not abstract linguistic expressions devoid of human circumstances and human application. Many of them are very philosophic in nature, and are supposed to convey messages that every adult member of the community should understand. This informs the saying among the Igbo that "as an adult, if a proverb is explained to you, then the *bride-price* paid on your mother is a waste".[192] Having acquired much experience about life within the context of the community, an elder is expected to be able to punctuate his speech with traditional concepts and proverbs. This is highly appreciated. Chinua Achebe, in his novel, *Things Fall Apart*, attests to this fact when he commented on a speech by elder Okoye: "Having spoken plainly so far, Okoye said the next half a dozen sentences in proverbs. Among the Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten."[193]

The high degree of the consciousness, on the part of elders, of responsibility over the younger members of the community, and their awareness of beings supported by culture, added to a perceived effect of not doing so, is a motivation to continually seek knowledge. This constant act of correcting is a way of imparting this knowledge. Important also is that this art of teaching and learning is presented, in the Igbo culture, as an "obligation" with consequences upon failure. Hence the saying: *Ahu ekwughi n'egbu okenye, ma ekwuo anughi n'egbu nwata- "to see a wrong act and refuses to correct it 'kills' or condemns an elder, but to refuse to harken to the admonition of an elder, 'kills' or condemns a child"*. This holds irrespective of whether the elder knows the child or not. It is a moral responsibility. Indeed, it

---

[192]   In traditional Igbo, bride price is a monetary commitment of a man to the family of his proposed wife. No matter how small the amount is, this commitment is to signify that the woman was duly married according to custom and tradition. This gesture gives the woman the necessary authority, honour and security in her matrimonial home. On this understanding, it is very insulting to tell someone that the reason for which his or her mother was married is defeated, which is implied by the saying that the bride price paid was a waste. One of the major reasons for which a man marries a woman is to get reasonable children. The characteristic feature of proverbs being formulated out of concrete experiences of life, and understood within a context, equals also the nature of African philosophical tradition. There are no much analysis of concepts and abstract thoughts given the fact that philosophical themes are not devoid of concrete experiences of life. Concepts used, including moral ones, are understood within a concrete context. On this note, pure analytic philosophy, which has been criticised for its lack of relevance on how people actually live their life, has little relevance in the African philosophical agenda.

[193]   Achebe, C., 1993: Things Fall Apart. New York: Fawcett Crest. p. 10

is a moral duty adults owe to the community to morally and rightly instruct any child. Direct parents of the child may not stop this, partly because, since the child is not always in their presence, they cannot raise the child alone, and partly because the child also belongs to the community. Not keeping quiet by the elders or relatives is normally done by consistent admonitions, prodding, chiding or scolding of the child, and above all, by showing, by their way of life, and within the context of their environment, good examples of what a good moral life ought to look like. This scenario makes parenting a communal responsibility, and informs also the saying: *It takes a whole community or village to morally raise a child*.

In this task of community responsibility in morally raising a child, let us consider some relevant epistemic conditions that inform the moral thought by which and with which individuals are brought up.

4.3.2.2 Relevant Epistemic Conditions for Moral Thought

In African-Igbo communities, relevant epistemic conditions for moral thought stem from *substantive evidence of lived experiences of people within the community*. Generally, acceptable moral situations include those that harmonize *means* and *ends*. K. Wiredu observed this for African communities in general. According to him, African moral thought favours "the harmonization of interests as the means, and the securing of human well-being as the end of all moral endeavour."[194] This could be compared to the formula of humanity in Kant's ethics- to treat humanity always in a sort of *harmonization of means and ends*, and never only as a means. Relating this to the communitarian ethics, Wiredu indicated that the preservation and promotion of communal values and interest is a *means* that makes the *end* of realising human and individual well-being possible.[195] This harmonization serves an epistemic ground for the belief on the goodness and rightness of a particular action. Such an action should be seen to be securing the end of human well-being, individually and communally, unless hindered or distorted by something unwilled in the very execution of the act. Such obstruction must not however be seen to be constant or part of the defining features of the act in itself.

In this sense, one can say that African moral thought combines communalistic, humanistic and naturalistic factors for its epistemic conditions. That it is communalistic and humanistic should be clear so far. It is also naturalistic. Although my work is not metaethical, however, it suffices to note that the African naturalistic view of morality supports the

---

[194]   Wiredu, Kwasi (1996): Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective, p. 65
[195]   Wiredu, Kwasi (1996), Ibid, 393

metaethical view of naturalism that considers the domain of moral value and judgement as a simple part of the familiar natural world, and that moral values are understood and analysed in the familiar empirical ways we know and analyse natural human facts or phenomena. This type of naturalistic approach to morality requires, according to John Shook, "compatibility with our scientific understanding of human beings and how they live", and its essential principles include the fact that "morality is a kind of reliable practical knowledge that can be improved by applied human intelligence", and that people have "some moral knowledge from being raised in a culture that teaches morality and from their own reflections on that inherited morality".[196]

Shook sees these principles as being able to assist the naturalist in developing a humanist ethics. He understands a humanistic ethics as "an explanation and justification of morality that does not rely on anything supernatural or on any religious authority."[197] Though it does not need to simply or merely reject or contradict moral rules or values as taught by religions, any humanist ethics will be free to disagree with them. Shook indicated further that a "naturalistic humanist ethics can be developed by working through the moralities of cultural/religious traditions and making some fresh judgements". Along the same thought, morality in traditional African thought does not depend or rely solely on super-naturalistic phenomena or authority. Rather, it is naturalistic, in the sense that moral principles, values, and action are materially justifiable and also connected to some natural human existential conditions or realities of life. *This type of connection is by no means a logical or metaphysical necessity.* Therefore, even though these natural facts provide a sufficient basis for moral judgments and values, they do not necessarily imply them.

I would suppose that Shook's understanding of the relations of naturalistic and super-naturalistic phenomena is different from the African conception. In the African ontology, the supernatural does not abstractly exist. Rather, it is existentially and materialistically related to the natural world and therefore to everyday human living. This implies that supernatural entities are perceived and understood in naturalistic terms without which their existence is difficult to conceive. Onwuanibe R. in expressing this view said: "The traditional African philosophy of the human person is more existential and practical than theoretical, that is, metaphysical. It is based in part on the conviction that the metaphysical sphere is not abstractly divorced from concrete experience; for the physical and metaphysical are aspects of

---

[196]   John Shook, "The Naturalistic Approach to Morality"
          http://www.centerforinquiry.net/blogs/entry/the_naturalistic_approach_to_morality/
[197]   John Shook, Ibid

the reality, and the transition from the one to other is natural."[198] As it is believed in the African culture, gods, spirits, and ancestors mix up and intervene in a naturally observable way in the activities of the living. This informs the belief in the continual presence of dead ancestors within the community. They continue to be part of the community and are considered or respected when deliberations are being made. And so, an African-Igbo will consciously talk loudly to his dead father or mother almost in the same manner he will talk to someone who is physically with him or her.

In distinguishing the relations of the naturalistic and the supernaturalistic in African and Western views, Gyekye indicated that the humanistic foundation of morality in the African conception is not anti-supernaturalistic in the sense that the reality of supernaturalistic metaphysics does not divert people's attention from the naturalistic. He observed that the Western view of a thing being humanistic may oppose this type of relation of supernaturalistic with human welfare.[199] Such opposition, I think, is conceivable in the absence of experiential facts of such a relation. So far, let us now understand that morality in the African view is naturalistic understood in the African sense, and not supernaturalistic in the western sense that is devoid of relations with the natural.

The fact of having a communal, naturalistic and humanistic basis as against abstract supernaturalistic foundations, opens moral principles in African communitarian tradition for rational evaluations, as against the thought of their being impositions on humans. To rationally evaluate the communal "what we ought to do" is demanded in a kingdom of ends. Such rational evaluations cannot but make use of long time standing natural and fundamental human facts to the extent observable or evident in the community. In some cases, rational evaluation is an act of coming to terms with the reasonableness of a moral rule or principle. That is, the why of its "oughtness". The communal "what we ought to do" then sets hedges along the line of the individual's "what I ought to do". They serve as standards setting parameters for individual human behaviours. As already indicated, the members of a kingdom of ends are persons as rational beings, capable of making moral evaluations, which implies also the ability to set ends along lines of priority. In the doctrine of virtues, Kant says that humanity (understood as the rational nature of human beings) is characterized by the "capacity to set oneself an end- any end whatsoever"[200] It is this ability to set ends for ourselves that makes us worthy of moral consideration, evaluation and responsibility. And as I

---

[198]   Onwuanibe, Richard, "The Human Person an immortality in Ibo (African) metaphysics" p.184

[199]   Gyekye K., 1995: An Essay in African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme, p.143

[200]   Immanuel Kant (1996): The Metaphysics of Morals. (edt. by Mary Gregor) I will be referring to this work mostly with the Akademie edition abbreviation eg., Metaphysics of Morals 6:392 or Ak. 6:392

have argued, there is need to have, as far as a kingdom is concerned, a sort of collective or communal use of this capacity. This is in order to set, also, common or communal ends: Ends that necessarily require the collective duty of individual members. In a community or kingdom where individuals are defined and identified in terms of their relationships and interactions with others, the ends or values being considered in this definition and identification must be those that are commonly shared. This is necessary in order to have common grounds of evaluating members.

Kant described our ethical duties as *ends*.[201] Within this description, he saw the moral life as a matter of devoting ourselves to certain ends or duties, working out our individual priorities among them and making decisions on how best to bring about those ends under particular circumstances. In his earlier works, he noted that every action must have an end to be effected.[202] Some of these ends are only means to other ends, and some are valued for their own sake and are at the same time duties. An end, according to Kant, is an object of free choice, so that to have an end of action of any kind is an act of freedom on the part of the individual agent himself, but it is also a duty because this act which determines an end is a practical principle, hence it stems from a categorical imperative of pure practical reason.[203] According to Kant, "one's own perfection and the happiness of others" are the fundamental ends that at the same time constitute fundamental duties of the same person.[204] They are the ends of practical reason or morality, and follow from the formula of humanity- to treat humanity always as an end in itself. These fundamental ends that are at the same time duties cannot be absent in any kingdom of ends. In African-Igbo communalism, common or communal ends belong to those ends that constitute duties.

The existence of ends that are also duties presupposed the existence of priorities and hierarchies as far as rules, ends, and duties are concerned. Such priorities and hierarchies come also into consideration in the moral reasoning of the communitarian individual and of the communal self.[205] In this hierarchy, there are fundamental moral rules that seek objective or common ends. These fundamental objective rules are seen to target communal ends, and present also communal duties. These ends and duties further impact the lives of individual members of the community by means of ensuring the fulfilment, also of individual ends. This

---

[201]   Kant, Metaphysics of Morals 6:382–86, 394–95

[202]   Groundwork for Metaphysics of Morals. 4:427; Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason (KpV 5:58)

[203]   Kant, Metaphysics of Morals 6:385

[204]   Ibid

[205]   Here the 'communal self' is not to be understood as an individual person. The expression refers to the community as a whole regarded as a self

could be outlined further as "what I ought to do" being drawn from "what we ought to do". The rule that 'one should not take human life', either one's own life or that of others; and that 'one should not steal', are fundamental and objective moral rules that target communal ends or welfare, and present duties to preserve and promote lives. When an individual takes another person's life or steals, the community is wounded, partly because the good relationship, which is at the basis of communal unity, is destroyed. There are also other principles or rules that could be placed second to the fundamental ones. For example, that 'adult members should teach the younger ones', or that 'one should lead a straying child or livestock, e.g., goat, sheep, and cattle, back to the owner', or detailed principles on how one ought to show love to his or her neighbour, are rules that serve as means of acquiring moral personhood, and of promoting the happiness of other members of the community.

The class of this second set of rules and principles presents, in the terminology of Kant, imperfect duties, and therefore, as rightly indicated by him, allows for personal inclinations.[206] In the communitarian system, not only that imperfect duties allow for personal inclinations, they also allow for sentiments on the part of the community either in her reactive attitudes towards individuals, or in determining right and wrong actions or behaviours. Sentiment, as an epistemic state, normally puts to question epistemic correctness or justification of moral judgement. It leaves open the way for errors and possible mistakes. This scenario makes reasonable the necessity, in African moral view, of occasional re-evaluation of certain ethical principles and rules, especially those that are circumstance (or available evidence) dependent. Such re-evaluation makes moral development possible, however, also dependent on a rational evaluation of the prevailing evidence or reason. This goes to prove that traditional African moral views or convictions are not so dogmatic as some may think. There has always been a room to correct errors and mistakenly accepted views, or those that were practicable before, but have proved to be irrelevant in the present. *Rather than dogmatism, African moral views seek practical groundings for moral beliefs and disagreements*.

---

[206]   The term 'Duty' in Kant's thought comprises of perfect (strict) and imperfect (wide) duties. In the Groundwork, Kant defined a perfect duty as one "that admits no exception in favour of inclination." (Groundwork for Metaphysics of Morals 4:421 footnote) Conversely, imperfect duties might be said to allow inclinations. Kant's argument is also that in the case of the perfect duties, an occasional violation would be unthinkable (contradicts thought), whereas in the case of imperfect duties, such a violation cannot be willed (contradicts willing). (Groundwork for Metaphysics of Morals 4:423) Perfect duties set obligatory ends and one is blameworthy when one acts contrary to these ends. He mentioned, for example, the duty not to commit suicide and not to tell lie. (Groundwork for Metaphysics of Morals 4:429-430) It is an imperfect or meritorious duty to seek one's natural perfection (to cultivate one's powers) and moral perfection (purity of motivation and virtue). (Metaphysics of Morals 6:444-447

This does not rule out the presence of moral principles that are objectively valued. Such rules are seen as being absolute in the sense of their finding practical and natural application or being reasonable in every situation at all times. That "one should not intentionally take one's own or other people's life" is an absolute moral demand that supports human welfare and communal relationships. *Following from the above, moral thought in the African cultures acknowledges both objective and particularistic elements in the nature of morality.* This implies there are moral rules that apply universally given the common rational nature and ends of humanity, and there are those that take care of particular situations, situations that might not present the same conditions in other societies. Such particular situations might be means to achieve the common ends of humanity.

Having noted some of the epistemic conditions of moral thought in traditional Igbo society and in many other African societies, the next worry is the issue of justification of belief given the informal manner of its acquisition.

4.3.2.3 Possibility of a Justified Belief through Informal Process of Moral Education

The worry of many writers concerning African belief and culture is finding a justification for all these beliefs in order to establish true knowledge. It seems much of what is done and what is believed are extremely suffused by the practice of respecting hierarchies, especially elders, in terms of uncritical acceptance of their opinions that turned to be traditions. Such authoritarian structures, in terms of respect for elders, have also made some critics indicate that beliefs cannot be questioned and critically examined. Wiredu is among such African philosophers who are worried that communal structures of traditional African societies made them to be delineated by a sort of moral and epistemic authoritarianism. Such authoritarianism, in his view, hinders adequate evidence for the beliefs that are at the root of many moral values, principles, and practices.[207] Wiredu is here referring to an unquestionable epistemic and moral authority of elders. This situation, according to him, hampers the development of people's cognitive powers and militates against their unrestricted autonomous use of reason. I take this observation to be an aberration or a practice of radical communalism or the abuse of communal structures, which this work is meant to condemn, because as we

---

[207]   Wiredu, Kwasi (1980): Philosophy and An African Culture, London: Cambridge University Press. p.3.

shall see later, in African-Igbo communitarian ideal, there are situations in which elders and beliefs are also critically questioned.

It is part of the academic culture to cite authorities. But this does not mean that one is not free to investigate and question the basis of such authorities. To be an authority in a particular aspect of life or knowledge is not just a mere claim, there are conditions. But it would be wrong to rebuff a person who wants to know the grounds of an accepted belief, principle or knowledge irrespective of the type of authority on which such knowledge is justified.

There is a supposition that an elder will direct others in accordance with norms of the community. That is in line with "what we ought to do" established out of long lived life experiences. That is to say, the norms have passed the test of time, and have undergone and continue to undergo the test of practical reason. We have seen that in African culture, beliefs and principles are fundamentally practical in nature, hence, in traditional African-Igbo society, when a person questions the justification of any belief or norm, the possible answer or justificatory reference would be that of practical or concrete experience, and not any reference to theoretical inquiry. I am aware of the possibility of living in long standing and continuous moral error or falsehood. But this could be seen as an exceptional case which, as it is said, does not 'nullify' but 'test' the rule.

As already indicated, elders were looked upon as having learned from experience, in the sense of having had the opportunity of testing the reasonableness of beliefs and principles before such are accepted as norms. Beliefs have to be reasonable if they are to be accepted even if their truthfulness remains uncertain. *Following from his experience of the events of life, the epistemic authority of an elder is not considered arbitrary*. It is an authority that is justified by a combination of wealth of experience and knowledge of norms and customs. So, an individual who, basing on his moral deference, takes a moral decision to act in such and such a manner, feels justified in his decision and actions. When he acts, based on the fact the he trusts the judgement of an elder who is an authority, such person could provide, to that extent, a moral and rational justification of his action in virtue of his having consulted an authority before taking his personal decision.

But it is not the case that a display of deference always means the dominance of one person over another in terms of autonomy of the will. It might be sometimes rational for the deferring party to do so in an effort to act wisely. Kopytoff Igor expresses the same view by indicating that "...unless I have knowledge to the contrary, I must assume that the decision of

one senior represents the decision of all seniors."[208] With such an assumption, a rational actor will have less doubt regarding the goodness or rightness of the proposed decision, and to that extent, one is justified in his actions.

It is a philosophical debate as to the number of evidence or reason sufficient enough to justify a belief, or a number of set of beliefs that justifies knowledge. But to avoid the requirement that one should have an *infinite set of beliefs for the justification* of his knowledge, there is, sometimes, a need to delimit evidence by seeking a context for justification. It is in this sense that an appeal to authority on a particular field of inquiry is reasonable. That is, some of the times it is reasonable for one to epistemically depend on an expert, believing that the expert has good reasons to hold to certain beliefs in his or her area of profession. It is on this same ground that the occasionally epistemic dependence of the young on the elders in Igbo communities, concerning certain matters, is justified.

It is worthwhile to remember that the Igbo normative community, in her ideal form, is one with certain characteristics. In the first place, it is a community with a certain kind of 'fused' individuals having a strong sense of a collective norm in form of "what we ought to do". Secondly, it is a community where a strong sense of responsibility for one another exists given the fact of shared beliefs, interests, values. Thirdly, tightly established relationships in forms of common lineage or ancestry and links established through marital and other forms of relationships exist within the community. With this understanding, the Igbo community in Germany or elsewhere is identified along the same values and beliefs, and therefore, elders among them, and indeed, parents naturally feel the sense of responsibility in teaching their young one morals as they would have done were they to be living in the geographical region called Igboland. This normally creates frictions when this culture is lived within another cultural environment with contrary values, especially in the face of a different understanding and application of autonomy. It might then be asked: Giving the fact that a kingdom of ends places emphasis on autonomy, is an epistemic deference not an interference with the individual's autonomy?

4.3.2.4 Informal Process of Moral Education and Autonomy of the Will

K. Gyekye has criticised what he identified as a radical presentation of African communalism. By this he means a type of communalism that, in his own view, makes the individual

---

[208]   Kopytoff Igor (1971): "Ancestors as Elders in Africa" In *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp.129-142 at p. 132

rationally inactive and presents him as "a shackled self, responding robotically to the ways and demands of the communal structure."[209] With this, the radical view seeks to reduce, "a person to intellectual and rational inactivity, servility, and docility."[210] This rational inactivity I understand to imply absence of rational and moral autonomy of the Will. Docility here has a negative connotation. But if someone is *docile* in a positive sense, he is easily taught or handled. In this sense, instructors and teachers long to have docile students or apprentices, as against trouble-makers and difficult-to-teach ones. A docile student is willing to be taught. But docile used as a critic word targets someone who is overly submissive, without the willingness to engage in a rational discussion or to hold a personal stand. This sense does not help learning. This is what Gyekye is pointing out regarding radical communalism. It does not help learning because in such a situation, reason is inactive. Gyekye rejects this view, and opined that true conception and practice of communitarian system is one that integrates rational ideas and creativity of all persons.[211]

There are, no doubt, instances of attempts to operate a radical form of communalism in some Igbo families and communities by certain individuals or group of individuals. In such instances, some elderly people or hierarchies that exist, demand a sort of stupid docility and servility from others or their juniors. And therefore, their epistemic and political authority or dominance takes only the form of imposition of whatever beliefs, principles and values in such a way that does not allow the younger ones bring in ideas through rationally deliberating on those values and principles. An environment of such impositions, Kaphagawami argues, is suffused by a kind of tyranny by elders.[212] This trend establishes irrational authoritarian power structure and hierarchy, and does not favour cultural development. As I already noted in chapter two of this work, for any culture to develop in the sense of effecting changes where necessary, ideas, ingenuity and rational creativity of individual members have to be harnessed.

Informal Process of Moral Education demands docility in the positive sense. But to what extent does it allow autonomy for children or adolescents in a communitarian system? Although we have seen the observation of Pantaleon Iroegbu that the "possibility of people being able to challenge the structures in place shows how the traditional Igbo communities value the individual autonomy and how in practical terms free and autonomous people are."[213]

---

[209]   Gyekye, K., Tradition and Modernity, pp. 55-56.

[210]   Ibid. p. 56.

[211]   Ibid. p. 41.

[212]   Didier Kaphagawami, "On African Communalism: A Philosophic Perspective," A Paper presented at the First International Regional Conference in Philosophy, Mombassa, Kenya, May 23-27, 1988.

[213]   Iroegbu, P., Communalism Towards Justice in Africa, "Kpim of Politics", pp. 52.

It is not clear whether this opinion from Pantaleon also includes children. I would think he does not, rather, he implies, and rightly so, adults. Children are being taught, and so, lack the adequate knowledge to change traditional structures. This is the view of Wiredu. He first observed that "the respect accorded to age is not gratuitous."[214] That is to imply that such respect is meritorious. It is meritorious in virtue of their contributions to the growth of the community. Many among these elders, as indicated by Wiredu, were "not afraid to criticise, reject, modify, or add to traditional philosophical ideas."[215] Pantaleon and Wiredu made it clear that in traditional African communities, beliefs and principles were also subject to criticisms, revisions, and improvement. I have to grant, therefore, that the African sense of respect for elders or one's senior contributes and optimizes the docility of young ones, and constraints them in determining for themselves what ought to be taught and done, until they have been fully formed, informed and guided to make rational and moral decisions. At this stage, their practice of autonomy is limited.

Granted, in Kant the basic attribute of moral agency is autonomy, and as noted earlier, it is an essential feature of a possible kingdom of ends. I understood autonomy simply as self-legislation in the sense of declaring a law fit for one's observance and at the same time the wish that such a law be there for all individuals. I understood it equally to imply making a free choice or decision to act in such and such a manner. But this decision must not, all the time, be the result of one's independent judgement, even irrespective of being an adult. This is because, as I observed, no individual is always in the best epistemic condition for rational or moral judgements. If this holds for already morally mature adults, it should hold even more for immature individuals. Their innate capacity to make use of reason must, first of all, be nurtured, in addition to their proper understanding and application of autonomy. How to go about this has to be determined, not by those still morally and culturally immature, but by mature adults or, in the present context, elders. This demand on elders gives their epistemic authority a rational and moral basis. But care must always be taken to remain within the ethics of hierarchy.

---

[214]   Wiredu, Kwasi (1996): Cultural Universals and Particulars, 16.

[215]   Wiredu, Kwasi (1980): Philosophy and An African Culture, 21.

4.3.2.5 Communal Autonomy, Hierarchical Ethics, and Rational/Moral Authoritarianism

A kingdom of ends could be seen as a community of moral and rational agents who have regard for one another's autonomy of the will to act, which is the freedom of belief and action. As I have argued, autonomy could also be understood not only as an individual concept, but also as a social and communal concept in view of the communal legislation of moral obligations couched in form of "what we ought to do", "how we ought to behave". In Igbo communitarian society, certain individuals enjoy some rights of authority, for instance, elders with regard to epistemic and moral authority to teach morals and correct errors. Communal Autonomy demands that they exercise their authority within the limits allowed by "what we ought to do". By so doing, they would have respected the autonomy of will of all involved in the communal legislation of "what we ought to do". Invariably, they are also treating others as co-law-makers, as ends, and so, as autonomous beings. This, I consider as an *ethics of hierarchy*: *Authority constrained by respect of the general will*. This is the fundamental principle of operation in a kingdom of ends. So that in the exercise of authority in any established hierarchical structure, individuals do not lose their worth as ends in themselves. An authority or a leader, who is conscious of the communal and individual concept of autonomy, encourages other individuals to make their rational contributions in community affairs, letting them understand that they are all law-making members of the community. This is supposed to be the ideal in the exercise of epistemic authority by elders in Igbo society.

The Igbo proverb "*ahu ekwughi n'egbu okenye, ma ekwuo anoghi n'egbu nwata*" (to see a wrong and keep quiet 'kills' or condemns an elder, but to refuse to harken to the admonition of an elder, 'kills' or condemns a child) also indicates that, in certain cases, a child may not be willing to adhere to the admonitions of an elder regarding "what we ought to do". If in such a case it was not possible to override his will, the child or the young adult involved must then be responsible for his actions and face the consequences of his decision which normally lead to, in one form or the other, an uncomfortable state of affairs. An overriding of the child's or any individual's Will occur in African-Igbo communitarian system based on the established "what we ought to do" which are reflected in certain commonly shared beliefs, values and principles individuals are expected to be obligated to or adhere to, were they to be reasonable or rational enough, or were they to have acquired the demanded communitarian attitude or ethics.

115

Rawls considers as an important *principle of paternalism*, guidance in line with values and principles individuals are expected to be obligated to or adhere to, were they to be reasonable or rational enough. This is to guide decisions taken on behalf of others. According to him: "We must choose for others as we have reason to believe they would choose for themselves if they were at the age of reason and deciding rationally."[216] It is therefore on the strength of this stand that the will of the younger ones are overridden by that of the elders in the context of their exercising epistemic authority. Such stand portrays epistemic authoritarianism, deference or dependence as being rationally and morally justified. This is what I refer to as *Moral and Rational Authoritarianism.* A society that disallows, because of communal will or values, the right to individual possession of firearms would be overriding the autonomy of the individual will of those who would have wished to possess firearms. People living in a society where individual possession of firearms is allowed might consider such prohibition an unjustified overriding of individual's will.

If epistemic dependence or deference is at times reasonable and justifiable, then it might be irrational for one to always insist on deciding or making epistemic judgement alone on the grounds of holding to epistemic autonomy or its moral variant. In his treatise on political state, Kant recognised a hierarchical context of the nature of justification. This nature of justification allows an overriding of individual's freedom or autonomy in respect of another higher order of justification. In today's usage, one could refer to this as a meta-justification. Kant indicated that the fact that human beings can be unpredictable in their dealings with one another, there arises the need to establish an institutionalized 'order of rights' or system to protect the natural inalienable human rights. Such order of rights is normally engraved in a political society. 'Right', according to Kant, is "the sum of the conditions under which the choice of one can be united with the choice of another in accordance with a universal law of freedom"[217] and is often connected in a certain sense with an authorization to use coercion, that is, coercion that is employed "*as a hindering of a hindrance to freedom."[218]* With this, Kant provides within the context of a political community, a rational and moral defence for rational authoritarianism, by which the impeding of the individual's will, by a political authority, is justified under certain conditions.

As noted, the overriding of the individual's will occur mostly in relation to issues or beliefs that are supported by communal rational opinions made manifest in the acceptable

[216]   Rawls, J., (1999): Theory of Justice, (chapter IV, Section 33), p. 206.
[217]   Kant, Metaphysics of Morals 6:230
[218]   Kant, Metaphysics of Morals 6:231.

beliefs and rules. It is also necessary that there are no known reasons or evidence to doubt the goodness or truthfulness and reasonableness of the accepted belief or rule. As such, in a case where individuals have sufficient reasons, within the context of their epistemic community, to believe the reasonableness and/or truthfulness of the belief of an elder, in the sense that there are no known defeaters to the epistemic status of such belief, then it would be justified if such individuals hold on to epistemic deference, in the sense of allowing their will to be overridden, until there are state of affairs that call such beliefs to question. Let us call this a *wilful surrender of epistemic autonomy*.

In the African-Igbo context, and in fact generally, such a wilful surrender of autonomy or deference to higher authority or to the community could be justified also from the fact that the individual does not merely do or follow what an authority says, or what is communally agreed upon, but rather, the individual also observes that those authorities actually accept and act in accordance with what they say or what is commonly agreed upon in the community. It is therefore a major demand in African communitarian culture that elders teach morals through personal acts that speak for their acceptance of communal ethos. Their acceptance of it, and the fact of their being authorities, would be a convincing rational ground for accepting also what they propose. Such method of conviction is at times necessary because a person might not even have the relevant information as to the truthfulness of a belief apart from following what an authority does, just in the manner a child learns. This is because of human limitation and fallibility. Hence, the natural fact of cognitive or epistemic limitation of human beings requires that in some situations, an individual's will be overridden by the will of an expert or a professional. There have being debates also on this issue in medical ethics regarding the patient-doctor relationship. Rebecca Kukla has argued that: "Ideally, patients will sometimes take control of their health care but sometimes defer to medical authority."[219] Such deference is based on the belief that medical authorities are supposed to know what is best for their patients.

From the forgoing, though the value of autonomy is recognised in the Ideal Igbo communitarian system, however, certain practices, like epistemic deference, permit that individuals, in certain occasions, defer to authorities or 'surrender' their autonomy.[220] The readiness to make such wilful surrender of autonomy is a feature of Igbo communalism. The

---

[219]   Rebecca Kukla "Conscientious Autonomy: Displacing Decisions in Health Care", In *The Hastings Center Report*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Mar. - Apr., 2005), pp. 34-44, at p.34. See also Beauchamp T.L. & Childress J.F. (2001): Principles of Biomedical Ethics, 5th edn. New York, NY: Oxford University Press: 58.
[220]   Autonomy here understood as acting only as you like it or deemed fit without the willingness or readiness to submit to any other person's stand.

common rule under which all members of a kingdom of ends are supposed to be guided demands some sort of constraints. For, on some occasions, if individuals act autonomously in all respects, they will surely reduce or infringe on the autonomy of others. This is the sense in which autonomy is understood as freedom. It has been widely argued that no individual is so free as to infringe on the freedom of others. This, as already indicated, was the reason for an establishment of an institutionalized ´order of right`. In most liberal western societies, the quest to act autonomously, irrespective of the epistemic and moral condition of the agent, has destroyed many institutions like the family and institutions of learning. Many parents, under the guise of respecting the autonomous will of their children, can no longer control and direct them. The same parents or the society itself, still under the guise of autonomy of the will, make it difficult for teachers to control and direct students or scholars. Students themselves or children, under the intoxication of being autonomous, demand that their decisions be respected at all times irrespective of how destructive and unreasonable they sound. We read from Daniel Bell that communitarians are worried by this state of affairs: "a perception that traditional liberal institutions and practices have contributed to, or at least do not seem up to the task of dealing with, such modern phenomena as alienation from the political process, unbridled greed, loneliness, urban crime, and high divorce rates". What is however needed, like in the African communitarian order, is a sort of structure that will recognise and enhance individual's autonomy of the will, especially that of the young ones, but without encouraging them to think that the most rational way of stamping their autonomy or independence is to reject, in the guise of 'thinking for oneself' and of 'practicing one's autonomy', the epistemic authority of their experienced elders, for example, their parents, teachers, and other superiors.

It must be noted therefore, that what an individual think, with respect to acting autonomously, depends mostly on principles and values of the society, community or family that shaped the individual's psychological, social, and moral point of view or reasoning. Aristotle, in the very first book of the Nicomachean ethics, argued for the necessity of a good family upbringing for students of political sciences. He indicated that the man who is to listen intelligently to lectures about what is noble and just, must have been brought up in good habits. And the man who has been well brought up has or can easily get starting-points.[221] In order to be "well brought up", a child is required to defer to authorities like parents. Such deference will enable the child, in the future, to autonomously get starting-points in terms of basic decisions regarding noble and just acts. This is to imply that certain values and

---

[221]   Aristotle, Nicomachean ethics Book 1, Chapter 4
http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/nicomachean/book1.html .

principles are expected to be inculcated in a growing person to facilitate the acquisition of further skills or meta-principles necessary for noble acts. During the period of inculcating these fundamental and requisite values and principles, to hold to the child's or the individual's autonomy of the will would be counterproductive, in the sense that it might not lead to having or getting the required starting-points. One of the effective means of inculcating these starting-points or principles, according to Wilson John, includes "the right to use force or compulsion on children, and the right to condition their behaviour to some extent…These methods are necessary partly in order to establish the precondition for moral education"[222]

Hence, with the intention of being well educated, morally or otherwise, the surrendering of my autonomy at one time, in form of following obediently the injunctions or directives of elders or teachers, promotes my acting autonomously in the future. Many have expressed a similar opinion. Graham, for instance, indicates that the wish to be able to act autonomously in the future "may serve as a reason for putting myself in the hands of a teacher who, I believe, will teach me something useful."[223]

The African-Igbo communities as families in a wide sense play through their elders, the role of teachers and guardians who establish the necessary preconditions for the moral education of their younger members seen as being still in the learning stages. This is, in fact, a preparation for value preference. For a good teacher/student relationship, it is important that children learn obedience, respect, prudence, and the humility to acknowledge their lack of knowledge and the need that they be directed. On the other hand, the elders, as teachers and role models, are expected to have the virtue of caring, patience, and love. In the African cultures generally, the child tends to accept the values of communal life, the value and importance of the family, of caring and hospitality, of extended sense of welfare, relationships, and responsibility. The child may, however, in the future, look for rational grounds for the values he has been inculcated with- the values that have shaped and informed his autonomous moral and rational decisions, which have further determined his moral personhood. Kymlicka Will supports the view that community and culture prepare people in their value preferences. According to him, "it's through having a rich and secure cultural structure that people can become aware, in a vivid way, of the options available to them, and intelligently examine their values."[224] The way children are raised in African cultures, targets making them, even as adult members of the community, docile in a positive sense, that is, in

---

[222]   Wilson John, 1972: "Indoctrination and Rationality", in *Concepts of Indoctrination: Philosophical Essays*, edt. by I.A. Snook, pp.17-24, at p. 17.

[223]   Graham, K. (1986): The Battle of Democracy, (Brighton, Harvester Press), p. 90.

[224]   Kymlicka Will (1995): Liberalism, Community, and Culture, p. 165.

terms of knowing when not to insist on their independent thoughts in consideration of certain values, and of having the awareness that their individual and collective welfare is the target of the community.

Some who argue for unrestricted autonomy hold the view that children should be allowed, in their autonomy, to make mistakes and learn from them. There is a sense in this opinion. However, those who hold to this view often forget that some mistakes are better not made because of the seriousness of their consequences. Not that it is possible to protect children or growing adults from making any mistake at all, but some lessons are better learnt from the mistakes of others and the consequences that follow from such. This is where experience plays an important role. With what could be the consequences of not stopping a wrong action or decision of the morally immature or of any individual, the emphasis, by some liberal views, on the protection of the individual's absolute autonomy at all times to determine his principles or ethics of life is too dangerous. It leaves the issue of the determination of what actually constitutes an acceptable and rational life plan of a person solely to the individual with a denial of any form of external constraints. It is in reaction to such absolutism regarding autonomy that Charles Taylor made this observation:

> To say that we have a right to be free to choose our life-form must be to say that
> any choice is equally compatible with this principle of freedom and that no choice
> can be judged morally better or worse by this principle- although, of course, we
> might want to discriminate between them on the basis of other principles.[225]

The truth is that some choices are wrongly made, while some others are better than others. Also with their wealth of experience, some individuals are better informed when it comes to the question of choosing life-form. Such individuals could be addressed as authorities. In the African-Igbo communitarian context, however, the proper idea of epistemic authoritarianism does not project a mere imposition of belief by the elders. People most often voluntarily accept their authority in the face of the social and communal context of practical evidence and reason. As such, elders and the community serve as an external push or help that activates, sooner or later, an internal motivation or a self-decision to act in the morally accepted "what we ought to do". It is however possible for an individual or a group to challenge some of those long standing traditional beliefs regarding "what we ought to do". Equally, irrespective of being a repository of "what we ought to do", an elder in African-Igbo society is not a super-moral being. An elder can act in a reprehensible way, and could be, respectfully or otherwise,

---

[225]   Taylor C., "Atomism", in Shlomo Avineri and Avner de Shalit (eds.), *Communitarianism and Individualism*. 1992, p. 34

corrected even by a young man. These possibilities are also culturally supported in traditional Igbo society. But how?

4.4 Criticising a long standing Belief and Challenging an Elder

Kwasi Wiredu criticised the reference to traditional ways of doing things or the epistemic dependence on elders on the ground that such creates situations where individuals do not critically consider all the relevant alternatives that exist, though maybe unknown to anyone, before holding to a certain belief.[226] I also consider this opinion as a danger posed by epistemic dependence on elders and traditions as practiced in African cultures. For instance, when a community or cultural groups continued to hold the belief, as prescribed by tradition and thought by the elders, that a particular cultural festival has to be celebrated in a certain day of a particular month of the year and in a particular way, without trying to know why it has to be so, or whether any other day or month could be better. Or the belief that some crops are better planted in certain periods of the year. These instances do actually exist, and there might be reasons that speak in favour of such decisions, but Wiredu is worried that communalism does not give room for inquiry on the reasons, although there might also be cases in which occasions or situations that warrant going back to those reasons have not arisen. For instance, when a belief has continued to proof effective, like the belief on a particular planting period for a certain crop, or the belief that, at times, even when an individual think that he or she is 100% right, a compromise with others in the family or community might be a better course of action in consideration of *ends* and *means*.

However, Wiredu was not right to hold that communalism in general makes impossible, occasions that might warrant anyone going back to reasons behind an accepted belief. This, he indicates by pointing out that in African cultures, there are many proverbs that indicate peoples' way of life, thought, and beliefs, but that "it is rare to come across ones which extol the virtues of originality and independent of thought."[227] Wiredu might have spoken from a Ghanaian point of view. But the fact is that in African-Igbo society, many Igbo proverbs extol virtues of originality and independent thought. For instance, a daily used Igbo proverb says: "*Anaghi agwa okenye k'osi n'anwu puta*"- (an adult person is not told to come out from the heat of the sun). Similar to this is a proverb that says: "*Anaghi agwa nwata k'owepu aka n'oku*" or "*Anaghi agwa nwata k'osi n'awuru oku puta*" ('no one tells a child to

---

226   Wiredu, Philosophy and Culture, p.4
227   Wiredu, Ibid.

remove his/her hand from a fire' or 'you do not need to tell a child to come out from smoke of a fire'). To extol independent thought, the Igbo also say "*anaghi agwa oshi nti n'agha esula*' which means literally that 'no one tells a deaf man that a war has started'. The deaf man only needs to notice other people running for safety, and will make his own decision. It directly points to a fact that individuals should not always expect to be told everything. Many a time, the individual is expected to assess and learn from the reality on ground. Such individual assessment of situations is the message the Igbo proverb '*agbisi gbaa otele ya muru ako*' (when an ant stings the buttock, the buttock learns its lesson) is meant to portray. These proverbs, and many others, make it possible to ascribe blames and responsibilities to individuals. In the first place, they render support to the fact that true communalism does not hinder individuals' rational assessments and deliberations, and as such, secondly, of their being candidates for reactive attitudes, that is, of being held responsible.

Many other frequently used African-Igbo proverbs indicate that people, irrespective of the authority of elders, are encouraged to come up with independent thoughts that might challenge an opinion of an elder. These proverbs support the fact that it would be wrong to hold that because of the communitarian system, Africans do not, in any situation, question the grounds of certain beliefs. Africans do so, but more especially when things are no more working out well as supposed. Such questionings have made advancements and cultural growth or modernisation possible. Most often, the ineffectiveness of an existing principle or belief is what necessitates the formation and testing of new hypotheses. One of the Igbo proverbs that expresses this, says '*Ofo kpaa ajo ike, agwa ya aha osisi eji wee tuo ya*'. (If 'O*fo*' exercises its strength destructively, the wood from which it was carved will be made known to him). *Ofo,* in Igbo culture, is a short-sized wood staff of authority and could be raised by the holder during supplications. But it is used in this proverb in a personified way. As a traditional symbol of authority in a family, it designates power, so that, he who is in the possession of it, (not arbitrarily but according to stipulations of tradition) has the power and authority in the family circle, and therefore, the head of the family. Although carved from wood, the carved object is often not left visible, rather tied tightly with certain symbolic ropes and/or clothes.

Over and above being a symbol of power, *Ofo* is believed to be potent in itself, and affects the life of members of the family. If its effect on the lives of the people becomes disturbing, as an act of disrespect, the wood from which it is carved will be made known. That is a way of telling the *Ofo*: "remember, you are merely a piece of wood, and we invested you with strength". In another important sense, the proverb addresses the bearer of *Ofo*. If such

individual think he can exercise his authority arbitrarily, then he will be seriously challenged and made to understand that other individuals are not stupid, rather, they are also aware of certain facts, as in the case of the fact that an *Ofo,* irrespective of its potency, was carved out from a known wood. Again, the holder of Ofo is expected to be upright in his judgments and activities, especially in dealing with other members of the family.

This necessitated another proverb: "*Oji Ofo jidekwa Ogu.*" (Ofo holder should also possess Ogu). *Ogu* stands for truth, honesty and justice. It is only when the holder of Ofo also stands on the side of truth and justice, and also live honestly that the Ofo can meaningfully and effectively administered by him. To hold *Ofo*, and then perpetrate injustice and dishonest life, may attract the wrath of the gods, hence the premonition: *Oji Ofo jidekwa Ogu*.

The proverb, "if 'O*fo*' exercises its strength destructively, the wood from which it was carved will be made known to him" points to the fact that the Igbo believe that certain state of affairs call for an analysis of the content of a belief. Therefore, I consider it a misrepresentation for Wiredu to hold that communalism as a system does not allow, in any situation, a challenge of a status quo or the content of a belief. Some individuals did challenge a status quo or a long accepted belief when the need to do so arose. *The need must not necessarily be that because the belief is no more relevant, it could also be because of the need to strengthen and renew people's confidence in the belief.* It is necessary that there be a need for this challenge or questioning of traditional practices, and in the case of our work, the epistemic and moral authority of elders.

Another well-known Igbo proverb says: *"Asokata Eze anya, ekpuru nkata gwa ya okwu"* ("At times, one needs to put on a mask and caution the village head"). 'Putting on a mask" is an expression to show that, the present state of affairs demands that one should be uninfluenced by the position and authority of the targeted person being cautioned or chided. The expression could also be interpreted in a positive sense as an act of respect. That is, the person being referred to is still feared and revered irrespective of calling him or her to order. This proverb is normally used when an authority, an elder, or a person of high prestige misbehaves and could not correct himself or herself, hence the need for chiding, prodding, ribbing, or poking him or her. Sometimes, the proverb is reformulated using an elder or an aged person. So, irrespective of the respect accorded to an elder or aged person, the Igbo say: "*Okenye kpahie agwa, ekpuru nkata gwa ya okwu*". ("If an old person or an elder misbehaves, one puts on a mask and caution him").

All these proverbs prove the fact that African communalism (at least the African-Igbo) allows individuals to challenge or to criticise a belief by way of weighing other alternatives

that might serve better in a particular life situation. It also allows, irrespective of respect, the pointing out of wrong behaviours of any member in the community, in spite of social status. But this does not remove the fact that some individuals, under the guise of tradition and culture, think their views cannot be challenged or that they cannot be called to order in the event of their wrong doings. It is the aim of this work, to prove to such mistaken individuals that they cannot support their wrong notion by referring to African-Igbo communitarian principles. It is however true that there are lots of constraints in communalism posed by communal expectations couched in form of "what we ought to do" and "how we ought to behave", and that certain situations demand the use of a certain amount of force, for instance, in demanding compliance to a norm, or, in the course of instructing a child. But then, the use of force by an authority or an elder in certain situations is not in itself wrong. Charles Larmore has indicated that "[w]hat we must regard as improper is … to seek compliance by force alone, without requiring reasonable agreement about the rules to be enforced. For consider the basic fact that persons are beings capable of thinking and acting on the basis of reasons. If we try to bring about conformity to a rule of conduct solely by the threat of force, we shall be treating persons merely as means, as objects of coercion, and not also as ends, engaging directly their distinctive capacity as persons".[228] The required reasonable agreement, in the case of African-Igbo communalism, is normally achieved through a consensus involving rationally and morally mature members of the community. Let me talk more on this in my treatment of political deliberations in a communitarian African-Igbo society.

---

[228]   Charles Larmore, 'The moral basis of political liberalism', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 96:12 (1999), 599–625, p. 607.

CHAPTER FIVE

African-Igbo Political Structure

5.0 Introduction

From the discussions in the previous chapters, there is this opinion that the respect accorded to elders in traditional African societies established, (also on the political level), a sort of *gerontocratic tyranny* that turned to be a culture. As such, it became part of the political culture of most African communities that ideas are imposed on the community by the elders. This situation, as I have argued in the earlier chapters, would be denying other members of the community the ability to critically examine and appraise socio-political operations. Such state of affairs makes the realisation of a kingdom of ends a mirage. In this chapter, I will distinguish between centralised and decentralised traditional African political structures, and present decentralised political structures, to which the Igbo communities belong, as not affected by the above criticism, that is, when their ideals are adhered to. And in line with my aim of presenting an ideal form of communalism in Igbo societies, I will present, as a way of holding to their political ideals, the recourse, in the traditional Igbo, to an all embracive rational deliberation or willing that is geared towards arriving at a consensus opinion in political decision making- a process that requires, just as Kant opined in a kingdom of ends, that individuals abstract from personal interests. I will also expose how the communities' perspectives on moral personhood of an individual constitute the basis for participating in socio-political deliberations, legislations, and structures as a whole.

5.1 Political structures in traditional African society in general

In traditional Africa, there exist diversities regarding institutions of governance. But in spite of these variations and diversities, the institutions of African traditional governance are basically classified by writers under two major types: (1) A centralized political system with more emphasis on the opinion of a Head-chief or a King; and (2) a decentralized political system, with its emphasis on consensus opinion. Let us consider them.

5.1.1 Centralized Systems

Right from the pre-colonial era, African communities that operate a centralized system of governance have kings and monarchs as rulers with much authority and influence. In some communities, an individual sit on the throne or occupies the top position of authority mainly

by virtue of membership of a particular family or belonging to a particular clan. Such modus operandi make that position hereditary, where, all things being equal, the most senior in the family ascends the throne. However, in many other cases, the choice of who occupies the throne is determined by factors other than mere circumstances of birth. Other criteria, such as moral character and other personal qualities are highly reckoned with. Where such criteria are in operation, the throne is usually being contested by several eligible persons from the same family or a particular clan. In some other places there is no limitation in terms of family or clan affinity. Any eligible member of the community can present himself as a candidate for the throne.

In most of these societies, there exist checks with regard to the power and authority of kings and rulers. Some of these checks exist in the form of institutions, like that of the council of elders or advisers, and the presence of other low-rank chiefs. Some communities have a strong and advanced mechanism with regard to checks and balances, while in other communities, such a mechanism is rather too weak, and therefore, accountability of the rulers to the people is equally weak. Although normally, the King has the final word on issues, he is also somehow constrained or expected to consult his council of elders before coming out with a final decision that is expected to reflect the opinions sampled from the council.

There are also some communities, where the provisions of checks never functioned well due to strong interference by the king. A Centralised system of governance therefore creates avenues for some elements of tyranny and suppression.

5.1.2 Decentralized Political system

On the other hand, in pre-colonial era, traditional political systems in some other parts of Africa, were highly decentralized. In those areas, law-making, social control, and allocation of resources were carried out by naturally or locally organised entities or structures, such as a village council of elders, and age-groups. Consensual decision-making was the operative principle within these systems. Such a principle is geared towards curbing the investment of absolute power on one person or institution. This yielded the result of averting the existence of a rigid hierarchy and tyranny in the society. The Igbo communities are among African societies that have no central king or ruler, hence the common saying '*Igbo enwe Eze*' (the

Igbo have no king).[229] In these societies, there was no super sovereign whose word is a dogma, rather techniques of social control and harmony centred on what Meyer Fortes called the "Web of Kinship" or the "Dynamics of Clanship". With such techniques, Kinship, Clanship, the family or tribe, were the building blocks of society and the key to maintaining the socio-political harmony of the whole community.[230]

In traditional Igbo societies, as in some other African societies, the rules of operation consisted of established governing norms of conduct couched in the form of 'how we ought to behave'. Political norms of conduct are usually guided and enforced by the elders, family heads, and leaders of other smaller segments of the community like the different age and cultural groups. The respect accorded to such people was the necessary condition for the effectiveness of their guiding and enforcing norms. And more importantly, the survival of decentralized authority systems is based not only on the respect accorded to elders but also on the elders' recognition, in their ranks, of the rights and views of one another in matters that deal with political progress, peace, harmony, and mutual relationships. The demand of being highly sensitive and reasonable is expected from the individual or group of individuals presiding over a particular gathering of a council or an Assembly. This is the reason why, in a decentralized political system, decision making is by consensus- a method that tries to respect and consider the various different views of the participants. Respecting the views and interests of the individuals helps avoid the existence of political and social gaps between those entrusted with communal responsibilities and the rest of the members of the community.

---

[229]   Although negligible number of communities borrowed kingship system from other tribes in Nigeria even in the precolonial times, eg. Onitsha. The expression: 'the Igbo have no King' will occupy our attention later in this chapter.

[230]   Fortes, Meyer. [1945] 1967: The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi: Being the First Part of an Analysis of the Social Structure of a Trans-Volta Tribe. London: Oxford University Press;

Fortes, Meyer. 1949: The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi. London: Oxford University Press. In these two works, Fortes examined everyday life of the Tallensi of Northern Ghana—particularly in marriage, family, and tribal organization. He noticed among this people, the importance of the first-born, filial piety, respect for age, and value of kinship. From his findings, Fortes contended that "social institutions, like family or tribe, were the building blocks of society and the key to maintaining the harmony of the social whole. Through studying those institutions, especially their political and economic development, he believed that one could understand the development of the society as a whole." Ref. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Meyer_Fortes)

5.2 African-Igbo: From Decentralised to a "Forged-Centralised" Political System

During the era of colonialism of Nigeria, the first British colonial master in Nigeria, Lord Frederick John Dealtry Lugard (1858–1945) came up with the idea of indirect rule.[231] In his book, he presented indigenous Africans in general as being more like children, and therefore, should be governed and ruled. And since he perceived them as children, he equally opined that political relations with them on the basis of equality should not hold. Political relations on equality basis, would require "mature people" not children, and indigenous Africans, F. J. D Lugard supposed, do not qualify. The yearning, by Africans, for political relevance was considered by Lord F. J. D Lugard just like children yearning for something under the false presumption of longing for something good. However, a continuous suppression, by the colonial masters, of this yearning produced only counter effects that made political governance very difficult. But just like replacing a drink that contains alcohol and being demanded by a child with breast milk, colonial masters devised a tactics by which they made their colonies think they have local control of their communities. This they effected by appointing warrant chiefs as "rulers" of their people, thereby centralising political power even among races where centralised authority never existed. With the institution of warrant chiefs, the colonial masters forged a political relation with the colonized, and may be in effect, a seeming equality or something nearer to it.

Nkiru Nzegwu (an Igbo Philosopher and, at the time of my research, a Professor in the department of Africana Studies and Philosophy, Interpretation, and Culture, Binghamton University) points out that some of the people appointed ''chiefs'' by the colonial master were actually servants in precolonial times. They are servants in the sense of seeing duty and office as a call to represent and/or serve the people. But as Nzegwu further observed, with the introduction of warrant chiefs as community leaders and representatives of the colonial master, new sets of relational concepts that facilitated a disruption of the societies and more effective exploitation of local resources by foreign agents were also established.[232] But then, without the employment of the warrant chieftaincy by Britain in the administration of some African colonies, British colonial rule would have had a lot of set-backs in administration, especially in areas of finance, sufficiency of personnel, and communication given the barriers of local languages.

---

[231]   See F. J. D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1922).

[232]   Nzegwu, N., 2000: *Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture,* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press)

In areas with centralized political institutions, such as the Islamic emirates of northern part of Nigeria, the British indirect rule policy worked effectively. This is for the fact that there were existing indigenous political heads who already wielded much authority. The colonial masters continued with such leaders, but only changed already operative political ideologies and plans. Among the African-Igbo where decisions were made by long debates with a view of arriving at a general consensus, the absolute exercise of authority by colonial masters through their warrant chiefs was a nightmare. For this fact, many of the warrant chiefs were seen as saboteurs, and only interested in carrying out the orders of their master without being sensitive to the feelings of the people. This presented the chiefs as enemies to the majority of the people. There were many protests among the Igbo against such autocratic institution of governance. Famous among such demonstrations is the famous 1929 women's riot in which thousands of rural women protested against issues like: the imposition of taxes with its concomitant abuses and corrupt practices; the warrant chief system which centralised administration and instituted dictatorship. When it became clear that protest could not abolish warrant chieftaincy, the women demanded for an overhauling of warrant chieftaincy, and not a total abrogation. They insisted on the removal of warrant chiefs whose acts are reprehensible to the community.

In the end, the warrant chief system established a forged-centralised political administrative structure foreign to the existing political structures in Igbo communities. The colonial masters gave warrant chiefs a notion of hierarchy and leadership that is practically non-Igbo. It is such leadership, in its diluted form that later gradually became part of Igbo traditional political culture and has survived in different forms today, however, with some checks and constraints to curb the powers of the community chiefs. There were instances of community chiefs or kings building a hegemony around them that geared towards blocking all sorts of checks in their exercise of power and authority. Cases of such hegemonies are always fought against by some individuals and groups. And for the fact that such attempts have always faced oppositions, and as such remained, until today, unacceptable among the African-Igbo, it is not out of place to continue to refer to them as people with a decentralised political ideology that retained the precolonial emphasis on decisions by consensus.

5.3 Decision making in a Decentralised system of Governance

5.3.1 An Appeal to Consensus

Decision making on matters concerning governance in traditional African-Igbo society was, as a rule, generally taken to be consensual. This might not be the case in all the decisions that were ever taken, however *ceteris paribus*, consensus was taken as the *modus operandi*, that is, a concerted effort towards appealing to the rational will of all concerned is made. Such *modus operandi* are not exclusive of African-Igbo, but was witnessed in most of the decentralised traditional African communities. Gideon-Cyrus M. Mutiso, informed that Kenneth Kaunda, the first democratic President of Zambia, was quoted to have said: "In our original societies we operated by consensus. An issue was talked out in solemn conclave until such time as agreement could be achieved*"[233]* He further quoted Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, who said: *"in African society the traditional method of conducting affairs is by free discussion."* …. "[T]he elders sit under the big trees, and talk until they agree."[234] Kofi A. Busia, writing on the same issue as obtained among the traditional Akans of Ghana, observed that:

> When a council, each member of which was the representative of a lineage, met to discuss matters affecting the whole community, it had always to grapple with the problem of reconciling sectional and common interests. In order to do this, the members had to talk things over: they had to listen to all the different points of view. So strong was the value of solidarity that the chief aim of the councillors was to reach unanimity, and they talked till this was achieved.[235]

Generally, in many African traditional societies, the value of solidarity was highly appreciated and preserved. Therefore, decisions on political issues were sought in a manner that would not jeopardise solidarity. This fact is important, and has been emphasized by many scholars. A South African scholar, Joe Teffo, drawing attention to this fact said: "…let us note that African social organization is undergirded by the principle of solidarity. It is characterized by humane people-centeredness. Precisely because of this principle, adversarial politics, the hallmark of the Western-style multiparty system of democracy, is rather foreign to African political culture."[236]

---

[233]   Gideon-Cyrus M. Mutiso / S.W. Rohio (ed.) (1975): Readings in African Political Thought, p. 476.
[234]   Ibid. p. 478
[235]   K.A. Busia (1967) Africa in Search of Democracy, p. 28.
[236]   Joe Teffo (2004): "Democracy, Kingship, and Consensus: A South African Perspective" in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, pp. 443-449, at p.445.

Hence, the effort towards achieving a consensus opinion in African-Igbo communalism is not exclusively geared towards achieving a mere political goal. Were it to be exclusively for political gains, there would not be faster political progress by such means. This is for the fact that political decisions and progress are achieved faster through majority opinion. Such progress is irrespective of the feelings and views of the minority group. The demand for consensus in political decision-making, is therefore geared towards achieving, not only political goals, but also achieving at the same time solidarity, a better mutual understanding and social interaction, so that a person or a group of individuals would not win a political argument, point, or position, and lose a brother or sister. This is of paramount importance to the African. Through a consensual approach to political issues, a situation of having solved a political problem without also guaranteeing a good social relationship is minimized. That is to say that the attempt to make a consensual decision is a manifestation of a desired approach to social interaction and harmony.

It is not only a mark of respecting the free will of every individual, but also a test of patience, to wait until an adult individual sees reason why things ought to be done in such and such a manner, or why certain consequences should follow from what was done, or at least, to see reasons to give up his or her views in favour of other ones considered to be more practical at the given time in the face of some considerations. This is in terms with the demand, by Kant, of abstracting from individual interests in order that members of a kingdom might willing be under one common rule. To achieve this, that is, to come to common understanding, harmony of views and of social life, and reconciliation of opposing political interests, one has to reckon with a long period of rational deliberation.

5.3.2 Consensus and Reconciliation

As reported by Daniel A. Bell, Charles Taylor argues that "a 'genuine, unforced consensus' on … norms is possible only if we allow for disagreement on the ultimate justifications of those norms. Instead of defending contested foundational values when we encounter points of resistance (and thus condemning the values we do not like in other societies), we should try to abstract from those beliefs for the purpose of working out an 'overlapping consensus'... As Taylor puts it, 'we would agree on the norms while disagreeing on why they were the right norms, and we would be content to live in this consensus, undisturbed by the differences of

profound underlying belief'".[237] With this, Taylor accents to a fact that in a genuine consensus, there could be a marriage of convenience between agreement and disagreement. This happens when within such an intercourse, reconciliation is made possible without a complete identity of opinions. However, the fact of deliberating a long time in view of achieving a consensus that guarantees a reconciliation of dissenting views does not imply that the reconciliation achieved can never be broken. The possibility of further eruption of disharmony or conflict of interest was never a forgotten issue. A sustaining factor in the achieved reconciliation is the will for consensus.

Kwasi Wiredu drew a relationship between reconciliation and consensus. He considers reconciliation as a form of consensus and a sort of restoration of goodwill by a re-examination of the import of the initial bones of contention. Reconciliation, as he further noted, "does not necessarily involve a complete identity of moral or cognitive opinions. It suffices that all parties are able to feel that adequate account has been taken of their points of view in any proposed scheme of future action or coexistence."[238] Having presented such clear picture about reconciliation, he then relates it to consensus, noting that:

> Similarly, consensus does not in general entail total agreement. To begin with, consensus usually presupposes an original position of diversity. Because issues do not always polarize opinion on lines of strict contradictoriness, dialogue can function, by means, for example, of the smoothing of edges, to produce compromises that are agreeable to all or, at least, not obnoxious to any. Furthermore, where there is *the will to consensus*, dialogue can lead to a willing suspension of disagreement, making possible agreed actions without necessarily agreed notions.[239]

Notice that Wiredu placed as a condition for the possibility of suspension of disagreement, *the will to consensus*. That is to say, where such a 'will' is lacking, suspension of disagreement might be difficult, or even impossible. In such a situation the different parties or one of the parties involved tend(s) to hold, sometimes without further considerations, to various opposing notions without the readiness of coming to collectively agreed actions. However, when views are directly opposed to each other, and therefore, contradict each other, the *smoothing of edges* of disagreement becomes also impossible. What is needed here is a total dropping of one view in favour of the other. Such situation involves views that do not admit

---

[237]   Daniel A. Bell, (2006): "Confucianism and Anglo-American Political Theory", in *The Oxford Handbook on Political Theory,* edt. John S. Dryzek et. al. pp. 262-280 at p. 269. Quoting Taylor, C., 1999, 'Conditions of an Unforced Consensus on Human Rights', in *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights,* p.124

[238]   Wiredu, K (1995), "Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics: A Plea for a Non-party Polity", in The Centennial Review 39.1, Online: http://them.polylog.org/2/fwk-en.htm.

[239]   Wiredu, K (1995), Ibid. (Italics mine).

of any mean (using Aristotle's' terminology): either our cultural dance takes place this year or it does not, any other position can never satisfy taking place and not taking place. Such situations underline the importance of *having the will to suspend disagreement.* Waiting for any party to suspend disagreement in order to come to a consensus, requires enormous patience and convincing and persuading arguments from the right people. And this is where again elders help with their wealth of knowledge, not by mere forceful imposition, but through a dialogical method that will logically lead to why the required point of common agreement is the best option for that particular situation.

As seen above, consensus as a dialogical approach has an ethical advantage. The dialogical approach to issues is also epistemologically necessary. On this, a Ugandan Philosopher, Edward Wamala observed that "[t]he dedication to consensus seems to have been rooted in the firm epistemological belief that knowledge is ultimately dialogical or social, and in the ethical belief in the collective responsibility of all for the welfare of the community."[240] The link between belief in the dialogical nature of knowledge and the social emphasis on consensus, according to Wamala, is apparent. Arguing from the generally accepted fact that nobody has a monopoly on knowledge, he concludes that everybody is in need of the knowledge and the opinions of others. That being the case, in consensual procedure, "[i]ssues had to be looked at, cogitated over, and discussed until a general agreement was reached as to what was to be done."[241]

5.4 Some factors that favour Consensus in African Communities

5.4.1 Consciousness of Relatedness and Collective Social Responsibility

The deep rooted conviction on collective social responsibility in traditional Africa aided decision making by consensus. Wamala argued that without the help of the idea of collective social responsibility, a dialogical conception of knowledge alone would not have led to the emphasis on consensus, in the sense that owing to the complexity of society, everyone was supposed to contribute his or her part, working alongside others.[242] The idea of collective social responsibility was strengthened not only by the presence of features of social networks and relativity that enable individuals consider themselves naturally committed in a shared

---

[240]   Edward Wamala (2004): "Government by Consensus: An Analysis of a Traditional Form of Democracy", In *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Edited by Kwasi Wiredu, pp. 435-442, at p. 437.
[241]   Edward Wamala (2004): 438
[242]   Edward Wamala (2004): Ibid.

objective, but also by the availability of certain proverbs of social cohesion that are in constant use. Some of them we have encountered already in chapter two. We saw that on the sphere of relatedness, a moral person, in the African sense, is seen as "a being-with-others", "a being with a group consciousness" or "a being in a community". Remember also our famous "I am, because we are". The consciousness of this relatedness influences the values, thought pattern, semantics, and actions of the African-Igbo. I tried to demonstrate all of these with the 'Bambo Tree analogy' that brought to light the implications of the Igbo proverb '*Igwe bu ike*'- (togetherness is our strength) and '*ogbuturu ojuturu*'- unavoidable involvement and affectedness in the fate of an individual by others due to a compactly knitted social network of relationships. Regarding this aspect of social network and relationships, one commonly refers to the nature of traditional African kinship relationships. Wamala tried a description of such relatedness and how, for that fact, the possibility of consensus makes sense:

> In the immediate family, a brother to one's father was a father. Similarly, a sister to one's mother was a mother. At the larger tribal level, because of the cultural tradition never to marry into one's patrilineal clan, any family found itself related to several other clans, as the sons in that family married into those clans, and likewise the daughters married into clans other than those they were born in. What emerges, consequently, is a very strong sense of the "social" as opposed to the "individual" or the "personal" or even the "private." Such a frame of mind was doubtless conducive to a consensual approach to governance.[243]

The list still goes beyond what Wamala enumerated. In the same immediate family, the wife of one's uncle was one's mother. And generally, the relationship that existed between a young man and his in-laws is that of father, mother and son relationship. This is also the case between a lady and the parents of her husband. Such scenario presented a situation where the regular use of the expressions "my father, my mother, my brother, my sister" in the extended sense as described above reduced drastically the use of words like "uncle, aunt, cousin, niece and nephew". Such strong network of relationship, in the first instance, sees to it that the individual identifies with others, and secondly, it enhances the possibility of everyone giving room for a consensus decision. After all, with such network of relationships, what goes around comes around.

---

[243]   Edward Wamala (2004): 438

5.4.2 Moral Personhood as a factor in favour of Consensus Decision

A traditional Igbo community has high regard for good moral standing of any elder or a representative of the people. A good moral personhood is a sort of worthiness to be listened to as a leader or a representative, be it on the family or village level. It is also an important factor in the pursuit of consensus decision in socio-political debates and deliberations. To begin with, one with a moral personhood draws the attention of the people when he makes a contribution. On the other hand, an individual lacking in moral personhood finds it difficult to get the attention of the audience. In that sense, his reprehensible behaviour beclouds whatever rational contribution he might be making. This makes it difficult, most of the times, for others to reflect on his contributions. Only few individuals look beyond the moral personality of the contributor. This is for the fact that it is believed that sometimes even a mad person can make comments that could give clues to the solution of a problem. Irrespective of such exceptional cases, a good moral personality or personhood of any contributor prepares his or her audience towards a serious consideration of his or her opinion. The moral personhood makes the contributor a "person", a "human being" to be listened to.

The demand for morals in politics has been under criticisms in some quarters. John Rawls' political liberalism, for example, has been criticised for its demand for normative rules or approach to politics. Rawls' approach has been criticised as falling short of a good understanding of politics. Critics point out that his approach emphasizes normative rules over and against genuine political practice, and as such, they conclude that there is an absence of genuine politics in liberal political theory. Such criticism makes a distinction between politics and moral rules.[244]

In the face of the above criticism, politics in traditional Igbo communitarian model must be guilty of the same charges. That is, its demand for a good moral personhood for political leaders and contributors in political discussions seems more suitable for moral or religious leaders than genuine politics. But the fact is that in the context of traditional Igbo, the distinction between governing, political leadership, role modelling and transfer of morals, as it were, is negligible, in the sense that practically speaking, a political leader is also expected to possess amiable qualities for modelling good behaviours, *inter alia*, moral personhood and dignity required for effective leadership. This expectation finds support in

---

[244]   For more on this, see Bonnie Honig (1993): *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics,* pp. 126–261.

Aristotle who indicated that good morals, acquired through the normal process of good family up-bringing, is crucial for a student of political science. One might try to argue here that such demands are necessary theoretically, and only during the period of learning, just to enhance learning progress of a student of political science, but not for the actual practice of genuine politics. To say such would be ridiculous. Think of a situation where medical students learn medical ethics, just to drop them during actual medical practice. If the actual practice of genuine politics requires no morals, then, one must have to define "genuine politics" as a type of politics that does not involve the question of right and wrong in relating with one another, or between a political leader and the masses, in terms of responsibilities.

It remains a valuable culture in ideal Igbo traditional political system that leaders and heads, not excluding elders, are expected to possess a good moral personhood in order to attract or win the confidence of the people. Such a demand of a good basic moral standing was also part of the reason why consensus decision does not depend on a majority vote. This is so because the opinion of an individual with moral personhood supported by his reasonable arguments can easily prevail upon the views of the opposing side, irrespective of their numerical strength.

5.5 Community Leadership and the Demand for consensus

As a tribal group, the Igbo society comprises of several clans which in turn consist of larger or smaller towns. The towns are made of villages, and the villages are composed of various kinship groups. At the tribal and clan levels there is no existence of a political unit, and therefore no recognised leader. Hence, there is no tribal and clan authority which overrules town authority in any aspect of the latter's external and internal dealings. This situation upholds even till today. In the precolonial era, the Igbo communities on the town level, with the exception of few, had no single central leader. Leadership on this level rested on the shoulders of council of elders and titled men who serve as the representatives of the people. This was also the case on the village and kinship levels. In the postcolonial era, we saw how warrant chieftaincy morphed into today's traditional kingship system on the town level.

As pointed out above, in the African-Igbo society, the personal character of any traditional leader has added effect on his demand of respect and obedience from the community. The effectiveness of his leadership rests more on a harmonious cooperation between him and other elders of the community, as well as on his readiness and openness for deliberations and consensus, coupled with his personal behaviour and approach to his

community members in general. He must be sensitive to the fact that he possesses no absolute power in the sense of lording things over to other individuals. This explains a common African proverb: '*the Chief is chief by the grace of the community*.' An Igbo proverb is direct on this: *Ibigibi nwe Eze, Eze nwe ibigibi*, meaning *residents own the King while the King owns the residents too*.

Igbo traditional leaders, being sensitive to these facts, address their community with expressions like "*ndi nwe m na ndi m nwe*" meaning literally: *people to whom I belong and who belong to me*. Hence, irrespective of the fact that the power and authority of the community or village head was highly considerable and respected, he was seldom an absolute ruler and autocratic despot. In order to get things done in the community, the leader is expected to consult and gain the support of his cabinet members and other village chiefs, who thus play an important part in restraining arbitrariness in governance. Any attempt to act in the contrary, '*ekpuru nkata gwa ya okwu*'- literally meaning "*he will be cautioned with masked face*." That is to say, he will be brought to order with or without the due respect. Therefore, a traditional leader demands that his people respect and obey him, on the other hand, he must be open to consensus and therefore, to the views of other elders who in turn are ready to actively resist an act from the community head to deny them the right to be part of decision making.

The above portrays an important fact, that irrespective of the existence of a very strong sense of community and respect, there is also, in traditional Igbo, a strong sense of autonomy and freedom. The sense of freedom and with it, the consciousness of self-governance supports the stance that the expression "*Igbo enwe Eze*" (the Igbo has no king), as I will now argue, says much about the natural attitude of an Igbo person irrespective of being under a sovereign Leader or not, and irrespective of whatever hierarchical structure that is in place. Such a strong sense of freedom and the consciousness of self-governance amidst whatever hierarchy is, as far as my work is concerned, a necessary condition for the possibility of having a kingdom of ends within a hierarchically structured Igbo society. Let's say more on this.

5.6 Three Major Expressions supportive of consensus and self-governance in the *Igbo* political Culture

I have indicated that in the precolonial era, traditional Igbo communities had decentralized political structures, and that in the postcolonial era, even with centralised structures, there are still reasons to designate them as 'decentralised'. That does not imply the reign of anarchy. It is perhaps, easier in the context of such a decentralized socio-political system to appreciate

the necessity of consensus. Three major Igbo expressions that survived even in today's contemporary situation strengthen the course of consensus, and support the fact that decentralization of socio-political structures is also attitudinal for the Igbo. Attitudinal because with the forged or quasi-centralization, the expressions below still obtained and remained relevant.

5.6.1. "Igbo-enwe-Eze" / "Igbo-ama-Eze" (the Igbo have no king / the Igbo do not know who is a king)

In the precolonial era when some nations and tribes in Africa operated kingship societies, and therefore, a centralised system of government; when, in such societies, the words of a king were commands, almost all Igbo communities and towns governed themselves without a single figure-head in the likes of kings. Village and town councils of elders were constituted. The members met occasionally to discuss and deliberate on affairs of the village or the town, as the case may be. In these general assemblies, every man had an equal right and opportunity to ask questions or to argue for or against a point or a decision. At the end, consensus opinion was sought.

Drawing inference from this fact, some commentators have interpreted the expression "*Igbo enwe eze*" or "*Igbo-ama-eze*" as to imply that, in precolonial period, the Igbo Society had no tradition of kingship. Some other opinions take a negative interpretation and therefore found meaning in the expression "*Igbo enwe eze*" in a sense of an alleged ungovernable attitude of the Igbo people. I rather align myself with the opinion that interprets it as an expression that points to an attitude of self-governance. An attitude that rejects impositions and being lorded things over. This attitude followed from the first opinion that there were no kings to lord it over them in the precolonial era. An Igbo scholar, Onwumechili C. Agodi referred to this fact during one of the annual lectures aimed at rejuvenating the Igbo tradition and culture. According to him: "The pre-colonial traditional government of the Igbo without kings imbued in them the characteristic traits that prompt the saying that "*Igbo Enwe Eze*""[245] The culture of having no kings in the precolonial times led to the fact that the Igbo remained conscious of self-governance even in the present day situation. In their rejection of having decisions imposed on them, the option opens itself for rational deliberations that targets arriving at a consensus decision.

As noted, traditionally in the precolonial times, the majority of the Igbo societies have no kings, governance is decentralised. They respected elders and great achievers. However,

---

[245]   Onwumechili C.A., 2000: Igbo Enwe Eze: The Igbo Have No Kings (The 2000 Ahịajọkụ Lecture) (http://ahiajoku.igbonet.com/2000/).

this respect is not servility or docility in the negative sense. Leadership comes from elders and great achievers with moral personhood. Igbo traditional governance was participatory and with extremely democratic features, in the sense that every adult individual could have and indeed had say at the different assemblies discussing and taking decisions on matters of common interest. Such discussions normally targeted achieving a consensus decision. And so, in modern society, the Igbo people having been accustomed, by their traditional culture, to these conditions, still remained people with a great deal of individual self-confidence irrespective of the modern centralised political structure. Every Igbo man still considers himself as a self-legislator or self-governed, and obligated to the entire community, and not to the traditional ruler, chief or king.[246] The "*Igbo-ama-Eze*" (*the Igbo do not know who is a king*) expression points to the attitude of condemning whatever reprehensible behaviours in Igbo society, no matter whose ox is gored.

5.6.2. "Ikpe-ama-eze" (A King not being guilty)

An important caveat is that this expression is not a positive claim or assertion. Were it to be, the phraseology would have been: "ikpe anaghi ama eze" (a king is never guilty). To hold that 'a king is never guilty' would have been an affirmative statement used in a positive sense. The Igbo by saying "ikpe ama eze" are not affirming that a king is never guilty. Rather than that, the saying is rhetorical. It expresses a notion meant to reject a state of affairs in which an individual takes himself or herself to be rightfully above being ascribed being wrong, maybe for instance, because of the privilege of a position of being a king. It expresses a rejection of the injustice committed by explaining away a wrong done by highly placed individual or a king, on the grounds of his status or being a king, thereby twisting justice to favour such a person.

That this expression implied a total rejection of injustice is deducible from the contexts of its usage. For example, such expression is often used when it is almost clear that what was done was wrong, condemnable, and maybe punishable, but for the mere fact of being done by someone in a high position, the individual comes out of it without any condemnation, not to talk of punishment. In order to present the whole issue as being ridiculous, one might hear comments like "*Ikpe-ama-eze*".

Another context of its usage is when one is caught in an offense, and the individual persistently tries to exonerate himself with implausible arguments, or to present what he did as not being bad at all. In such an occasion, one hears other individuals calling the person "*eze*

---

[246]   See also Onwumechili C.A., Ibid

ikpe ama" (meaning a king *who* is never guilty or who always tries to wriggle himself out of every matter). In relation with the course of consensus, an individual who argues implausibly in trying to defend a personal and selfish position in things pertaining to the community could also be referred to as *eze-ikpe-ama.*

John Paul C. Nzomiwu understood "Ikpe ama eze" in relation to the widely used expression noted above: "Igbo-enwe-eze" (the Igbo have no king). According to him, in the early times, most Igbo communities, as against the case in other surrounding societies, had neither kings nor chiefs, hence the slogan "Igbo-enwe-eze. He maintained therefore, that the name *'Ikpeamaeze'* is used in those days to scorn those communities that had kings and chiefs who naturally would never be imputed with guilt in any event.[247] This situation occurred due the fact that most of these kings, as last arbiters, would always find means of manoeuvring justice and get it on their own sides. So, the expression "Ikpe-ama-eze" is an expression to distaste such situations in preference to a decentralised political system that created the opportunity for consensus decisions on matters concerning the community.

5.6.3. "Eze onye agwala m" (a king who nobody corrects or advices)

The expression "Ikpe ama eze" could also be understood in the sense of another African-Igbo expression: "E*ze onye agwala m"* (a king who nobody corrects or advices.). This expression puts whoever it is addressed to in a negative light, in the sense that such a person is observed to be exhibiting reprehensible behaviours, but then, such a person normally stubbornly refuses to be directed or corrected. The belief of the Igbo is therefore: "*enweghi onye bu eze onye agwala m*" (No one is a king who nobody cannot correct or give advice). Therefore, in the modern Igbo communities with central leadership headed by a king, the king is seen as being in the service of the community, and so, is expected to have a listening ear for advice and correction. He is expected to make use of democratic principles concerning matters of communal interest, without "lording" it over the people, or seeing himself as someone in possession of absolute powers or above corrections.

"*Eze onye agwala m*" (a king who listens to no one) is used equally to designate a king who has the attitude of not consulting with the elders of the community before taking decisions. That is, a King who does not apply the principles of consensus decision making. And most certainly, such a king faces confrontations from individuals or groups. With time,

---

[247]   Nzomiwu, J. P. C. (1999). The Concept of Justice among the Traditional Igbo: An Ethical Inquiry. Awka: Fides Publishers.75

this expression was used generally for anyone who thinks he is always in the best epistemic condition to know the best option in everything he does as an individual and as a part of the community, as such, does not listen to any advice. Such an attitude does not favour the course of consensus, and for this fact, is highly unacceptable in the Igbo society.

The above three expressions reflect in the life of the Igbo even outside the Igbo homeland. For this, they are referred to as people who believe in themselves. Although not the major concern of my research, it might however be asked: How does consensus help the present Nigerian political structure as a whole- a structure that harbours many ethnic and tribal groups? Or in a wider sense, is the majority opinion system as witnessed in democratic states an alternative to consensus?

5.7 Consensus Verses Majority Opinions

Some people may question whether at all, there is in practical terms, any distinction between consensus opinion and majority opinion. This question may arise given what is involved in both types of decisions. Consensus decision or opinion does not really imply oneness in moral and cognitive views and notions. This is also, I suppose, the case with majority opinion- the absence of one common view among a group. But in the case of consensus opinion, the different parties or individuals agree to adopt a view, without a feeling of hurt and defeat by those whose views were not adopted, or their losing confidence on the goodness or efficacy of their views. That is to say, there is a common acceptance to proceed with a particular opinion. Majority opinion lacks this character. There is no common acceptance to proceed with a particular opinion. An opinion is usually imposed by the majority. Therefore, one can equally say that there is no agreement. No agreement in the sense that those of the minority views remained opposed to the views of the majority group, and usually leave the discussion room or forum hurt, disappointed, and dissatisfied.

I accept however, the fact that it is much easier, and less time consuming, to go with or secure majority opinion than to achieve consensus. But the pursuit of consensus, in traditional Igbo communities and in some other communities in the African society, was a deliberate effort to go beyond decision by majority opinion. The target is for individuals or groups to leave the discussion room satisfied, that is, without grudges. On this, an Igbo Philosopher, Nwala T. Uzodinma observed that "[u]nanimity and all the rigorous processes and compromises ... that lead to it (consensus) are all efforts made to contain the wishes of the majority as well as those of the minority. In short, they are designed to arrive at what may be

abstractly called 'the general will of the people of the community'".[248] This being the case, consensus decision gives no room for substantive distinctions on basis of majority and minority. Therefore, no individual or group is placed, at least officially and intentionally, in a disadvantaged minority or privileged majority position. This is also true, judging from the fact that in the Igbo consensual system, majority does not carry the vote. In a consensus decision system, a majority view could only prevail upon, but not over, a minority view. That is, the majority could be accepted but not in the sense of victory or dominance. There might also be instances where the reverse is the case. In such instances, a minority view now prevails upon a majority view. Consider a situation where an expert or an authority on an issue under deliberation is on the minority side. The minority now prevails upon the majority to accept the proposal of the professional, as concerns his field of profession. Again, there is a high respect for the views of individuals with high moral personhood and wealth of experience; people who have proved their trustworthiness in matters of morality and creative thought. There could be occasions where such people are only a few. It becomes obvious that in such a system, a reliance on decision by a preponderance of numbers or votes would likely be dysfunctional. As already noted, the voluntary acquiescence of either side is normally a prerequisite for the adoption of a decision.

When individuals, irrespective of personal views, wittingly consent to another reasonable view that led to a decision reached, they have by that act, willed the accepted view also, and are therefore co-makers of the decision. In Igbo communities, official pronouncements regarding such decisions begin normally with such introductions like: *Oha kwuru si* (The Assembly or the people said); *Oha kpebiri si ...* (The Assembly or the people decided). The Majority-vote-system does not actually allow all participating individuals to become co-legislators. In the aspect of politics, majority vote culminates often to what is aptly called adversarial politics. On this M. B Ramose argues that

> [the] oddity of adversarial politics is emphasized even more by the fact that quite
> often this kind of politics degenerates into opposition for the sake of opposition. No
> doubt the protagonists of this system will retort that the aim of opposition is to
> accede to the position of political power by displacing the ruling party. Without
> denying this rather egoistic aim, I still argue that, understood in this way,

---

248   Nwala, T. U. (1985): Igbo Philosophy, p. 168. The word 'consensus' in bracket was not in the original.

adversarial politics undermines the principle of solidarity in traditional African political culture".[249]

But does this principle of solidarity or what I have called 'consciousness of relatedness' and that of collective responsibility help all the time to achieve consensus? What happens in the face of failure at consensus? Or was consensus always reached? Granted, it was not always the case that consensus was achieved. However, what is most important is that consensus was aimed at, and honest efforts towards its realization made. Sure, there would be cases in which certain individuals or groups failed to see reason in what was evolving as a consensus decision. Such cases answer also the question of why there existed, at times, quarrels within the community. Even at that, there is however a big difference, in its effect, between systems that operated or are operating majority decision principle and those that operated consensus decision principle. In the case of an intractable division, there is no other option left in order to break the impasse than to use a majority vote system. But the rarity of such situations when compared with the frequent use of consensus says much about the beauty and strength of the principle of solidarity or the consciousness of relatedness.

This consciousness of relatedness, and therefore efforts towards consensus and the respect of legislative rights of all, has being suggested as what must be adopted at the national level of the Nigerian society in order to heal her fractured situation, and therefore make positive efforts towards a kingdom of ends. In a paper delivered at The Platform Nigeria, 1st October, 2016, titled "Healing a Traumatized Nation", Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah emphasized that the centripetal force must continue to pull us together rather than pulling us in different directions. He indicated that the real essence of democracy is the ability and capacity to create institutions of negotiations, reconciliation, cooperation, competition and consensus. Democracy, he said, has to do away with the attitude of relying on might and power. In a multinational country like Nigeria, emphasis on might and power is and has been counterproductive or at most unproductive. Nothing can supersede the need for dialogue and greater communication. The citizens of any country should have the right to speak and to be heard. This right should not be taken away by any means.[250]

The observation of Bishop Kukah strengthens the Igbo stand that any individual with an attitude of *eze onye agwala m* (a king who listens to no one) cannot be allowed to hold any leading political position. Democracy strives to perfection when the channels of mutual

---

[249]   Ramose, M. B. (1992) "African Democratic Tradition: Oneness, Consensus and Openness: A reply to Wamba-dia Wamba", in Quest, Vol. VI No. 2 December 1992. pp. 62-83, at P. 75
[250]   Kukah M. H., "Healing a Traumatized Nation" paper delivered at The Platform Nigeria, October 1, 2016.

communication between the leaders and the led are always left open. The people must always be connected with their leaders. Opportunities must be given to everyone to contribute to democracy and national growth. This is how the present multinational nature of the Nigerian state could be democratically sustained. However, some writers think that for democracy to succeed it must part ways with the consensus ideology of traditional African political system.

5.8 Communitarian and Kant's Legislators

Kant's legislators in a possible kingdom of ends are universal legislators. The notion of universal legislator is required for the possibility of the individual abstracting from personal interests and differences. Such possibility makes a kingdom of ends possible. Kant argues that "if we abstract from the personal differences of rational beings, and likewise from all content of their private ends, we shall be able to conceive all ends combined in a systematic whole …, that is to say, we can conceive a kingdom of ends."[251] A similar notion of a universal legislator is required also for the possibility of a consensus decision in the Igbo communitarian system, which is a system that demands community consciousness and a systematic union of rules of engagement and ends. Here we talk of communal legislators. A moral legislator in such a system has to act apart from personal ends, abstracting from the personal differences as rational beings. Let us call him a *communitarian legislator*.

Paul Guyer had argued that "the conceptions of the moral agent as a universal legislator and of the community of moral agents as a kingdom of ends are necessary in order to explain how an individual moral agent could possibly act apart from personal interest and how a community of moral agents could possibly arrive at a systematic union of maxims and ends."[252] By the same token, the conception of a universal or communitarian legislator is necessary for achieving a consensus decision (which is here also understood as a systematic union of maxims) given the fact that the legislator has learnt to look beyond himself, and consider other members of the community or kingdom as ends worthy of realising their welfare, and worthy of dignity. T.E. Hill Jr. is of the opinion that the "Kantian legislators are not mutually disinterested. They are overridingly committed to human dignity, which implies not only that they are constrained in their choice of means but also that they value to some extent the personal ends of each."[253] The emphasis is that because of not being mutually

---

[251]   Kant, Groundwork AK. 4:433

[252]   Guyer Paul (1995): "The Possibility of the Categorical Imperative" *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 3, pp. 353-385 at *p. 385*.

[253]   T.E. Hill Jr. "Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules" p. 298

disinterested, decisions on issues of communal interest could be pulled together by a sort of centripetal force- a sort of an overriding force made possible by an overriding commitment to human dignity, and by the practical human needs and values.

Interestingly also, the ideas I have concerning ideal communitarian legislators who aim at a consensus decision are part of the ideas Hill Jr. had for Kantian legislators in a kingdom of ends. Such ideas include the priority of conscientious judgment, acceptance of constraints on self-interest, some form of reciprocity, respect for human dignity, abstracting from morally irrelevant concerns when deliberating about rules, a good sense of duty and responsibility; and above all, possession of a good will.[254] As I already indicated in chapter one of this work, these legislators should be seen to possess basic and required moral attitudes- what I have referred to as a moral personhood. According to Hill Jr., these legislators "will not make rules unless they judge that there is good reason to do so."[255] This is because they are presumed to be 'reasonable and conscientious'. This expression was actually used by Hill Jr. "to convey an ordinary, indefinite idea of sensible, well-intentioned people trying to decide well and act as they morally ought…. [And such] "is the audience, at least in their best moments, that Kant thought he was addressing."[256]

Conscientiousness and being reasonable are requirements for such legislators because, as Aristotle observed: "The legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them, and this should be the wish of every legislator, and they would be failing in their duties if they approve norms ... that tend to form in the citizens bad habits."[257] Consciousness and being reasonable are of high necessity in order to approve or legislate norms that could form good habits in the citizens, and thereby, in the context of the African-Igbo, enable them to live genuine communitarian life. Some opinions consider this requirement of conscientiousness and being reasonable as what has always eluded traditional governance in a consensual decision making system.

5.9 Criticisms of Traditional African Political Systems

There have been criticisms levelled against traditional governance in African societies in general, describing it as unaccountable, and based on a coercive "demand for consensus,"

---

[254]   See Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (1992): "A Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules" p. 299
[255]   Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (1992): Ibid p.295.
[256]   Thomas E. Hill jr. Ibid footnote 1, p.302.
[257]   Cahn S. M; Markie P., [2002]: Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues, P. 140.

rather than freely given consent.[258] African traditional authorities are further accused of relying on deference. In this context, deference is referred to as a negative attitude. And for this, Mattes holds that "traditional authority constitutes an anti-democratic, or at best a non-democratic form of governance"[259] The worry concerning this position is that if African traditional systems of governance, including that of the African-Igbo, are all proved to be anti-democratic, where democracy is understood in the general sense as a system of governance that allows the individual the freedom to express his or her will or wish, then any sort of traditional African system of governance could not have provided an environment in which individuals see themselves as co-legislators or co-deliberators. Critics believe therefore that traditional systems of governance are obsolete and "impede the development of a virile, prosperous, democratic, and just society, and thus must have no place in any progressive society."[260]

One of Gyekye's main arguments in Tradition and Modernity is that indigenous African political thought needs more dissent and critical opposition that could be constitutive of such politics and that philosophical thought has an important role to play in its development. I agree with this view. But this would not mean that when philosophical thought or critical analysis is involved in a discussion, consensus would always be impossible. I would rather hold that the quest for a consensus decision under a democratic and discursively free atmosphere facilitates philosophical reflections. Such an exchange of critical ideas will give the consensus decision a rational character, rather than a product of mere emotions and sentiments as alleged in the criticism above.

Critics also accuse some writers on traditional African societies of presenting consensus as achieving unanimity in traditional society which, however, was never actually achieved. In the opinion of some of these critics, "there is a kind of idealization of the past… which ignores and, in fact, obscures the deadly conflicts that Africa endured before colonialism."[261] This however is an objection against scholars in this camp, but not against consensus decision system. I belief and have also indicated that consensus was not always achieved. More so, the very talk about consensus does not imply there were actually no

[258]   Mattes, Robert, 1997: "Building a Democratic Culture in Traditional Society." Paper presented to the International Conference on Traditional Leadership in Southern Africa, hosted by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and University of Transkei, Umtata South Africa, 16-18 April, p.5
[259]   Mattes, Robert, 1997, p.6
[260]   Owusu Maxwell 1996: "Tradition and Transformation: Democracy and the Politics of Popular Power in Ghana" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 307-343 at 330, citing Peter Waterman, "Introduction: On Radicalism in African Studies," in Peter C.W. Gutkind and Peter Waterman, eds., *African Social Studies: A Radical Reader*, London and New York: Heinemann
[261]   Edward Wamala (2004): Ibid, p. 439

dissenting voices in the first place. The fact is that sincere efforts were made, in the form of continuous discussion, towards reconciling the various opposing stands. The product of this reconciliation could be referred to as a consensus stand. And as I have indicated, reconciliation does not necessarily mean that everyone has to drop his or her previous opinion. Rather, it is more of agreement on an opinion to work with. And therefore, as Wamala rightly opined, the idea of political opposition was "not alien to traditional… society, only it was not the formal and ossified opposition instituted for the sake of an adversarial form of political pluralism."[262]

My concern in this work has been that of focussing on the ideal in order to expose aberrations, which I believe should not constitute the parameter for definition. And therefore, concerning traditional African-Igbo socio-political emphasis and preference on consensus, I aim at presenting conditions that would make the practice of its ideal possible. My next discussion will focus on the contribution of all co-legislators, and therefore of all individuals representing themselves or groups in a communitarian society that operates by a consensus decision.

---

[262]   Wamala Edward (2004): Ibid

Communitarian Ideal and Modern African-Igbo Communities

6.0 Introduction

It is important to note that Kant's kingdom of ends has no geographical definition or boundary. Therefore, it does not specifically define a particular people. Any group of individuals that conforms to the ideas contained in this formulation of the categorical imperative, are supposed to be living in such a kingdom. The formula of the kingdom of ends has been said to be idealistic, implying that it deals with ideas that must not be exactly practically realistic as they were theoretically formulated. Hence, in the first chapter of this work, we saw Thomas Hill Jr. battling with some of the worries that could be faced in adopting those ideas as heuristic for practical moral living. African Communalism on the other hand is a socio-political and ethical way of life by a geographically defined group of people. Such way of living has its ideal. But in this case, the ideal is part and parcel of its practical constitution, not merely on the theoretical level. Hence, communalism is a form of life which could be possibly be grounded on its concrete ideal form. I have tried to present some aspects of its ideal. My concern now in this chapter is to expose how, irrespective of the communitarian ideals, some aspects of life of the majority of the African-Igbo are yet to conform to them, or have derailed from some that were much observed before.

Agulanna Christopher wrote an essay on "*Ezigbo Mmadu: an Exploration of the Igbo Concept of a Good Person*". This is similar to my exploration of the African concept of the moral or normative personhood. But after an exposition of the grand quality of the African-Igbo as good person girded with moral personhood, Agulanna lamented:

> This grand quality of the Igbo is, regrettably, a description of days gone by, of the values and attributes of an age that has been completely eroded or fast vanishing away. The present Igbo life is neither cheery nor eye-catching. The worship of money, the vulgar pursuit of material gain, the spirit of mercantilism as well as the abandonment of all ethical or social norms are the factors that define the contemporary life.[263]

In recognition of this fact, as also observed by Agulanna, I will draw attention to the fact that many of the traditional values have been misconstrued, misapplied, negatively reformed or interpreted to suit ugly individualism, invariably, in an attempt to imitate some other cultures

---

[263]   Agulanna Christopher (2011): "Ezigbo Mmadu: An Exploration of the Igbo Concept of a Good Person" in *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.4, no.5, September 2011 pp.139-161, at p.155

but failed with the project of proper grafting of the borrowed ideas with communitarian norms. A caveat is that even in the precolonial era, many of the ideals of African communalism cannot be said to have been perfectly practiced. The difference is that today modern Igbo society is drifting much from those ideals.

6.1 Some factors that affected the modern Igbo Perspective about life.

It has been reported in many literary works, how European colonialism, modernity, and other forms of culture-contact with the industrialised world have had a transformative effect on traditional Igbo communitarian life, positively as well as negatively. The brutality of the civil war waged against the Igbo between 1967 and 1970 also has its toll on the world-view of the Igbo. It affected the conception of many of her citizens concerning life and the ethics of survival. Let's take these as two major factors A and B.

a. Culture-contacts and Modernity

One of the forms of culture-contact is Christianity and early commercial European merchants. Chinue Achebe in his famous book 'Things Fall Apart' involved himself in tracing how and where things started falling apart with respect to most cherished Igbo traditional values, including fraternity and brotherhood which are the hallmark of communitarian life. He related the unfortunate close cooperation between Church Missionary Society (C.M.S)[264] and the commercial European merchants on the Niger coast. The cooperation was necessitated by the lack of commercial banks, postal and transport facilities. The C.M.S mission had to avail themselves of the services provided by trade companies that shuttled between Europe and the Igboland. The problem was that the immoral and dishonest life style of the merchants who applied tricks in their commercial activities became a source of scandal and embarrassment for the indigenes. And the fact that these merchants were seen to be in cooperation with the missionaries had its own convincing impression on the people. This informed the speed with which the converts started imitating these trade merchants in their tricks and greed for commercial gains and immoral life.[265]

With such influence, greed and the readiness to trick your brother for commercial and personal gains started informing the life of the local people. Such manner of interaction is

---

[264]   The Church Missionary Society (CMS), later known as Church Mission Society, is a mission society working with the Anglican Communion, Protestant, and Orthodox Christians around the world. This society began missionary work in west Africa in 1804

[265]   Achebe, C., (1976): Things Fall Apart, Heinemann Educ. Books, London, p. 77

foreign to traditional ethics of communal life of the people. It constituted a hurdle so high to jump. This was contained in a report sent to the C.M.S. headquarter in London by one of the early missionaries Perry. He reported that unfortunately "riches have come to Onitsha and have brought temptations which some of the native Christians are ill able to resist."[266] Many who have commented on the above cooperation reported that even some of the missionaries became entangled in commercial activities in such a way that they paid more attention to trading and making quick money than to evangelization. Some of the merchants wearing missionary workers' garb, took advantage of the hospitality of the natives to deceive and manipulate them- an attitude which later registered in the minds of the people.[267] Although the missionaries later realized that collaboration with their merchant brothers was, as far as evangelization of the people is concerned, counter-productive. This realization was rather late. It was late in the sense that the missionary approach had already disposed and opened the hearts and minds of the people in accepting the teachings and ethics of the white man. It was under such a psychological and moral disposition that the merchants sowed their seed of dishonesty, fraud, and self-centredness in the minds of many of the natives.

Such was the beginning of an attitude that grew so strong among the Igbo tribe and became a strong challenge to the long existing communitarian ethics. In the ethics of communitarian life, a man's wealth is measured by his being economically advantageous to individuals and the community, and not being exploitative and tricky. A man who exploited his neighbour to acquire wealth was never reckoned as wealthy or honourable, rather seen as abominable. To express the rejection of exploiting your neighbour for material gains, an Igbo proverb says "*onye riri nwanne ya laba ura bu onu*" which literally means "*whoever eats his relative and goes to sleep has not eaten, the stomach is still empty*". This expresses an idea that if you enrich yourself by tricking or exploiting your brother in whatever manner, in the traditional Igbo conception, you are still poor. But the manner of the said culture contact ushered another sort of business ethics and perspective regarding the acquisition of wealth and led to the maxim of priority of the end over the means or a justification of the means by the end. This new ethics of engagement was supported by the proverb: "*Agwo ga elo ibe ya, ogaghi eto*" which translates as "*if a snake does not swallow the other, it will not grow*". This new business ethics led, among other things, and in so many people, to an undue

---

[266]   C.M.S., CA 3/30 Perry to Hutchinson , received at C.M.S. London, 10th January, 1874; quoted in Ilogu, E., Christianity and Igbo Culture, London: Faber and Faber, London, 1973, p.77 (**Onitsha** is a Town in Igboland with the local Sea-port (coast of the Niger) through which Evangelization and Civilization came into Igboland. It is the commercial hub of Igboland)

[267]   See also Ilogu, E., Christianity and Igbo Culture, London: Faber and Faber, London, 1973, p. 77ff

consciousness of personal interests and survival regardless of its cost on the community and other individuals. The growth and spread of this trend continued gradually, and today, the picture is not far from the exaggerated view of Jude Uwalaka. He indicated that today,

> excessive individualism is on the Igbo throne; egocentrism and selfishness have become the driving force, personal interest has subdued common interest; there is personal agenda over group agenda; nothing is sacrificed to the interest of the group. Internal destructive competition has taken over from co-operation and collaboration. All is now permissible in order to out-manoeuvre the other in the pursuit of personal ambitions.[268]

Such culture of individualism, out-manoeuvring, and exploitation has been closely linked, by many other writers, with modernity and enlightenment. Some think that such attitudes are inseparably embedded in modernity in the sense that to be modern, the African-Igbo have to be individualistic, egoistic, and less caring about the plight of the other. And so, many have described the ugly situation as one in which the Igbo find themselves victims of the global trend towards modernity. The result is a clash of cultures- ancient and modern, culminating in the cultural identity crisis present in the contemporary Igbo society, all in an effort to live a "modern life". Kalu O.U recognises this fact when he avers that "under the pressure of modern" life, Igbo ethical values have become *shattered* into such small fragments that it seems impossible to be gathered together any longer.[269] Writing on modernity and industrialization in respect to African communalism, K. Wiredu observed that "industrialization seems to be proving deleterious to that system of communal caring and solidarity which was a strong point of traditional communalism, and one of the greatest problems facing us in Africa is how to reap the benefits of industrialization without incurring the more unlovable of its apparent fallouts, such as the ethic of austere individualism."[270]

This observation is also true of the Igbo society. Modernity seems to be synonymous with individualism. The worry as Wiredu pointed out is 'how' to reap the positive effects of modernism without losing the traditional African values embedded in the practice of communalism. But does modernity necessarily imply being individualistic? Is it not an error to hold that the two concepts go necessarily together, making it impossible for an African to be modern without being individualistic? Let me answer with this little experience: Two Igbo young men live together in one building in Germany. They also work in the same company.

---

[268] Uwalaka, J., (2003): The Struggle for an Inclusive Nigeria, Igbos to be or not to be? p. 30
[269] Kalu, O. U. (1993), "Ethical Values in Igbo Tradition of Politics," In: Anyanwu, U. D. and Aguwa, J. C. U. (ed.), *The Igbo and the Tradition of Politics* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd.. pp. at p.19
[270] Wiredu, K (1996): Cultural Universals and Particulars, p.72

Normally, they come to work carrying a bag where they put all they need for their work, including edibles. There are visible signs of their caring for each other, at home and in their place of work. These signs are so evident that one day one of their co-workers, also from Africa, came up to them and asked with dismay: 'What is this you are doing? This type of mutual caring and sharing is not done here. We are in a civilized, modern, and industrialized country- Germany and not in Africa. Everyone is on his own here, so you should stop all this show of brotherhood and mutual caring'. That is the story! By this, this intruder would be designating the other two as old-fashioned and uncivilized because of their having carried over the African traditional value of mutual caring and sharing to Germany. And so, to be civilized or modern, in the thought of the intruder, these two need to stop such practice. But this view is misconceived. The two are not less civilized by fact of their mutual caring and sharing.

If modernization and industrialization implies the state of affairs where everyone is on his or her own, then Igbo communities do not really need such a system. The 'how' of modernization of the Igbo society has to be within the context of African communalism and her many other values. It is a duty of philosophy as a tool in the hands of Igbo Philosophers to critically examine and analyse the 'how' of this modernization. *My work suggests that the individual, without losing his individuality, can at the same time wear a communal garb, and still be a member of an industrialized and modernized Igbo society.* Regrettably, the reality in the present Igbo society is that the notion of austere individualism as mark of civilization and modernity has eaten deep like a cankerworm in the mind set of many, and as such, has to a reasonable extent determined their life-style. This has led to many conflicts in the Igbo society. The Igbo need to put the ideals of communitarian life before them in their march towards industrialization and modernity.

Culture-contact is an everyday event. In today's world, the Igbo count among the greatest number of migrants in every Nook and Cranny of the northern and southern Hemisphere. There are many of them in different parts of the world in search of knowledge and economic survival. Regarding this trend, C. Agulanna observed rightly that "most Igbo communities survive by the communitarian practice of having migrant workers also in the diaspora who make financial returns back to their ancestral homes. Such *returns* remain an important source of capital for rural development and the uplifting of the home base."[271] Considering their being modernised, R. L. Sklar observes that communitarian societies tend

---

[271]   Agulanna Christopher (2011): "Ezigbo Mmadu: An Exploration of the Igbo Concept of a Good Person" in *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.4, no.5, September 2011 pp.139-161, at p.154

to, and should "retain their traditional communitarian characteristics that mitigate and contain the socially harmful consequences of functional differentiation"[272] Sklar, by this view helps in proffering answers to the "how" to reap the fruits of modernisation while still being communitarian.

I am by no means concerned with a functional differentiation in terms of its positive or negative consequences. I leave that for sociologist. However, in a functional system, all functions within the system are ascribed to a particular unit so that such a system is said to be functioning departmentally, and if one part fails to fulfil its task, the whole system will have great difficulty surviving.[273] This great difficulty is for the fact that, most of the times, the departments are much independent of the other to the extent of no interdependence, interference, or over-lapping. The natural instinct is that of 'this one does not concern me' even in the face of the system going down the drains. This is not communitarian instinct. But it suffices to say that the above suggestion and observation of Sklar has to do with how the case ought to be. There are however cases where the situation is the opposite of what was described. Instances abound where communitarian characteristics were thrown over-board by some individuals from communitarian societies, and so, they embraced those harmful ethics of functional differentiation that are associated with modernity and at war with communitarian traits. The intruder in the just illustrated example of two Igbo friends in Germany who were making collective use of a hand bag is *ad rem* here. In some worst cases, some communitarians imbibed only these dreadful negative aspects of modernity without being able to acquire its concomitant positive sides. This is also a reality in the contemporary Igbo society.

b. **The Civil War between the Igbo and the rest of Nigeria (The Nigerian / Biafran war)**

The brutality of the civil war waged against the Igbo between 1967 and 1970 affected the conception of many of her citizens concerning life and the ethics of survival. The aftermath of the war led to the 'play down' of many traditional and communitarian values like the sense of welfare of one being the concern of all. When the war ended, thousands of those who fled returned and realised they have lost everything, in many cases, including houses. The instinct

---

[272]   Sklar, R. L. (1987), "Developmental Democracy," In: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29 (4): 686-714 at 711.

[273]   Ritzer, George (2007): *Contemporary Sociological Theory and Its Classical Roots, The Basics, Second Edition*, p.98

to survive and the feeling of insecurity and uncertainty pushed some individuals to embrace individualistic approaches in seeking solutions to their problems. In order to make a living, they became over-ambitious to the detriment of communal living. As people who lost the war and still remained part of the Nigeria that fought them, the Igbo as an ethnic group suffered hatred, injustice, and inequality in the distribution of social amenities. There were no efforts towards cushioning the after-effects of the war on them. Instead, their properties and investments were regarded as abandoned, and therefore were confiscated or looted by others. They were diplomatically and economically disarmed or dwarfed. This hateful and heinous economic disarmament was carried out through the change of currency immediately at the end of the war. The Igbos were reduced to twenty pounds each, and this, irrespective of having millions in the Nigerian bank before the war. Confronted with such a biting economic hardship, many threw ethics overboard, and could not find any justification in not searching for survival through any means. The end started to justify the means. The question of the "ought" and the "ought not", as established by right reason, was not much considered. Excessive permissiveness crept in.

In effect, many acquired anti-communitarian traits that remained in the Igbo contemporary society even in the absence of the state of affairs that led to their acquisition in the first place. In fact, the brutality of the Nigerian civil war and its after-effects are far too numerous and far-reaching to be neglected in respect to the Igbo communitarian ethics of living. Stanley N. Macebuh put it this way: "[T]he war destroyed the communal reference point of all action, and caused a shift in the hierarchy of values from reverence for age, knowledge, experience and maturity and wisdom, to the cult of youth and the rejection of the concept of apprenticeship, and therefore of accountability.[274]

6.2 Further negative effects of A and B

The negative effects of the above two factors A and B, with respect to the shift in the hierarchy of values in the Igbo society, can be further schematized as follows:

1. Traditional hierarchical authority misconstrued and misapplied

In colonial times, warrant chiefs exercised their authority in the style of the colonial masters, a sort of Lord-servant relationship. This brought in a foreign idea of hierarchy. Some aspects of this idea could still be noticed among the Igbos. Following this influence, activities of some

---

[274]   Macebuh, Stanley N. (2002). Quoted in Agulanna Christopher (2011): "Ezigbo Mmadu: An Exploration of the Igbo Concept of a Good Person" in *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.4, no.5, September 2011 pp.139-161, at p.156.

elders in the hierarchical ladder are delineated by a sort of coarse moral and epistemic authoritarianism. A situation which, according to K. Wiredu, hampers the development of people's cognitive powers and militates against their unrestricted autonomous use of reason, to the point that he described the very atmosphere we breathe in many areas of life in African society as seems to be suffused with an authoritarian odour.[275]

In chapter four of this work I defended the position that having moral and epistemic authorities is advantageous for the preservation of the values and ideals of communalism. However, I condemn and say no to abuses and misapplication, under which I place the observation of Wiredu. I consider as an abuse of epistemic authority his further observation about "disinclination to entertain questions about the reasons behind an established practice or institution". He rightly described it as "a sure mark of the authoritarian mentality"[276] . Sometimes one hears questions like, "are you questioning my ideas or are you questioning established practice?" or statements like, "do not argue with me or with us". With such questions and statements, the possibility of engaging reason is hindered, and a grovelling sheepish and blind docility is demanded. This is arrogance on the side of whoever is demanding such from a person who has come to a mature age of reason.

It also smacks of an extreme epistemic authoritarianism and the abrogation of the individual's will and opinions which manifests itself in a domineering attitude of some seniors in matters of reasoning- what I call *a colonial master attitude*. It is an attitude which seeks to establish a culture that discourages criticisms and questioning, either of long standing beliefs or particular epistemic or moral judgement of an individual elder. Certainly, such an attitude can be cited in the ancient times, but it has become 'alarmic' in today's Igbo contemporary society in the sense that some individuals, mostly because of the influence of their wealth and position, and sometimes because of seniority rights, try to be irrationally authoritarian and therefore turn to "*eze onye agwala m*"- a king or colossus whom nobody can talk to or challenge but who dishes orders to other individuals. Such an attitude is in the increase given the wrong notion that money is the highest value and can command every other thing, including buying over the will of others. An Igbo Proverb says '*Aru gbaa afo, ya buru omenala*'- when a bad attitude lingers for years, it becomes a tradition. This is a point critics of African communalism point out. They insist that such system creates open avenues for the attitude of not questioning the existing status quo.[277] But I have tried to argue that a

---

[275]   Ibid
[276]   Ibid, p. 4
[277]   See Appia, Kwame Anthony (1989), Necessary Questions: An introduction to Philosophy. P. 202-203.

conscientious communitarian agent with a moral personhood can guide against being irrationally authoritarian. Hence, a proper application of the ideals of the system would create conditions for a kingdom of ends.

The criticism on the prevalence of extreme and irrational forms of authoritarianism in the practice of communalism intertwined with the observation of the suffocation of, and the clamp down on the will or voices of others in order to arrive at an alleged consensus decision or opinion. Such being the situation, some of those occupying various positions in the hierarchical ladder see it as a source of power for arbitrary control and intimidation. The common citizens on the other hand perceive the social hierarchy to be an apparatus of coercion, exploitation and oppression. In all of these, consensus decision lacks moral legitimacy. Let me elaborate.

2. Attempt towards a Consensus Decision misconstrued and sabotaged

I have observed that there are, in modern Igbo society, increased instances of aberrations in seeking consensus decision. Such scenario is part of the result of the increased shift in the hierarchy of values. One observes that, often, when people gather in various communities or families to deliberate and discuss on various socio-political matters, the path towards decisions premised upon consensus took forms that could be explained as hijacking of decisions instead of decisions by consensus. Some of those gatherings witness a concerted effort, by some individuals or group of individuals to clamp down opposing views. In the face of such a development, there is an unwillingness by many to air their views, or they simply absent themselves since their presence adds nothing to the decisions. But consensus, as we saw before now, does not imply the absence of opposing views. It only implies reasoning and deliberating on the various opinions available, and trying, at the end of it all, to come to an agreement.

Clamping down on dissent voices and the imposition of decision of an individual or a certain group as a consensus decision is one of the major reasons for the high level of corrupt practices in the socio-political administration of today's Igbo society. The dominance of the single view of any given hierarchy in a consensus system of decision making leads to a situation of unaccountability and impunity with regard to governance. Such a situation is expected given the fact that the strength of the general opinion, which supposed to challenge the opinion of the Chief or the head of a group, or that of the wealthy, is stifled and rendered ineffective. The result, as has been witnessed, is the prevalence of imposed decisions and actions, and the absence of checks and balances. With such being the case, the Leader, relying

on unanimity, asserts or presumes a unitive type of relationship between his will and the will of the rest. Such a presumption quickly results in the Leader losing sight of the requirement to account for his role. He does not feel obliged to the people anymore, since he can make decisions irrespective of them. Such a state of affairs has caused wrong decisions that have destroyed many families and communities in the Igbo society.

The traditional communitarian ideal based *legitimacy of any decision* on the will or approval of the entire community and not on any individual. Hence, any decision is legitimate when it represents the collective will of the people, and so, normally begins with "Oha kwuru si" - the Assembly of the people said that..." Traditionally, without accountability, the legitimation of Leaders or heads of communities collapses automatically. The person might remain a figure head, but would no longer receive any recognition or respect. To lose the recognition and the respect of the people is to lose one's legitimation. And normally, there was no appeal to a civil court to obtain legal legitimation. The only legitimation available is normative legitimacy conferrable by the people and merited by accountability, good relationships, and moral personhood.

Paradoxically, in some of today's Igbo communities, traditional heads, leaders, and chiefs, in order to lead their various traditional communities, obtain their legitimation from the state rather than from the people they are meant to lead and before whom they are supposed to gain acceptance. To express it succinctly, they usurp power with the help of the state. This development rendered normative legitimacy almost obsolete, and made heads of communities to develop attitudes inimical to communalism and the practice of consensus decision. In fact, much Government interference in traditional life and Governance promoted the shift of priorities and values. This affected also the award of traditional honours by heads of communities, in the sense that it also took some arbitrary forms since some of these heads now make choice of the individuals to receive such awards irrespective of the opinion of the community.

3. Awards of Traditional Honours Commercialized and Divested of Moral Standards

Traditionally, in Igboland, some wealthy individuals were given special recognition not just because of their wealth, not for their personal relationship with the chief head of the community, but more, because of their moral personhood and their service to the entire community which could also be in form of financial support. Wealth from persons with questionable character is not accepted in the family and society. Such made it the case that there could be wealthy individuals without moral personhood and consequently without any

chieftaincy recognition. This implies that not all wealthy individuals were seen as persons in the normative sense. It is along this line of recognition that I indicated earlier that there could be an individual who is advanced in age, but not accorded the respect due to elders, that is, a man who is chronologically aged but not an elder.

Meanwhile, what is clearly observable in some communities in the contemporary Igbo society is a worrisome case of crisis of value in respect of wealth and the award of traditional honours. Critical observers have referred to this development as an apparent deification of wealth. In what can be called an echo of this crisis, Barth Nnaji, in a lecture, lamented that "wealthy Igbo ruffians are now crowned as owners and leaders of their community and they end up enthroning crisis, stealing, and intimidating opponents. Riches become the yardstick to measure responsibility and acceptance in the society unlike before. What they fail to understand is that greed is like a bottomless pit which exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without ever reaching satisfaction…"[278]

One of the major factors why it is possible for wealthy Igbo ruffians to be crowned leaders and heads of their communities is the fact I mentioned earlier: state government interference which snatched legitimization of traditional leadership away from ethical or normative communities. As a logical consequence, these ruffians further select and award honours to people of their likes, to individuals who are ready to buy these honours irrespective of what the rest of the community members think about their moral personhood. Hence, riches or wealth becomes the yardstick to measure responsibility and worthiness of traditional honour. And since, traditionally, prestige and respect go with cultural and traditional honours and recognitions, some individuals, in the contemporary Igbo society, who feel they have money, now presume the next thing left is to get a title of honour to balance their social status. The truth is that, in some communities, many succeed in this quest since the community leader is either a ruffian or an individual who has no regard about the supposed constraint posed on individual aspirants by their not being morally fit for the award.

Such state of affairs drops the question of moral standing and other normative issues that traditionally go with the award of traditional honours. It jeopardises the continual survival of communitarian ideals and obliterates equally the aura of respect that accompanies Igbo traditional titles. And therefore, respect, responsibility, and caution, which were and remained above price, became demands of the past. This is because they have been replaced, regrettably, by a value that has price worth. Titles of honour could now be purchased by those

---

[278]   Nnaji, B., Ahiajoku Lecture, *Ka Ihe Di*, The Power of Light Energy as a Fundamental Instrument for Socio- Economic Development., 27th Nov. 2009, p. 15

who can afford the monetary cost. Having invested much money in order to be conferred with any of the honours, what normally follows is a high display of wealth and pompous self-adulation by traditional title holders in today's Igbo societies. This is exactly what obtains among politicians. With much concern, Lucius Ugorji analyzed some features of this pompous self-adulation: "Unnecessary display of wealth, luxury …intended to impress others and win applause from them. It is also manifested in unrestrained desire for honour and respect; showing off, fishing for compliments. It assumes various forms like, exhibitionism, self-bloating, self-complacency, boastfulness, exaggerated self-importance. Ostentatious life-style is gradually eating deep into the fabrics of our society. It is easily observed in the pomp and pageantry that usually accompany wedding, birthday ceremonies, jubilees, ordinations, etc in our society today."[279]

4. The Traditional Attitude towards the Poor (OGBENYE) is fast Eroded

Ostentatious life-style that has gradually eaten deep into the fabrics of the Igbo society, as L. Ugorji indicated in the above citation, has negative effects on the traditional senses of answerability and responsibility with respect to the attitude towards the poor and the needy (*Ogbenye*). In the treatment of the humanistic nature of the Igbo society in chapter three, I pointed out that the Igbo word for the poor - '*Ogbenye*'- refers to a needy member of the community, and literally means 'one who receives from the neighbourhood'. That is, an individual whose bad financial situation made his relatives to take over certain financial responsibility for him. Traditionally, as already indicated, an *Ogbenye* expects that his relatives live up to their responsibilities on him. Hence, he does not see his situation as a hopeless one, thanks to his understanding of the traditional values of brotherhood and human welfare. This value, as we saw, made it the case that the welfare of an individual is the concern of all. But with the current instances of a shift in values, the *Ogbenye* is most times reduced to a hopeless beggar. The current trend towards selfish individualism and undue love placed on riches, which is witnessed by the excessive accumulation and hoarding of wealth, brought about the neglect and/or the enslavement of the *Ogbenye*

Regarding such ugly situations, C. Agulanna observed: "It is now commonplace to find among the Igbo the vulgar struggle for survival which manifests in the worship of money for its own sake. In the past, it used to be that the great concern was with the nurturing of the mind and the pursuit of knowledge."[280] The wealthy worship their wealth and further demand,

---

[279]   Ugorji, L. I., Unconditional Return to Christ, Lenten Pastoral, Umuahia, 1992, p. 9
[280]   Agulanna Christopher p.154

by words or actions, that the *Ogbenye* worships them and their money. This is what many observers have referred to as an apparent deification of wealth. Some individuals would rather prefer the *Ogbenye* to starve to death or his state degenerates more and more than to spend their money or render other forms of kindness. With such attitude, the *Ogbenye* turned to be, not only a beggar, but a hopeless one. He is no more considered as a person with a sort of right to survive by means of the wealth of his kinsmen or extended family members. However, that the *Ogbenye* survives by means of the kindness of kinsmen was traditionally taken for granted. That is an aspect targeted by the Igbo proverb: "*Onye ji akwu toolu nchi na nchi adighi ali elu*"- whoever has palm should drop some for the grass-cutter because the grass-cutter does not climb a tree.[281] This proverb, in the context of communitarian life of the Igbo, has within itself a justification for the help due to the *Ogbenye*. It should not, however be interpreted to imply that the Ogbenye should lazy around without making sincere efforts to improve his or her situation.

---

[281] The grass-cutter is an animal that has palm nut as one of its favourite food, even though it cannot climb any tree including the palm tree.

CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

7.0 Introduction

Believing what Rescher rightly indicated that philosophy is "a venture in theorizing, but one whose rationale is eminently practical"[282] I have engaged in a theoretical analysis of African-Igbo communitarian principles but with its practical instances. These principles, in my analysis, have been so much misunderstood, misrepresented, and therefore mutilated. Mine is a project that seeks to bring rational and normative definitions and clarifications in the domains of the relationships between the communitarian individual and the community based on "what we ought to do". Such normative definitions extended to issues bordering on moral education and moral personhood; cultural hierarchical organigram fashioned to preserve the respect due to the status and authority of any individual especially that of elders; African-Igbo humanism that informed the moral sensitivity of seeing the welfare of an individual communitarian as the concern of all; socio-political structures with emphasis on consensus decision; and general ways of life of the African-Igbo. As a matter of choice, I deliberated on all these themes mostly through the prism of Kant's kingdom of ends formula. A summary of my reflections is as follows:

    a. **Kingdom of Ends Formula**

The formula states:

Act in accordance with the maxims of a universally legislative member for a merely possible kingdom of ends.[283]

By a kingdom Kant understands the union of different rational beings in a system of common laws. He holds that if we abstract from the personal differences of rational beings, we shall be able to conceive a kingdom of ends.[284] To make clearer my stand in relation to some of the values in African-Igbo communalism and morality, and my appreciation of them, I have also considered and appreciated the above principle by Immanuel Kant, which as I indicated, could be interpreted as speaking in favour of some elements of communitarian life of the African-Igbo, but at the same time holds firmly to individuality and autonomy of all members without them being individualistic. Such is a pointer to the type of communitarian life I stand to defend and uphold. Again, my reference to Kant, who reflected as a liberalist, is to avoid, in a

---

[282]   Rescher, Nicholas: *Philosophical Reasoning*: A Study in the Methodology of Philosophizing, 2001, p. 8
[283]   Kant, Groundwork, AK: 4:439; 4:433; 4: 437; 4:438
[284]   Ibid. AK: 4: 433

certain sense, a sort of Bootstrapping, that is, not relying only on a verification or justification from within the communitarian African experience. Suppose one reports that African-Igbo, based only on the experience of his African world, finds communitarian principles generally beneficial, and we believe him. And what is more, we corroborate his experience and further declare communitarianism as being generally good. We might have bootstrapped ourselves. And so, to avoid this, and in arguing for some communitarian ethics of life that could be acceptable even outside the African communities, I thought it wise to go beyond the arguments, thoughts, and principles of the African. The formula of a kingdom of ends by Kant, which demands abstracting from personal interests, and as I indicated, presupposes also the existence of commonly legislated norms regarding "what we ought to do" or "how we ought to behave" in a community of rational and moral human beings who are both conscious of common rules and ties, and very conscious also of the humanity and autonomy of the other, and therefore, no one is being treated as a means to achieve or satisfy the goals and ends of others.

As one of the building blocks of a kingdom of ends, Kant's formula of universal law, as a model of rational deliberation, could be understood in the context of communalism, as the demand that the individual considers the community at large before making decision on how he ought to behave. This implies that one considers "how we ought to behave" in the formation of "how one ought to behave". This demand is one of the essential features of an ideal African-Igbo communalism - that an individual considers himself always as a being-in-relation to other beings in the community or kingdom; that he tries to model behaviours along the lines of this consideration, so that he considers a situation where every other person in the community were to be him, and were to act as he proposes to act. This is part of the demand that members of a kingdom of ends abstract from and look beyond personal interests.

In proposing the idea of a possible kingdom of ends as a way of emphasizing the communal nature of moral principles, Kant never dropped his idea of individual autonomy, rather the idea constituted a construction material for a possible kingdom of ends. In a communitarian environment, the individual exercises this autonomy by being an active agent in communal deliberations about "what we ought to do". Therefore, an organised communal structure that denies an individual the opportunity to be part of communal deliberations, either by direct personal representation or by wilfully being represented by another person or group of persons, will be sabotaging the ideals of communitarian living that guarantees a kingdom of ends. As observed, in such a kingdom of ends, the individual is expected to willingly abstract from personal ends, differences, and interests. Such an 'abstraction-requirement'

cannot be possible if the individual is not ready to operate with maxims of action that he would wish for as communal or common rule. Such willing is understood as the individual's consideration of the community and other moral agents in the course of making rational and moral deliberations.

b. **Individual and the Community**

In Igbo communalism, as we have seen, the community is so relevant to the extent that a person could be defined or described in terms of his relationship with the community. Such importance also made the community indispensable in the moral and overall development of an individual. This informed the African conception that *it takes a whole village to raise a child*. In raising the child, the sense and importance of the community is instilled into him or her. This follows from the understanding that the individual is seen as "a being-with-others", "a being with a group consciousness" or "a being in a community". This natural and basic consciousness makes it possible for the individual to willingly say "I am, because we are". The acceptance and freedom with which a conscientious communitarian moral agent makes the assertion: "I am, because we are" makes also the communal legislation "what we ought to do" or "how we ought to behave" not to be an infringement on the individual autonomy. And the basic urge, by conscientious communitarians, to see to the welfare of the community, is because the end-beneficiary targeted is the individual. The idea here is that the community structures have to stand so that individuals can also stand, since the community is the mainstream for the continuous existence of the individual.

Presently however, in some big cities in the Igbo society, some people tend to maintain a sense of anonymity. The sense of togetherness or community is repressed. This is mostly possible because of influx to big cities where an individual is outside the direct influence of his kith and kin. In such a situation, there is less communal influence which is the basis for informal moral education. The result is that some people lost sense of shame in the face of immoral behaviours, and now live a life of "I don't care"- I don't care what others are saying about me. This type of attitude destroys the sense of relatedness that gives meaning to, and creates little room for, chiding, ribbing, and prodding. When individuals can no longer chid, rib, and prod one another, behaviours reprehensible to the society increase at a high rate. Morally speaking, this effect underscores the advantage of communalism, in the sense that it helps to hold social and communal interactions or relations which help people to know, care and help each other especially in matters of acceptable social behaviours. They also help in engendering the moral attitudes of shame and guilt, which are needed for moral progress

through a rational and moral reflection on the reactive attitudes of other members of the community.

My belief is that it is not impossible to create communal structures even in the contemporary big cities in the Igbo societies. This is because the sense of community is an attitude that could be exercised everywhere, not only in the villages. This type of communal structure could be in the form of certain socio-cultural or religious organisations or groups. There are, for instance, religious, social, and town or street unions or organisations in big cities. Within such groups, the communal sense of relatedness that makes possible informal moral education and mutual reinforcement is expected to be seen. In the midst of a seemingly anonymous structure of big cities, these groups make it possible for a manageable population of individuals to know one another closely and be able to engage on talks about one another. Such talks could lead to discussing very personal and moral issues, and provide opportunities for chiding, ribbing, and general mutual reinforcement. It is within the context of such urban communities, that the individual is expected to fit in, and therefore, continue to form his behaviours, and be socially and politically relevant.

Of course, there is always room for the individual to exercise his autonomy, which has been already given certain parameters by the communal stipulation of "how we ought to behave". In the face of particular circumstances for instance, it is for the individual moral agent to decide, in the first place, whether to apply the norms stipulating "how we ought to behave", and in the second place, how to apply such objective communal norms. But he must also be ready to dance the tune of the music he is playing for himself. In this sense, the individual autonomy is not vitiated by the presence of common moral rules, which is an unavoidable condition for the possibility of a kingdom of ends. They do not vitiate autonomy, because moral rules are open-textured. They do not completely specify actions in all circumstances of life. These circumstances call for individual rational decision of the moral agent. The demand on the rational agent is to analyse and understand the moral rules and principles, and then make personal rational decisions regarding their use. There are also other circumstances that challenge one's rational creativity. Circumstances, which no already made moral rule addresses or applies. In such cases, the individual, in consideration of several values in the community, decides on what the proper or right action should be. The above way of responding to "how we ought to behave" makes the moral agent responsible for his action, and therefore, could be blamed or praised. "How we ought to behave", as I already noted, creates a sort of parameter for moral agents. It supplies some sort of general moral points of view, moral attitudes or sensibilities needed for communal living in an ethical community.

In Igbo societies, an individual is expected to possess moral personhood. And this moral conception of personhood demands that autonomy, rights, and responsibilities be attributed to the individual, within the context of participating in communal life. Here, there is an interplay of individual and community values. Recognising the importance of this interplay, Gyekye holds that "a moral political theory that combines an appreciation of, as well as responsibility and commitment to, the community as a fundamental value, and an understanding of, as well as commitment to, the idea of individual rights, will be a most plausible theory to support".[285] Such an interdependence, complementarity or mutuality between the individual and the community in traditional Africa, made some researchers to notice only a theoretical distinction between the individual and the community. Verhoef and Michel noticed that "an individual is obliged to contribute to the community not because it is expected of him or her, but because it (referring to the community) is him or her."[286] Well, this could only be understood in a certain sense, a sense of 'what belongs to the community is also mine'. Such an interpretation is necessary because no single individual, in a literal sense of it, is the community, but there could be a tight mutual relationship between them. This mutuality and identification requires an ethics. For authors like Bénézet Bujo, a *communitarian ethics* demands that the community be a fundamental human good that guarantees a life of mutual consideration and interdependence, offering a viable atmosphere for the enhancement of the individuals' potentials; an ethics that also demands that communitarian life be devoid of hostility and friction, and therefore be able to make life most rewarding and fulfilling.[287] An aspect of the ethics, as noted already, is that elders, in the exercise of epistemic and moral authority, must be well informed on and guided by "what we ought to do" or how we ought to behave", and not just acting arbitrarily according to individual's whims and caprices.

An opinion that enjoys much support is the view that moral character and growth, as well as moral progress and its sustenance, are best acquired or achieved in a social or community context. This fact is widely accepted, and is attested also by Kant.[288] This implies that moral

---

[285]   Gyekye K., Tradition and Modernity, p.76

[286]   Heidi Verhoef and Claudin Michel, "Studying Morality within the African Context: A Model of Moral Analysis and Construction," *Journal of Moral Education* 26, no. 4 (1997), pp.389-407. They were quoting L. J. Meyer, "Transpersonal Psychology: The Role of the Afrocentric Paradigm," *Journal of Black Psychology*, 12, no. 1 (1986), pp.31-42, at p. 35.

[287]   Bujo, B., (1998): The Ethical Dimension of Community, p. 27.

[288]   See Kant, Religion 6:93-98. Here, Kant observed that many obstacles to living the moral life are rooted in the society, most of the times in the form of unhealthy societal competitions and self-love. Human beings, he noted, mutually corrupt one another's moral disposition, and even with the good will of each individual, because of lack of a principle which unites them, they deviate through their dissensions from the common goal of goodness, as if they *were instruments of evil,* and expose one another to the danger of

sensibility is rarely sustained with an individualistic attitude to life. If this is true, then communitarian ideals and principles best guarantee the continual existence of a society as a kingdom of ends. It guarantees also the social cohesion needed in such a kingdom. The individualism of liberalism, by the tendency of viewing as an imposition or a vitiation of individual's autonomy and freedom whatever that does not remotely come from the self, rejects most of the values that make cohesion in a kingdom possible. The communitarian emphasis that moral duty and obligation imply duties to oneself and to the community in mutually beneficial relationships is important for the sustenance of any ethical kingdom.

Granted that the act of thinking is an individual activity, but people can reason and deliberate as a group. To "Think different" or to think differently, as understood in a liberal society, as once used by Apple as a logo, where individuals as members of a community, in thinking for themselves tend to rely only on their own rational ability, irrespective of other individuals, is not emphasized in African (Igbo) communalism. The individual in African society thinks as an individual but in relation to and with the help of other members of the community. A family member deliberating on how to improve his personal welfare, even without directly seeking the opinion of others, has the instinct to consider in his deliberations, possible opinions of other members of his family. This is an act "think with". In a culture, where the emphasis is on thinking different and doing things only in one's own way, the needed consciousness of other human beings required in a kingdom of ends will be elusive. In my opinion, the culture of "think with", of caring and sharing as implicit in the humanistic nature of African communalism is necessary for a functional and practical kingdom of ends.

Meanwhile, the major criticism of the communitarian order is that it tends to neglect the individual rights. In so far as such tendency is true, communalism as a system does not neglect individual rights, but only places priority of duties to the community over individual rights. Duties to the community prevail upon rights of the individual. However, I believe that in many instances, African communalism is not practiced perfectly, and there is an inherent tendency to neglect individual rights and autonomy as understood in this work. My reference to the formula of kingdom of ends, in which Kant never dropped the individual autonomy of members of the kingdom, is to instil the consciousness of this tendency into the minds of communitarian agents. Such consciousness will help comb the level of this tendency.

---

falling once again under its dominion. The highest moral good, according to him, and therefore moral progress, will not be brought about solely through the striving of one individual person, but requires rather a union of such persons into a whole toward that end.

With a good understanding of the nature of communities in the African-Igbo societies and the individual's place within it, the overheated tension between the interest or rights of the individual and duties to the community, and the criticisms of the neglect of the individual, becomes mostly theoretical, engineered on the one hand by the extrapolation into African communalism, liberal ideas and definition of autonomy of the individual in relation to the community, and on the other hand, by the influence of the loose nature of communities in the western world. Some of the African Philosophers, in dealing with communalism in African societies, are so much influenced by the western idea and notion of individual autonomy while others tend to neglect the autonomy of the individual. Therefore, there exists a sort of polarization of stands whereby some writers on African culture either take, on the one hand, a position that presents communalism in a way that presents individual rights or autonomy as non-existent, and so talk about community decisions and interests abstractly in neglect of the individuals that make up the community. That is, conceiving a community being in opposition with individual human beings. Or, on the other hand, they posit a stance that presents communalism as a system to be thrown into the garbage as a worthless, nonsensical, and outdated system. Such authors argue that we live presently in a world where what is necessary is the individual's moral and rational decision in form of "what I ought to do", and that "what we ought to do" has become less necessary if not totally irrelevant.

I have argued that ideal communalism in the African-Igbo societies should be seen as combining "what I ought to do" with "what we ought to do", but that the former must find rational support from, or be understood in the context of the latter. Kwasi Gyekye took up a project to philosophically reflect on African traditions and the demands of modernity. And so, in his book *Tradition and modernity*, he presented an idea of a *moderate form of communitarianism*, in which he tried to simultaneously incorporate and balance individual and community interests and rights. According to him, "it is moderate communitarianism that, in the final analysis, adequately reflects the claims of both individuality and community, both of which need to be recognised morally and functionally."[289] This is my project. And I chose to support the possibility of such mutual existence of interest with the idea presented in Kant's formula of a kingdom of ends- a kingdom constructed with the conscious recognition of the individual's rational willing about what "one ought to do", coupled with a necessity that the individual be conscious of the communal rational willing, interest or rule couched in the form of "what we ought to do". In such mutuality, the individual is expected to abstract from personal ends and interests. A caveat, therefore, is that in discussing communalism, any

---

[289]   Gyekye K, Tradition and Modernity, 61

presentation that excludes the individual's "what I ought to do", or the communal "what we ought to do" is an extreme position. Moral demands in the form of "what we ought to do" present the communal nature of moral norms, and such a nature is what guarantees the survival of communalism and any kingdom of ends.

I admit the fact that community, clan, and tribe consciousness as required by African communalism challenges nation building and governance in multi-cultural, -tribal and –ethnic states. The challenge is on how public and political office holders or leaders in a multi-tribal society or nation like Nigeria, would shun tribalism, clannism, and nepotism in discharging their duties as national leaders.[290] And in fact, there are practical instances where African political leaders, such as Presidents, Governors, and Ministers appoint persons from their clans, or tribe to occupy positions they are not qualified for. Such situations are also witnessed in the giving of contracts and in allocating resources and infrastructures. An example as at the time of this work is the Nigerian President, Mohammadu Buhari who, as alleged, has displayed so much tribalism and nepotism in his political appointment. A Nigerian Newspaper, the Daily Post, listed federal appointments made by the President, and about 90 percentage went to his own particular region in the nation, leaving the other six regions of the country with about 10 percent.[291] In an interview, the president tried a defence of such lopsided appointments on the grounds that he received over 95% support from his own people, so felt justified to "reward" them. According to him, such reward is natural. President Buhari's insistence that such appointment is natural implies that he, like many of his type, feels a sense of responsibility to his tribe and kin for also supporting his presidential campaign, again, not necessarily because he is qualified to be the president rather because he is one of them. Critics say that communalism breeds such state of affairs, and for that fact, on the national level, the system is counterproductive. These critics would then prefer a system where the sense of responsibility to family, kin, community, and tribe is very weak. That will enable political leaders in multi-ethnic nations to discharge duties and operate without filial sentiments.

The challenge is not only directed to the political leaders. In some cases, citizens of a certain ethnic group will protest against the removal of any of theirs from national appointment or political post. This occurs even when the removal is justified on grounds of corrupt practices or incompetence. As such, thieves or fools would be preferred by their own

---

[290]   For more on this criticism see Wiredu: Philosophy and An African Culture, 23.

[291]   For more reading: http://dailyposting.ng/2016/08/11/ncef-Lists-discriminatory-appointments-non-muslims-says-buhari-islamized-nigeria/.

ethnic group for a national appointment rather than a capable and honest man from another ethnic unit. Such preference is sometimes engineered by unnecessary hatred and competition between ethnic groups. I might be exaggerating here by using "fools", but that gives the picture of the situation I want to present. There is what I will call a politics of FEEL. That is, the fact that a person from my ethnic group is at the helm of affairs gives me a satisfactory feeling to wish that he or she continues to hold the political position, and this, regardless of his or her performance.

No doubting the fact that there is a natural feeling of social and moral responsibility towards a group a person considers himself belonging to, a group that has contributed to the person's socio-moral, epistemic, and psychological growth and sustenance. Since communitarians see their communities as larger families that buffer every individual member, the feeling of responsibility towards one another and one's community is to be expected. But that does not imply a hatred of other communities or tribes. Distinctions have to be made between a feeling of responsibility towards one's people and hatred towards other groups. Such feeling of responsibility should be a panacea for selfishness, foolishness, and bad moral standing of a national office holder. The ideal reaction in line with principles of genuine communalism is the feeling of disappointment and shame with respect to non-performing national office holders from my ethnic group. Such an individual would not be qualified to be called a person in the normative and moral sense. That is not to say that individuals in a communitarian system who occupy national positions do not face a challenge of abstracting from their own community ends, and then look for general ends of the nation. In fact, this is where the ethics of mutual relationship between the individual and the community, as it exists in communalism, would serve a good purpose for a whole nation at large. Communities, clans, and tribes that make up a nation have to learn to abstract from their personal interest in the face of matters of national interest. This will create a sort of 'marriage of convenience' among the federating communities, clans, and tribes.

So, the 'how' of modernization of Igbo society has to be within the context of her valuable culture and values. This is what my work as a philosophical project has tried to suggest: that the individual without losing his individuality can at the same time wear a communal garb, be community conscious, and believe that the welfare of anyone of the community should be his or her concern, and still be a member of an industrialized and modernized society.

c. Moral Education and Moral Personhood

The consciousness in African-Igbo communalism, by responsible adults or elders, of having the obligation to see to it that moral principles and values survive and are transmitted to the young ones is a value that has to survive irrespective of modernization and civilization. We saw that in traditional Igbo, elders and morally responsible parents can correct and discipline any child or even other adults, reprimanding them on the moral and social values that are acceptable. This is done with an objective reason to make the whole community a kingdom where individuals act with the sensitivity and consciousness of having to relate with one another as moral and rational beings. The attractiveness of African-Igbo communalism with regard to informal moral education is that most elders, and in fact, morally mature adults have similar moral sensibilities, so that the dangers of misinforming the young ones by any elder is minimal, though possible. That being the case, parents have less reason to nurse fears that their children will be morally misguided by any elder who possesses a moral personhood. This is in line with the stand of Thomas Hill Jr. as seen in chapter one where he noted that in a supposed kingdom of ends, reasonable people can move on well enough with issues of moral decision by "relying … on the individual judgments of people who internalize some basic moral attitudes."[292] The existence of such common basic moral attitudes or sensibilities in any community is a *conditio sine qua non* for the type of informal moral education practiced in an African communitarian system. This is because there is now a common moral standard to measure the moral maturity and authority of those who form the moral sense of the young through the informal means, like instant prodding, chiding, praising, blaming, and poking. Such basic common moral attitudes make one feel justified to correct the other, and give parents a sort of guarantee that their child is being morally directed along the lines of acceptable moral principles, sensibilities or attitudes.

The moral ills associated with modernity is as a result of lack of such common moral sensitivity and consciousness, and the belief that everyone can decide alone what is good for oneself, without minding communal ethos, and therefore, *it does not take a village to raise a child*, rather the child determines what is good for him or her. When such ideology becomes prevalent in the modern Igbo, the traditional common moral sensibility dwindles, making it also difficult to achieve consensus on moral and socio-political issues. The effect is the moral decadence that is normally associated with civilization and modernity. However, moral decadence is not synonymous with, and must not necessarily be an effect of modernity. Moral

---

[292]   Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (1992): "A Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules." p. 300

decadence is only an effect of lack of transfer of morals from passing generations to the coming ones. Moral decadence is accelerated because many parents think no other person, including school teachers, have the right to correct their children morally. Moral decadence exists because many parents fight, with all possible arsenals, anyone who tries to educate their child on moral issues, and so, they make their children believe they can act and behave as they like, and that it is no one's concern. Above all, moral decadence is on the increase because of lack of support, on communal basis, for mutual correction with respect to moral behaviours. Here the major difficulty is the absence of a commonly acceptable moral stand on certain issues in a given community. It is left to be proved that these causes are necessarily one with modernity.

In African-Igbo communitarian order, the individual is never left alone in the process of acquiring moral education, rather, by means of an informal process, the individual acquires moral education through the help and influence of morally mature elders who have already acquired moral personhood. At the basis of the informal education process is the *good will* and the *sense of duty* on the part of the elders. An elder teaches and corrects the young ones with a good will and a high sense of duty. This is mostly done through poking, prodding, chiding, and also praising. A good will is understood to be one of the highest demands in a communitarian life.

Informal moral education and therefore the transfer of morals from passing generations to the coming ones demands that elders possess moral personhood which could be understood in terms of moral 'award' conferrable by the community to persons who put in practice the moral principles and values of the community. As an award, its conferment justifiably presupposes certain preconditions or qualities. However, such a moral award has no official conferment or proclamation, but by a sort of a gradual evolution, an individual is respected as one with a strong moral character which now defines his or her personality.

Individuals with a moral personhood try to make their community a normative one or a kingdom of moral persons. The acquisition of a moral personhood presupposes, on the part of the individual moral agent, an exercise of moral reasoning or deliberation. The *content of moral reasoning* in a communitarian order comprises primarily, a consideration of the mutual and coextensive relationships that exist among individuals, and between individuals and the community. Since moral personhood is personal, moral reasoning is fundamentally an individual activity, but as I mentioned earlier, the community structures inform the reasoning. When need be, the individual activity could necessitate another communal exercise or deliberation. Such an exercise helps the community to morally deliberate on, as in Rawls' idea

171

of an original position in his theory of justice, 'what they now think', which incorporates 'conditions they do in fact accept' for the purpose of public- and self-clarification".[293]

As I have argued in chapter two of this work, there is need, in a kingdom of ends, for a public or communal knowledge of "what we ought to do", "how we ought to behave", the moral convictions that we commonly share, and that should influence our moral reasoning, even if individuals have already legislated for themselves such rules. It is on this note that Rawls deemed necessary, the condition in which everyone accepts, and knows that the others all accept the same principles of justice. In other words, *it is necessary that everyone knows the type of moral sensitivity that is commonly shared.* This is a necessary condition for a real practice of African-Igbo communalism, especially with regard to informal moral education. The individual's awareness of the moral sensitivity of other members of the society creates trust in having to relate with them. This awareness also creates the consciousness that other individuals have a moral personhood and a moral worth beyond price, which they value and cherish, and therefore would like to be respected.

In traditional Igbo society, moral personality or moral worth of persons attracts respect. In a case of lack of it, as already stated, the individual is no person, and therefore, merits no respect. Individuals with a moral personhood, in Rawls' terminology, could be said to be owed equal justice. He argues that "equal justice is owed to those who have the capacity to take part in and to act in accordance with the public understanding of the initial situation."[294] He had earlier argued that: "A person's right to complain is limited to principles he acknowledges himself."[295] It could be said that those with a moral personality achieved through moral reasoning, are those who have the required capacity to act and indeed act in accordance with the public or communal understanding of "what we ought to do", as embedded in the norms of the community, which could also be said to have been reached under a circumstance similar to Rawls' initial situation, a situation that is devoid of prejudice and personal interest, or a knowledge of what preferences individuals had. Rawls actually shares the view that moral personhood attracts respect. Accordingly, he opined that "the sufficient condition for equal justice [is] the capacity for moral personality."[296]

---

[293]   Freeman, Samuel, "Original Position", Ibid.
[294]   Rawls, J., Theory of Justice, p.505.
[295]   Rawls, J. Ibid. p. 217.
[296]   Rawls, J. Ibid. p. 506.

Kant takes the possession of a moral personality as precondition for acting from duty.[297] It is also a necessary condition for informal education. And given the fact that acting from duty for Kant is a basic expectation in a kingdom of ends, moral personality becomes also, for a realization of a kingdom of end, a necessary demand. He explained that a being with moral personality cannot be seen lacking entirely conscience, moral feeling, love of one's neighbour, and respect for one's self. These, according to him, lie at the basis of morality and are natural predispositions of the mind for being affected by the concept of duty.[298] The cultivation of conscience, moral feeling, and love of neighbour is not free from community influence, in the sense of their being cultivated within the context of one's environment. Both Rawls and Kant agree therefore that one's moral personality is not realised in an isolated and abstract manner. Moral personhood must be acquired within the context of, and with the help of other individuals that are part of the community.

One sided readers of Kant might be surprise to hear that he supports community context of moral personality. Many think that for Kant, the individual's morality is all about the metaphysical and abstract individual. This is a misguided conception. Kant observed that many obstacles to living moral life are rooted in the society, most of the times in the form of unhealthy societal competitions and self-love.[299] This implies that community effort, through the help of morally mature individuals, is needed in moral education and progress. Kant noted that such unhealthy societal competitions and self-love breed in human beings, envy, addiction to power, avarice, and malignant inclinations, and provide the ground for human beings to mutually corrupt each other's moral disposition and make one another evil.[300] Emphasising on this he said:

> Human beings (as we have remarked above) mutually corrupt one another's moral
> disposition, and even with the good will of each individual, because of lack of a
> principle which unites them, they deviate through their dissensions from the

---

[297]   In the Groundwork, Kant made a distinction between actions that are in 'conformity with duty' and those 'done from duty.' Actions that proceed from duty are those done for the sake of duty without any sort of inclination, but those that conform with duty are those done with some inclinations but at the same time seem to proceed from duty. (Groundwork for Metaphysics of Morals 4:397-398). Allen Wood presented the distinction thus: "An action conforms to duty if it complies with what duty requires, whatever might be our motives for doing it. Only acts done *from duty...* have true "moral worth" or "moral content"." (Allen W. Wood (1999): *Kant's Ethical Thought,* p.27) Actions that merely proceed from a self-serving aim (personal advantage) may conform to duty but did not proceed from duty and from principles of honesty. Such actions, Kant says, lack inner worth and have no moral content. (Groundwork for Metaphysics of Morals 4:397)

[298]   Metaphysics of Morals 6:399-403.

[299]   Religion 6:27.

[300]   Religion 6:93-94.

> common goal of goodness, as if they *were instruments of evil,* and expose one
> another to the danger of falling once again under its dominion.[301]

This danger of mutual moral corruption therefore underlines the relevance of having in a kingdom of ends, a communal understanding of "what we ought to do", a sort of moral principle that unites members and influences moral reasoning. This is in order to foster mutual moral progress of all members. In this case, "what we ought to do" would be serving as a compass, beacon or parameter, in the hands of elders, in directing and informing the moral deliberations of the young.

Kant, because of "rational nature", characterized a human being as an end in itself, with a humanity that is to be respected. As we saw in chapter two, this encompasses humanity in your own person as well as in the person of everyone else, that is, every member of the society. The development of personal talents is a way of respecting the humanity in oneself. From a communitarian perspective, it is also morally unacceptable for someone not to invest his talents in working hard, or to refuse to take care of himself when sick, since in doing so, he is not only creating difficulties for himself but also sabotaging the community as a whole. One of the highest taboos is to take one's life. This is seen as an affront to humanity and the community in general. The argument, "*it is my life and I'm free to live or use it the way I like*" holds no ground in this context, since the welfare of one, is the concern of all, and invariably, a bad situation one puts oneself has negative consequences on the entire community. With such an involvement of the community in the fate of an individual communitarian, elders feel obliged to correct, inform and direct, to avoid a state of affairs that will not benefit the young individual and the community.

Rawls suggests that individuals deliberating on principles that could justifiably unite them must have to do so under *the veil of ignorance*. According to him, under the veil of ignorance, individuals "do not know how the various alternatives will affect their own particular case and they are obliged to evaluate principles solely on the basis of general considerations."[302] Communal moral reasoning or deliberations in traditional African-Igbo communitarian order could, in one perspective, be understood in this form. This perspective is in virtue of the fact that individuals do not know how and when a particular communal principle being put in place would affect their personal interest or that of their nuclear family unit. In that case, they are expected to selflessly and objectively deliberate on principles or norms. The demand of objectivity is for the fact that one is in a sort of veil of ignorance as

---

[301]   Religion 6:97
[302]   Rawls, J., Ibid. p. 136-137.

when he would be a direct subject of any particular principle. If there is anything one is sure of, it is that the principle awaits him, but as for when and how, he is under the veil of ignorance. This is supported by the Igbo proverb that says: "Whoever sees a chicken scattering faeces with her legs should stop her, for no one knows who will eat the legs". This proverb explains the nature of moral reasoning and deliberation in the African-Igbo context. Much of this targets the good and general welfare of all. The proverb also explains why an elder has the push or instinct to correct and properly direct any young member of the community, because a child today is an adult tomorrow, and no one knows who will be benefiting from him or her.

Viewed from another perspective, moral deliberators in traditional Africa never deliberated under the veil of ignorance with respect to the practical or existential situation of the community. Deliberations were on practical issues that concern the community and her relationships with individuals, or between individual members. In discussing those issues, examples were normally cited, and moral deliberators were expected to be sensitive to some of those examples culled out from practical human situations. It is on this ground that Sandra Harding criticised Rawls, indicating that his idea of a moral deliberator or a moral person contradicts the ethics of caring, and in that case does not represent the African view of morality and moral personhood, a view that, in its humanistic nature, is sympathetic to human conditions.[303] Practical issues also play a vital role in the course of informal moral education. Elders correct and direct the young ones by making reference also to practical life experiences, especially within the community.

Such reference to practical examples and situations follows from the African view that principles governing morality, justice, moral personality and personhood have to relate to relevant contexts or situations in which they are conceived, learned, and therefore first applied. These contexts are the starting points that make those principles meaningful, even if they apply in all situations, that is, even if they pass the test of universality. Therefore, it may not be the case that the contextual view of morality is inconsistent with universal application. Starting points or contexts could influence, and do actually influence the moral reasoning or moral development of an individual, but may also, without conflicts, track morality in its universal sense of obligation. So, Harding's observation of African morality as being

---

[303]   Sandra Harding, "The Curious Coincidence of Feminine and African Moralities: Challenges for Feminist Theory," In *Women and Moral Theory*, eds., Eva Feder Kittay and Diana T. Meyers (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1987), 296-315.

sympathetic to human conditions, with primary emphasis on love and caring, does not imply that morality in the African perspective does not border about the inherent goodness or rightness of an action in itself. It actually does, but not to a neglect of how an action's inherent goodness imparts on the wellness of human beings. Meanwhile, having noted the two perspectives in my reading of Rawls' veil of ignorance, I go with the first one in trying to establish the disinterested nature of communal moral deliberations.

And so, let us now understand a kingdom of ends in the African-Igbo communalistic context as a community in which members possess and respect moral personality or personhood of all, and where the young ones are willing to acquire such moral personhood by their openness to be guided, in their individual moral reasoning, by communal ethos couched in form of "what we ought to do". To this is added also their ability to feel shame and guilt in the face of improper moral behaviour, and their sensitivity to relevant concrete situations of others in the community or kingdom. Such shame and sensitivity open up the individual for the informal moral education through corrections, chiding, poking, and also praising.

To continue having a kingdom of ends, there is a need that young individuals, not only have a clear concept of "what we ought to do", but also acquire a consciousness of the unavoidable obligation posed by moral norms. In acting in a morally unacceptable way, the feeling of guilt, remorse, and a sense of shame ought to be there in individuals who understand the 'obligatoriness' of moral rules on the one hand, and the worth of a moral personality on the other hand, and who make sincere efforts to acquire or maintain a moral personhood. Such a need says much about the importance of moral education. Menkiti had offered the explanation that the transgression of accepted moral rules gives rise not just to a feeling of guilt but to a feeling of shame- the point being that once morality is conceived as a fundamental part of what it means to be a person, then as an agent, the individual is bound to feel incomplete in violating its rule, thus provoking in himself the feeling properly describable as shame, with its usual intimation of deformity and unwholeness.[304]

Individuals help one another to have this sense of shame or the feeling of emptiness and un-wholeness, partly through negative reactive attitudes when accepted moral rules are transgressed. In traditional Igbo communities, many of such attitudes come from mature individuals or elders, and could be passed over by means of prodding and chiding, or other means of condemning reprehensible acts, and hence, informally imparting moral education. Negative reactions also convey to the individual a message as to the value of the positive behaviour expected of him. For the morally immature, this is an aspect of the informal moral

---

[304]   Menkiti, I. A., "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought", p. 176

education, to learn by the reactions of others, especially elders. A child is considered unwise, if he or she cannot read the meaning of corrective gestures of elders, even without the elder speaking a word.

In the Igbo communities, the consciousness of hurting others by one's reprehensible acts, creates a high degree of moral sensitivity in an individual, and is a big factor in moral reasoning. With this consciousness, morality, as understood from a communitarian perspective, demands a sense of duty and obligation of individuals to each other and to the community, especially, morally mature elders to the young ones. We saw in chapter two that this sense or consciousness of duty is a necessary construction material for a kingdom of ends. Also, from a communitarian perspective, some moral duties to the community are necessary in order that the community will continue to exist and provide an environment or an atmosphere conducive for individuals to achieve moral personhood, and therefore become morally good persons. According to Kant, consciousness of duty contains that of a good will.[305] The two, taken together, give us an idea of a good person. These two are also necessary characteristics of elders who informally educate the young, and form moral personality in them.

d. **Influence of Hierarchy and the Respect for Elders**

The status hierarchical aspect of African-Igbo society has attracted much attention, worries, and criticisms. I indicated that there are genuine grounds for this. This is because of many exaggerations in the exercise of hierarchy and authority based on respect accorded to age. Such exaggeration in practical living is caused by a very wrong notion of the demands of communalism, and the neglect of the sense in which the individual enjoys freedom and autonomy in the midst of communal demands and respect accorded to elders or seniors. My support of hierarchy and authority in African-Igbo society is mainly in the aspect of imparting some moral and social values necessary for the formation of individual moral personhood; role modelling; effective community and family governance; and social cohesion. Any oppressive and suppressive use of authority and hierarchy is an aberration, and does not represent the original and ideal sense of Igbo hierarchical institutions. This is not a denial of the existence of some aberrations.

A form of "think with" attitude is the act of inquiry by which younger ones share their aspirations, plans, thoughts, and ideas with their elders and also by referring to some

---

[305]   Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals 4:397).

communally established beliefs which are usually preserved in a form of oral tradition. At this level of "think with" consciousness, moral education and African thought and culture are guided by the epistemic and moral authority of well-informed elders. As such, *epistemic and moral guidance by elders is the sense in which their authority ought to be understood.* I have also expressed the opinion that authoritarianism in this sense of having the right or being obliged to guide thoughts does not cancel the fact of the individual's autonomy as understood in this work. This obligation or duty establishes a natural hierarchical structure that placed some individuals on a separate level of status in the Igbo community, but at the same time is not to be taken as a reason not to recognise equal grounds in the aspect of reciprocal respect for the humanity and individuality of every member of the community. Such an obligation is to be understood to establish a rational and ethical authority, and any irrational and unethical exercise of it should be seen as an aberration which negates the features of a kingdom of ends.

One of the characteristic features of a society in which the hierarchical structure separates and at the same time unites in the sense of providing equal grounds based on common humanity of her members is a society in which "there are as many positions of prestige in any given age-sex grade as there are persons capable of filling them."[306] We saw that in Igbo communities, title-taking brings an individual in a prestigious status hierarchy or position, and there is no limit as to the number of people that can go for it in any given age grade. Whoever is considered qualified by the community, is invited and invested with a title, as far as his age is ripe for it, and as far as he also accepts the offer. This implies that any individual occupying any position of prestige ought to see himself or herself as only *honoured among equals*.

I am of the opinion, therefore, that the concept of hierarchy in such a society should be seen as a structure that separates but at the same time recognises common and equal ground of assessing all individuals. Admittedly and importantly too, the hierarchical and authoritarian structures in African-Igbo communities provide delimits or constraints, but they also ought to create room for possible alternatives in the process of the individual's making of free and independent choices. These parameters or constraints, as already noted, are mostly encoded in the normative form of "what we ought to do", and have also informed the moral instincts of most individuals. The possibility of the individual acquiring or not acquiring moral personhood is a proof that irrespective of hierarchical and authoritarian structures, individuals are expected to act responsibly through which they can be assessed and ascribed personhood.

---

[306]   Fried, M.H., (1967) „The Evolution of Political Society." p. 33).

The authority and respect ascribed and accorded to elders is a great value in African-Igbo culture, as in many other African cultures. The challenge these cultures face is how to hold and sustain such a great value of respecting elders, and still operate a community where individuals, young and old, are recognised as ends in themselves. Important to note is also the fact that the respect accorded to the elders is an indirect way of demanding their awareness or consciousness of the duty they owe to their juniors and to the community. Consciousness of duty contains that of a good will as I noted already. The two give us an idea of an elder who enjoys the existing cultural status hierarchy but who also possesses a clear knowledge of the distinctions between being a human being with authority and being humane. This distinction leads us to reflect more on the humanistic nature of African-Igbo communitarian philosophy of life.

e. **African (Igbo) Humanism**

We saw that communalism in the African-Igbo is an existing way of practical life. It is not merely a theoretical exercise, proposal, or experiment. It is about how traditionally, the Igbo, representing in this work other communitarian African societies, live and organise their communities. It is therefore, fundamentally, a manner or body of norms of interpersonal relations on socio-political and moral spheres. In a certain sense, one can also refer to it as a moral idea, since socio-political aspects of lives in traditional Igbo are strongly determined by norms of morality. *As a moral idea, its humanistic feature refers to the value of a high sense of responsibility towards the concrete situation of humans in the natural setting of the community.* Being humanistic in this way, a communitarian is required to act in such a way that one another's well-being is enhanced to the extent that the well-being of one becomes the concern of all. This is African humanism in its ideal.

My submission for the continual survival of humanistic nature of traditional African-Igbo communitarian philosophy of life is for the fact of its continual relevance. Communalism calls for social responsibility and curbs the tendency of 'who cares' with respect to communal structures and properties that guarantee the welfare of all. In this way, African humanism encourages brotherhood. This is in line with the biblical injunction of being your brother's keeper, which includes the demand for mutual caring, correction, and responsibility. This mutual caring is not without mutual prodding, ribbing, poking, and chiding in the face of reprehensible behaviours. Indeed, to care for someone demands that you correct the individual, hold him or her responsible, and offer suggestions regarding acceptable moral behaviours. In this way, the humanity of individuals is being positively impressed, enhanced,

and perfected. Along this line of thought, C. Korsgaard had argued that "unless you hold others responsible for the ends that they choose and the actions that they do, you cannot regard them as moral and rational agents, and so you will not treat them as ends in themselves."[307]

I argued equally that mutual caring as a Communitarian value makes raising children easier than in an individualistic society. And so, a functional and continual survival of "*it takes a village to raise a child*" will benefit the contemporary Igbo society as against the trend of imbibing the western ideology of parenting as the sole function of the biological parents. In order for "it takes a village to raise a child" to continue to survive, the African value of respecting elders and seniors must also necessarily survive. This is obvious because respect is a necessary requirement for a child to take an adult as a role model, or adhere to his or her admonitions and corrections. The high level of respect for elders and old age is behind the reason why separate homes for old people have not yet strived successfully in Igbo societies. The old or the aged are being looked after within the family circles, or within any of the arms of the extended relationships established. This makes them feel honoured and loved. The other side of "it takes a village to raise a child" is that "it takes any younger member of the village to care for the aged". That is, it is an Igbo culture that parents willingly allow their young ones to run errands for elders, and by so doing, they render priceless help to the aged. This is one of the aspects by which the problem or need of the individual becomes the problem, need, and concern of many other individuals in the community.

The attitude of seeing the problem or the concern of an individual as a concern of many helps in reducing stress and depression in the sense that it makes the weight of the problem lighter on the shoulder of the individual concerned. One of my experiences in the western culture is that even with much wealth and the presence of whatever good money can buy, there are comparatively more cases of depression and frustration leading to people taking their lives, being alcoholic and drug addicts. But the fact is that there is no amount of wealth and luxury that will take the place of having someone around you in good and bad times. This is expressed in the Igbo Proverb: "*Onye nwere madu ka-onye nwere ego*"- *the person who has people around him or her is better/greater than the one who has money*. Some Igbo names also express the importance the Igbo place on having human beings to relate and share life with. We have names like: *Maduka* (human beings are preferred to wealth), and *Nwakaego* (a child is more precious than wealth). It is true that the money for medical care might not be there, but there is no lack of human concern and help. The individualistic attitude of mourning

---

[307]   Korsgaard, C. M (1996): Creating the Kingdom of Ends. Cambridge, p. 206

and grieving alone is non-African. Such practice of being-with-others makes available goods that money cannot offer. Happiness is a good example.

From the foregoing, it is my conviction that one of the moral sensibilities in traditional Igbo communitarian system that needs to survive in this modern era is the moral feeling that makes the welfare of one individual the concern of all. With such a feeling, welfare is sought by both sides: the giver and the receiver. Understood from a Kantian point of view, and as such from the point of view of a kingdom of ends, both the giver and the receiver see one another as ends that constitute the humanity shared by all humans, and understand that an act of helping a part of this humanity benefits the whole. In this sense, the receiver is not seen and treated as a worthless beggar, but a needy person who by that condition does not lose his or her dignity as a human being. This type of moral sensibility, as far as African-Igbo communities are concerned, makes an individual a virtuous man. And as Aristotle said: "As the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also, for his friend is another self." The man who once told me that he believes that his life is prolonged whenever he gets a phone call from any of those he has helped thanking him for making life meaningful to them is a virtuous man. He believes the saying to be really true that "what goes around comes around." And so, whatever the giver gives out comes back provided the giver has the prerequisite moral sensibility. The prerequisite sensibility is that the individual considers his neighbour or kinsman as another self, as part of a shared humanity, so that, any good done to his neighbour or kinsman is like a good done to oneself. With this, traditional African-Igbo communalism presents to the individual, the belief in the principle of practical altruism as an important social virtue.

By extension, this implies the possession of a good will that enables the individual to see that the interest and good of the whole community is preserved for the welfare of all its members. *The preservation of the interest of the community becomes then a means to realise an end in view, and that is, the realization of human needs, welfare and dignity.* We therefore need in Igbo modern kingdoms, such a moral sensibility that takes the well-being, and the interest of the individual as coextensive with the well-being of the community in general; a sensibility that appreciates harmonious social relationships, and understands that which is morally good as that which is supposed to promote common human welfare, solidarity, and harmony in human relationships. Good human relationship, which is a basic factor in African-Igbo communalism, is a demand in order to withstand selfish attitudes and other evils against humanity in a bid to accumulate wealth.

There is a strong need for the contemporary Igbo man to imbibe the traditional moral sensibility that considers the welfare of all. This will help the functioning of the ethics that guides the manner in which personal well-being and the pursuit of wealth is being carried out. The capitalist tendency that considers every service in terms of money is non-African. It is traditional and cultural to Africa that individuals render mutual help to each other without having to pay by cash. There is a general attitude and the willingness to render help to neighbours, and as already noted, it is in this sense that the poor is not seen as a beggar but one who has the right to be helped as implied in the name "*Ogbenye*" (a needy who receives from kith and kin). I was once part of a situation where someone's poor neighbour is making it clear to him that he (the poor man) will not be happy with a belated assistance from him. This neighbour-in-need was bold enough to let the other know that a neighbour-in-deed is a neighbour who not only helps but who helps at the right time. He was bold in his request because of the common sensibility regarding welfare. Even when money was borrowed, normally it was returned with little or no interest. This is African humanism. Some have expressed the view that because of so much emphasis on being humanistic in every situation, Africa in general has no idea of justice. This is a wrong presentation, but there is a reason for such criticism.

The reason is that justice and rights are not considered to be the primary concern of ethics in communitarian moral universe. K. Gyekye, in support of this held that "in the communitarian moral universe caring or compassion or generosity, not justice-which is related essentially to a strictly right-based morality- may be a fundamental moral category. In a moral framework where love, compassion, caring, friendship, and genuine concern for others characterize social relationships, justice- which is about relations of claims and counterclaims-may not be the primary moral virtue."[308] Irrespective of this truth, Africans cannot be denied the sense of justice. An Igbo proverb says: *"Egbe bere ugo bere nke si ibe ya ebela nku kwapu ya"*. The meaning and purpose of this proverb is in its literal saying "*let the kite perch and let the eagle perch also, whichever tries to deny the other its perching right, let its wings break off.*" The proverb expresses and also emphasizes among other things, consciousness of the needs of others, respect, consideration and therefore a demand for peaceful co-existence. It is an ethics of "live- and -let live" which is also frequently cited among the Igbos "biri ma mbiri" –live and let live.

Biri ma mbiri is a unifying principle of justice among the Igbos of Nigeria, and among many African societies. As a principle of social justice in a traditional Igbo society, it was also

---

[308]   K. Gyekye, Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience, p. 67.

intended to ensure social stability and an equal right of existence for all as free human beings. Hence, *biri ma mbiri* was formulated to contribute to harmonious relationships and resolution of conflicts among different groups that constitute the larger Igbo society. In line with this, Armstrong et al, observed that the African justice system places emphasis on the "processes of achieving peaceful resolutions of disputes rather than on adherence to rules as the basis of determining disputes."[309] Put in another way, an African justice system is not always rule- or rights-based. Most times, it focuses more on employing an effective process of restoring peace and order rather than a rigid definition and application of rules. Under such an operation, a just judgment is one that puts into account a wider range of facts and interests, beginning with the interest of the litigants and cutting across that of the group or the community involved, without necessarily compromising the major crux of the matter in dispute. Such state of affairs made some writers to express the view that Africa has no idea of justice.

f. **Attempt towards consensus decisions**

It would have been clear from the foregoing, that the value of solidarity and harmonious relationship are highly appreciated and preserved in traditional Igbo society, to the point of playing down rules and rights that would not help in cultivating these values. Therefore, decisions on political issues were sought in a manner that would not jeopardise these values. Hence, the attempt towards consensus in decision-making is geared towards achieving, not only political goals, but also solidarity and a harmonious relationship in the community. Deliberations and decisions are normally characterized by humane people-centeredness. With a consensus decision, it suffices that all parties are able to feel that adequate account has been taken of their points of view in any proposed scheme, but not that all parties must finally come to a point of view in the sense of dropping their initial positions on the bone of contention. Wiredu has indicated that where there is *the will to consensus*, dialogue can lead to a willing suspension of disagreement, making possible agreed actions without necessarily agreed notions.[310]

A similar sensitivity regarding moral and political issues enhances the course of consensus decision in moral and socio-political issues. And such similarity in sensibility is a

---

[309]   Armstrong et al, 1993: Uncovering Reality: Excavating Women's Rights in African Family Law. Women and Law in Southern Africa Working Paper No. 7, WLSA Harare, Zimbabwe. p. 14
[310]   Wiredu, K (1995), "Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics: A Plea for a Non-party Polity"

major condition for the possibility of the practice of communalism in the African societies. The sense of relatedness or community makes individuals or groups accept the status quo that most actions have to be carried out on the condition of "*Ohakwe*", that is, on the condition that the community or relatives agree on the action. With such sensitivity, people are ready to willingly suspend personal views and accept an agreed action. Expressed in the language of Kant, in a kingdom of ends, as in a communitarian system, individuals should be ready to abstract from personal interests or ends, and accept the belief that things have to be done from the perspective of collective ends.

Conclusion

A number of African writers have argued in support of the necessity and relevance of having many of the African traditional communitarian values forming the basis of any effort to create a contemporary African society: A society that operates the ideals of a Kingdom of ends. In my view, such a contemporary communitarian African society will be one where the individuality of the individual is also given a recognition; a society where the socio- political and economic principles reflect moral sensitivity, rational decision or opinion of members of the society, affecting either in terms of equality or equity, the lives of all individuals; a society where every rational being is conscious of dealing with fellow rational beings as ends in themselves, and therefore, conscious of the guiding and accepted common rule. As the African-Igbo communities in particular, seek to build modern societies, there is the need to recognize and be conscious of the danger posed by the observable serious and strong drift from those traditional indigenous values that are ethical and humanitarian, or the abuse of them. The worry concerning this drift is principally borne out of a clear fact that in any society, sustainable and lasting socio-political legislations must be grounded on indigenous social values and contexts, without neglecting the need to adapt to continually changing realities.

Presently, the contemporary Igbo society is one that is suffused with an admixture of individualism that is opposed to African-Igbo communalism. Such admixture makes a conflict of values and attitudes inevitable. This situation has also created frictions in areas of morals and community governance. But the whole drama has always presented such individualism as a foreign body that encounters difficulties mixing up well. In the face of this, the African-Igbo need to return to those socio-political and moral ideals that communitarian life makes possible, and which made them place more emphasis, for instance, not on the accumulation of wealth but on how this wealth imparts the community and most especially the *Ogbenye* (the needy), with the consciousness of the fact that 'life is more valuable than wealth' (*Ndu ka-aku*); not on mere metaphysical personhood of any individual, which is taken for granted, but on the moral personhood which is acquired. It is this moral personhood that defines, in the Igbo context, *ezigbo mmadu* (a good person). And in fact, without a moral personhood, the individual is 'no person'. That is, such an individual is not a person other individuals would wish to have something to do with.

I have tried in this project to rejuvenate many advantages of some of traditional Igbo social and moral ethos or customs with also a caveat on threats of aberrations and misunderstanding of the communitarian ideals. Many work noted equally the positive and

negative effects of the contact of African values with western culture. However, my set objective was never to dwell much on these effects. The aspect that is useful for my work is the influx of individualistic behaviours in the communitarian Igbo society. This is quite different from the necessary demand of taking into cognisance the individuality of every communitarian. Such mix-up with individualistic principles is the reason for the conflict of values as being experienced in many African societies, including the Igbo society. There is chaos in areas of behavioural ethics, and so, arriving at a consensus decision on communal issues became more difficult than in the years back. This situation equally affected the acquisition of moral personhood because of the clash of ethics upon which actions, reasoning, and the general way of life of the individual could be assessed.

My efforts have been to draw attention to the fact that in the modern era, and in their efforts in building modern societies that would serve and support the course of humanity as '*end in itself*', the African-Igbo have much to borrow from the advantages of their traditional culture. This also demands that individuals or groups guard against abuses and exaggerated positions on communalism that do not recognise elements of individual identity. Such a balancing of communal demands on members of a society, and respect for the individuality of everyone is what the kingdom of ends formula stands for. I consider this formula a proposal by Kant for western cultures in order to check extreme individualism, I have tried to use it also to check against extreme views on Igbo communalism.

One might try to argue that by relating the kingdom of ends principles to African communalism I have committed myself to this admixture of the western concept of individualism and African communalism. Such an opinion points to not to have understood the whole work. I presented the kingdom of ends principle in such a way that it must necessarily take care of norms relating to "what we ought to do" and "how we ought to behave"- such that members of the kingdom are conscious of being under a common rule as demanded by Kant. A consciousness Kant would like to bring about in his kingdom of ends formula is that of a moral agent being a responsible and integral part of a community. Such consciousness presents us with the awareness of whom and what we are in relation to who and what our fellow human beings are, that is, other members of the kingdom. With this understanding and the context of being community conscious, a conscientious moral agent defines himself or herself in relation to other moral agents. For instance, that we are rational moral beings sharing one humanity. This idea is consistent with the communitarian stand that man is defined in terms of relatedness. That would then imply that Kant's kingdom of ends formula supports a communal life in which human ends are united and mutually supportive of

each other in a free and rational manner. This point is where my emphasis is: *that a communitarian must always be conscious of mutuality and freedom in the pursuit of individual and community ends.* According to Allen Wood:

> Kant holds that people should be united by ends they freely and rationally pursue in common. The fundamental aim of moral theory is to determine the principles according to which to achieve that agreement, hence the *right kind* of community. **...**For the Kantian, however, a community of rational beings must be conceived from the ground up as the rational agreement of a plurality of distinct and equal persons who freely choose to unite their ends on terms that respect each one's autonomy. The crucial thing ... is to determine the principles of association through which any rational system of collective ends is to be set.[311]

The fact of this plurality necessitated that any functional communal principle be couched in formulations like "what we ought to do" rather than remaining at the level of "what I ought to do". Torralba, M. José has argued that although Kant believed that human action is traceable to the individual, "he could not –and most plausibly did not– ignore the fact that human lives are neither lived in isolation nor fully intelligible in abstraction from their social setting."[312] Along the same line of thought, Barbara Herman has pointed out that Kant's doctrine of the kingdom of ends also recognizes that "autonomous moral agency is social"[313]

Therefore, my work is not entrapped in the marriage of inconvenience between the western concept of individualism and the African communalism. I have made efforts I considered successful, in the consideration of how certain elements of Kant's formula of kingdom of ends as an idea of an ideal community of rational beings might instil certain required consciousness in the practice of communalism in the African-Igbo society, and in fact, the whole of the African society. Such consciousness is needed if, as concerned and conscientious persons, we are trying sincerely, to resolve, in today's Igbo society, some uncomfortable practical moral issues that could be instantiated in some circles, in the actual living of the traditional communitarian life. This kingdom of ends formula is not individualistic but community oriented without neglecting certain fundamental individual definitions. It has to be seen as a principle that can guide collective decisions or that can help to structure our individual and communal dialogue and decision making. This theory as I have

---

[311]   Allen W. Wood (2002): "What Is Kantian Ethics?" In *Immanuel Kant; Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp.157-181 at 162-163.
[312]   Torralba, José M. (2013): "The Individuality and Sociality of Action in Kant. On the Kingdom of Ends as a Relational Theory of Action." en *Archiv für Recht- und Sozialphilosophie*, vol. 99 (2013), pp. 475-498. At.476.
[313]   Herman, B. (1997): "A Cosmopolitan Kingdom of Ends". In: Reath, A. – Herman, B. – Korsgaard, Ch. (eds.): *Reclaiming the History of Ethics. Essays for John Rawls*. Cambridge. 207.

tried to show, coheres with our basic outlook as reasonable, conscientious moral agents in the Igbo society, and therefore is expected to be one of the most fitted moral guides alongside with communalism.

As we saw in chapter two of this work, Kant presented his idea of a kingdom of ends as an ideal for a community of moral agents, that is, of rational beings. Among other worries by Philosophers, is also the question whether the ideal can be of any practical help. Thomas E. Hill Jr. first presented Kant's kingdom of ends as "a perspective for deliberating about rules". But his first worry, as we already noted, was that "…its use requires from us to make judgements about what sorts of issues are appropriately placed under moral rules."[314] In advocating rules on moral concerns, Hill Jr. noticed that "reasonable people can get along well enough without public agreement on rules."[315] By reasonable, I would think Hill Jr. was referring to conscientious moral agents. However, concerning matters like recurrent questions of life and death, or, questions on general ethics of life, we saw that Hills considered it essential to work towards a widely accepted common framework for decisions. But to do this, he thinks that Kantian legislators must face prior questions about what issues call for treatment by rules and above all, about what types of rules are appropriate.[316] The problem of about what types of rules that are appropriate, I guess, arises when one makes an abstract and sharp distinction between moral, political, and social rules or ethics, so as, maybe, not to burden politics and social issues with moral rules.

However serious and genuine this worry might be, I indicated that there will be no much need of this worry in the traditional African-Igbo communitarian ideal. This is for the fact that in the Igbo society, as in most African societies, the territory of personal relations and the socio-political are continuous with moral territory. These societies do not operate with strictly and abstractly demarcated social versus moral rules. That is to say, moral and social rules overlap each other. Although, one can substantively point to differences between purely social, religious, and political issues, but in practice, these issues are mutually reinforcing and coexistent. A political actor is assessed also morally. In traditional African-Igbo society, officially prescribed social rules overlap with traditional religious beliefs. This practice created no friction given the fact that the same individuals under a social rule, were also guided by the religious belief, and also for the fact that these rules, whether social, political,

---

314   Hill Jr., *Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules* p.299
315   Ibid.
316   Ibid. pp. 299-300

religious, or moral, were perceived as having the same goal of guiding individuals in acquiring a personhood that benefits everyone and the community at large.

No one should however presume African-Igbo communities to be kingdoms or communities where perfect social and moral rules are in operation, or where everyone is *ezigbo mmadu* (a good person). An ideal communitarian Igbo society is one in which individuals are expected to have a natural instinct and commitment to the welfare and dignity of all individual communitarians. It is a kingdom where every morally mature adult has a moral responsibility to chide, rib, prod, and admonish others, children and adults alike. It is a kingdom where communal efforts are made towards teaching or morally educating and helping people regarding common moral rules. It is a community where the target is not merely becoming persons, but that of acquiring moral personhood, or moral virtues. In such a kingdom, there are reasons not to "just mind your own business". This is because the moral ends of all persons should be everyone's business, hence, creating a kingdom where members have high sense of obligation and respect towards each other.

Communitarianism is to be understood as an attitude of mind. In Igbo communities, it is this attitude of mind that is needed to ensure that the welfare of one individual is the concern of all, and that individuals act in accordance with maxims that could ensure and sustain the society as a kingdom of ends.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abraham W. E. (1992): "Crisis in African Cultures" In: Wiredu K, and Gyekye K (eds.). *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*. Washington, DC: The Council for Values and Philosophy.

Achebe, C., 1993: Things Fall Apart. New York: Fawcett Crest.

…………….. (1987): No Longer At Ease, Ibadan Heinemann.

……………. (1998): The Trouble with Nigeria, Enugu, Fourth Dimensional.

……………. (2013): There was a Country, Penguin Books, London

Allen W. Wood (1999): *Kant's Ethical Thought,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Anyanwu, U. D. and Aguwa, J. C. U. (ed.) (2002): The Igbo and the Tradition of Politics (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd.

Appia, Kwame Anthony (1989): Necessary Questions: An introduction to Philosophy. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall

Armstrong et al, (1993): Uncovering Reality: Excavating Women's Rights in African Family Law. Women and Law in Southern Africa Working Paper No. 7, WLSA Harare, Zimbabwe. p. 14

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics IX.9 1170b 6-7. From the translation by W.D. Ross in The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941),

Aristotle, Nicomachean ethics Book 1, par. 4
http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/nicomachean/book1.html

Bentham J., (1781): Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation.
http://www.utilitarianism.com/jeremy-bentham/

Beauchamp T. L. & Childress J.F. (2001): Principles of Biomedical Ethics, 5th edn. New York, NY: Oxford University Press

Benhabib, S., (1992): *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bonnie Honig, (1993): *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics,* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press

Broome J. (2013): Rationality Through Reasoning, UK, Wiley Blackwell Publishing

Bujo, B., (1998): The Ethical Dimension of Community, Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa

Busia K.A. (1967): Africa in Search of Democracy, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Cahn S. M; Markie P., [2002]: Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues, 2nd Ed. NY, Oxford University Press

Cole, Herbert and Aniakor, Chike (1984): Igbo Arts: Community and Cosmos, (Los Angeles: University of California Press)

David Ross (1954): Kant's Ethical Theory: A Commentary on the Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, Oxford: Clarendon

Dicey A. V., (1959): *Introduction to the Study of the Law of Constitution*, 10th Edition, Macmillan, London

Etzioni, A., (1998): *The Essential Communitarian Reader*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

——, (1996): *The New Golden Rule*, New York: Basic Books.

——, (1995a): *New Communitarian Thinking*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

——, (1995b): *Rights and the Common Good: The Communitarian Perspective*, New York: St. Martins Press.

——, (1993): *The Spirit of Community*, New York: Crown Publishers.

Eze M.l Onyebuchi (2010): *Intellectual history in contemporary South Africa*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

Ezekwonna, F. C. (2005): African Communitarian Ethic: The Basis for the Moral Conscience and Autonomy of the Individual, Igbo Culture as a Case Study, Peter Lang Frankfurt am Main

Fortes, Meyer. [1945] 1967: The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi: Being the First Part of an Analysis of the Social Structure of a Trans-Volta Tribe. London: Oxford University Press

—— (1949): The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi. London: Oxford University Press.

Frank A. Fetter (1915): Economics, vol. 1: Economic Principles, New York: The Century Co. http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2088/158907

Frazer, E. (1999): *The Problems of Communitarian Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fried, Morton H. (1967): The Evolution of Political Society: An Essay in Political Anthropology. Random House studies in anthropology, AS 7. New York: Random House.

Gideon-Cyrus M. Mutiso / S.W. Rohio (ed.) (1975): Readings in African Political Thought. London: Heinemann

Graham, K. (1986): The Battle of Democracy. Brighton, Harvester Press

Griffin J., (1986): Well-Being: Its meaning, measurement, and moral importance. New York, Oxford: Clarendon Press

Guyer Paul (1995): "The Possibility of the Categorical Imperative" *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 3, pp. 353-385

Gyekye, K., (1992): Person and Community in African Thought: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washignton, DC.,

———, (1995): An Essay in African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme, rev. ed. Philadelphia: Temple University Press

——— (1996): African Cultural Values: An Introduction, Philadelphia: Sankofa Pub. Co.

Gyekye K., (1997): Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience (New York: Oxford University Press)

Hegel, G. W. F. (1967): The Philosophy of Right, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Hill, Thomas E., (1992): Dignity and Practical Reason in Kant's Moral Theory. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Ikenga Metuh E., (1991): African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes: The Problem of Interpretations, Jos,

Ilogu, E., (1973): Christianity and Igbo Culture, London: Faber and Faber, London

Iroegbu, P. (1996): Kpim of Politics: Communalism Towards Justice in Africa. Owerri, Nigeria: International University Press Ltd.

—— (2000): Kpim of Personality: Treatise on the Human Person, Nekede, Owerri

Kant, Immanuel (1998): Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: And Other Writings, (eds. Allen Wood & George di Giovanni, Intr. By Robert Merrihew Adams) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Kant, Immanuel (1996): Practical Philosophy, (trans. and edt. by Mary J. Gregor) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kant, Immanuel (1991): "Zum ewigen Frieden", in Kants Werke, Berlin: Prussische Akademie Ausgabe, vol. 8. (Trans. by H. Nisbet), "Perpetual Peace" in Kant: Political Writings, H. Reiss (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press

Kant, Immanuel (1996): The Metaphysics of Morals, (edt. by Mary Gregor), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Kant, Immanuel (1964): The Doctrine of Virtue (trans. By M.J. Gregor), Philadelphia, The University of Pennsylvania Press

Kant, Immanuel (2005): Critique of Practical Reason (trans. By T. K. Abbott), Stilwell, Digireads.com Pub.

Kant, Immanuel (1956): Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals, trans. By H.J. Paton, New York: Harper & Row

Kant, Immanuel (2002): Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals. (ed. & trans. by Allen Wood) Yale: Yale University Press

Kant, Immanuel (1996): Practical Philosophy, (trans. and edt. by Mary J. Gregor) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kant, Immanuel (1997): Lectures on Ethics, (eds: Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind, trans. by Peter Heath) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kant, Immanuel (2001): Religion and Rational Theology, (trans. & edt. By Allen W. Wood & George di Giovanni) Cambridge: Cambridge Uni. Press

Korsgaard, Christine (1996): Creating the Kingdom of Ends, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Kristen R. Monroe (1996): The Heart of Altruism: Perceptions of a Common Humanity. New Jersey, Princeton University Press

Kymlicka Will (1989): *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

——, (1995): Liberalism, Community, and Culture. Oxford: Clarendon Press

Lukes, Steven (1973): Individualism (New York: Harper & Row)

MacIntyre, Alasdair (1984): After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, 2nd edt. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press

Mason, A., (2000): *Community, Solidarity and Belonging: Levels of Community and their Normative Significance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mbiti, J. (1969): African Religions and Philosophy (London: Heinemann).

Meillassoux, C. (1981): Maidens, Meal and Money, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press

Miles Kimball and Robert Wills (2006): "Utility and Happiness", University of Michigan, http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mkimball

Murphy, A. E. (1943): The Uses of Reason, New York, Macmillan Company

Nwala, T. U. (1985): *Igbo Philosophy* (Lagos: Lantern Books).

Nyerere J., (1968): "Ujaama- The Basis of African Socialism" in *Freedom and Unity*. New York: Oxford Univ. press, pp. 165-166

Nzegwu, N., (2000): *Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture,* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press)

Nzomiwu, J. P. C. (1999): The Concept of Justice among the Traditional Igbo: An Ethical Inquiry. Awka: Fides Publishers.

Oguejiofor, J.O. (1996): *The Influence of Igbo Traditional Religion on the Socia-political Character of the Igbo* (Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing Co.).

Onwuanibe, Richard (1984): "The Human Person an immortality in Ibo (African) metaphysics" in *Introduction to African Philosophy* ed. Richard Wright, New York: University Press of American.

Paton H. J. (1947): The Categorical Imperative: A Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy (London: Hutchinson)

Rawls, John, (1971): A Theory of Justice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Rawls John (1999): A Theory of Justice (*Revised Edition*), Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Rescher, Nicholas (2001): *Philosophical Reasoning*: A Study in the Methodology of Philosophizing. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd.,

Ritzer, George (2007): *Contemporary Sociological Theory and Its Classical Roots, The Basics, Second Edition*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Sahlins, M.D., (1958): Social Stratification in Polynesia. Seattle. University of Washington Press

Sen A., (1993): "Capability and Well-Being" in Nussbaum, M., and A. Sen. (eds.) *The quality of life.* Oxford: Oxford University, pp. 30-53

Tams, H., (1998): *Communitarianism: A New Agenda for Politics and Citizenship*, Basingstocke: Macmillan.

Uchendu V.C., (1965): The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria, Forth Worth

Ugorji, L. I., (1992): Unconditional Return to Christ, Lenten Pastoral, Umuahia

Ukeh, C.O., (2016): Spirit – Between Man and God: An Igbo-African Christian Appreciation, Snaap Press Ltd., Enugu

Uwalaka, J., (2003): The Struggle for an Inclusive Nigeria, Igbos to be or not to be? Snaap Press, Enugu,

Walzer, M., (1983): *Spheres of Justice*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Wiredu, Kwasi (1980): Philosophy and an African Culture, London: Cambridge University Press.

Wiredu, Kwasi (1996): Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective, Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University, Press

Wiredu, Kwasi (2004): "Truth and an African Language". In *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*, edt. by Lee M. Brown. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp.35-50

Wood W. Allen (1999): *Kant's Ethical Thought,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Journals, Anthology, Papers

Agulanna Christopher (2011): "Ezigbo Mmadu: An Exploration of the Igbo Concept of a Good Person" in *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.4, no.5, pp.139-161

Arno, A. (1985): "Structural communication and control communication: an interactionist perspective on legal and customary procedures for conflict management". In *Journal of American Anthropologist*, 87, pp. 40-55

Bell, D., (1995): 'A Communitarian Critique of Authoritarianism', *Society*, 32(5): 38–43.

Daniel A. Bell, (2006): "Confucianism and Anglo-American Political Theory", in *The Oxford Handbook on Political Theory,* edt. John S. Dryzek et. al. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 262-280

Bentor, Eli, (1988): "Life as an Artistic Process: Igbo Ikenga and Ofo". In *African Arts*, Vol. 21, No. 2., pp. 66–71+94

Bodunrin P.O (1984): "The Question of African Philosophy", in *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, edited by Richard A. Wright, pp. 1-23.

Brunner J., (2004): "Life as a Narrative" In *social research* Vol. 71, No 3, pp. 691-710

Caney, S., (1992): 'Liberalism and Communitarianism: A Misconceived Debate', *Political Studies*, 40: 273–90.

Coplan, David B. and Tim Quinlan (1997): "A Chief by the People: Nation Versus State in Lesotho, *Journal of the International African Institute*, 67, No. 1, 27-60.

Daniel M. Hausman (1995): "The Impossibility of Interpersonal Utility Comparisons". In Mind, New Series, Vol. 104, No. 415, Oxford University Press, pp. 473-490.

Dzobo, N. K. (1992): "African Symbols and Proverbs as Sources of Knowledge and Truth," in *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*1, eds., Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye (Washington D.C., Council for Research in Values and Philosophy),

Edward Wamala (2004): "Government by Consensus: An Analysis of a Traditional Form of Democracy", In *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Edited by Kwasi Wiredu, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, pp. 435-442,

Ehrenhalt, A., (1999): 'Community and the Corner Store: Retrieving Human-Scale Commerce', *The Responsive Community*, vol. 9 No.4: 30–39.

Freeman, Samuel, "Original Position", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/original-position/>.

Guyer, Paul (1995): "The Possibility of the Categorical Imperative" *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 3, pp. 353-385

Harding, Sandra: (1987): "The Curious Coincidence of Feminine and African Moralities: Challenges for Feminist Theory," In *Women and Moral Theory*, eds., Eva Feder Kittay and Diana T. Meyers (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield,), 296-315

Haydon, G. (1978): "On being responsible", In *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 28, 46-57

Heidi Verhoef and Claudin Michel (1997): "Studying Morality within the African Context: A Model of Moral Analysis and Construction," *Journal of Moral Education* 26, no. 4, pp.389-407.

Hendricks, J. W. (1988): "Power and knowledge: discourse and ideological transformation among the Shuar", In *American Ethnologist* 15, pp. 216-238

Herman, B. (1997): "A Cosmopolitan Kingdom of Ends". In: Reath, A. – Herman, B. – Korsgaard, Ch. (eds.): *Reclaiming the History of Ethics. Essays for John Rawls*. Cambridge. 207.

Hill, Thomas E., Jr. (1992): "A Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules." In *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 6, Ethics, pp. 285-304

Johnson, Robert, "Kant's Moral Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/kant-moral/>.)

Kain, Patrick (2004): "Self-Legislation in Kant's Moral Philosophy" In Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie 86 (sect. II) pp. 257-306

Kalu, O. U. (1993): "Ethical Values in Igbo Tradition of Politics," In: Anyanwu, U. D. and Aguwa, J. C. U. (ed.), *The Igbo and the Tradition of Politics* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd.

Kaphagawami N. Didier (1988): "On African Communalism: A Philosophic Perspective," A Paper presented at the First International Regional Conference in Philosophy, Mombassa, Kenya, May 23-27,

Kopytoff Igor (1971): "Ancestors as Elders in Africa" In *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp.129-142

Korsgaard M. Christen (1992): "Creating the Kingdom of Ends: Reciprocity and Responsibility in Personal Relations", *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 6, Ethics, pp. 305-332

Kukah M. H., (2016): "Healing a Traumatized Nation" paper delivered at The Platform Nigeria, October 1

Kukla Rebecca (2005): "Conscientious Autonomy: Displacing Decisions in Health Care", In *The Hastings Center Report*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 34-44, at p.34) URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3527761.

Larmore Charles (1999): 'The moral basis of political liberalism', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 96:12, 599–625

Macebuh, Stanley N. (2002): Quoted in Agulanna Christopher (2011): "Ezigbo Mmadu: An Exploration of the Igbo Concept of a Good Person" in *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.4, no.5, September 2011 pp.139-161

Mattes, Robert, (1997): "Building a Democratic Culture in Traditional Society." Paper presented to the International Conference on Traditional Leadership in Southern Africa, hosted by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and University of Transkei, Umtata South Africa, 16-18 April, p.5

Menkiti, A. Ifeanyi (1984): "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought," in African Philosophy: An Introduction, ed., Richard A. Wright (New York: University Press of America), pp. 171-181

Menkiti A. Ifeanyi (2004): "On the Normative Conception of a Person*" A Companion to African Philosophy* (edt. by Kwasi Wiredu) Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, pp.324-331

Moody-Adams, Michele M., (1994): "Culture, Responsibility, and Affected Ignorance." Ethics 104, 291-309

Motala, Z. (1989): "Human Rights in Africa: a Cultural, Ideological, and Legal Examination" in Hastings International and Comparative Law, Review 12, 373 – 410

Nnaji, B., (2009): Ahiajoku Lecture, *Ka Ihe Di*, The Power of Light Energy as a Fundamental Instrument for Socio-Economic Development., 27th Nov.

Nyerere, Julius (1968): "Ujaama- The Basis of African Socialism" in *Freedom and Unity*. New York: Oxford Univ. press

Onwumechili C.A., Igbo Enwe Eze: The Igbo have no Kings [The 2000 Ahịajọkụ Lecture] (http://ahiajoku.igbonet.com/2000/.

Owusu Maxwell (1996): "Tradition and Transformation: Democracy and the Politics of Popular Power in Ghana" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 307-343

Peter Waterman, (1977): "Introduction: On Radicalism in African Studies," in Peter C.W. Gutkind and Peter Waterman, eds., *African Social Studies: A Radical Reader*, London and New York: Heinemann,

Ramose, M. B. (1992): "African Democratic Tradition: Oneness, Consensus and Openness: A reply to Wamba-dia Wamba", in Quest, Vol. VI No. 2 December 1992. pp. 62-83

Reddiford, Gordon (1993): "Autonomy and Interests: The Social Life of a Curriculum." *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 265-275

Robert N. Johnson, (1996): Primer on the Elements and Forms of Utilitarianism, Phil. 213 http://web.missouri.edu/~johnsonrn/utilnote.html

Roth G., (2005): "Max Weber, Scion of the Cosmopolitan Bourgeoisie: Historical Context and Present-Day Relevance" In *Max Weber's Economy and Society: A Critical Companion*. (Eds.) C. Camic, P.S. Gorski, D.M. Trubek, Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, pp.31-46

Sandra Harding, (1987): "The Curious Coincidence of Feminine and African Moralities: Challenges for Feminist Theory," In *Women and Moral Theory*, eds., Eva Feder Kittay and Diana T. Meyers (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield,), 296-315.

Schneewind, J. B. (1992): "Autonomy, obligation, and virtue: An overview of Kant's moral Philosophy" The *Cambridge Companion to Kant*, (edt.by Paul Guyer) Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. press. 309-341

Segun Gbadegesin, (1998): "Eniyan: The Yoruba Concept of Person." In *The African Philosophy Reader*, eds., P.H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux (London: Routledge,)

Sklar, R. L. (1987): "Developmental Democracy," In: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29 (4): 686-714 at 711.

Strawson, P. F., (1962): "Freedom and Resentment", *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 48, pp. 1-25

Sussman David, (2003): "The Authority of Humanity" Ethics, Vol. 113, No. 2 The University of Chicago Press, pp. 350-366

Taylor C., "Atomism", in Shlomo Avineri and Avner de Shalit (eds.) (1992): *Communitarianism and Individualism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 29-50

Taylor, C., (1999): 'Conditions of an Unforced Consensus on Human Rights', in *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights*, J. R. Bauer and D. Bell (eds.), New York: Cambridge University Press, 124-144

Teffo Joe (2004): "Democracy, Kingship, and Consensus: A South African Perspective" in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Edited by Kwasi Wiredu, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, pp. 443-449

Terborgh G. W., (1928): "Psychic Income, Total Utility, and Consumer's Surplus", In *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1, URL: http://www.jestor.org/stable/1806141

Torralba, José M. (2013): "The Individuality and Sociality of Action in Kant. On the Kingdom of Ends as a Relational Theory of Action." en *Archiv für Recht- und Sozialphilosophie*, vol. 99, pp. 475-498.

Virgil, C. Aldrich (1946): "Good-Will, Good Coffee, and Bad Judgment", In *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 43, No. 5, pp. 133-135

Vitz Paul C. (1990): "The Use of Stories in Moral Development: New Psychological Reasons for an Old Education Method." *American Psychologist* 45, no.6, 709-720

Williams B., (2007): "Life as a Narrative" In *Journal of Philosophy,* vol. 17: no. 2, Oxford: Blackwell Pub. Ltd., pp. 305–314

Wilson John, (1972): "Indoctrination and Rationality", in I. A. Snnok (ed.), *Concepts of Indoctrination: Philosophical Essays*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 17-24

Wiredu, K (1995): "Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics: A Plea for a Non-party Polity", in The Centennial Review 39.1, Online: http://them.polylog.org/2/fwk-en.htm.

Zimmerman, M. (2001): „Responsibility", In L. Becker (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ethics*

Bell, Daniel. "Communitarianism". Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/communitarianism/

"Communitarianism" From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communitarianism (The writer of this article was not stated)

"Think different" From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Think_different (The writer of this article was not stated)

UBUNTU (PHILOSOPHY) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu (philosophy)