



Personhood (one) in Igala Worldview: A Philosophical Appraisal

Egbunu, Fidelis Elejo^{[a],*}

^[a]Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria.

*Corresponding author.

Received 21 February 2013; accepted 16 April 2013

Abstract

Personhood in Igala worldview dwells on the centrality of the human person in the universe. The Igala understanding is employed as a launch-pad unto the general African perspective on this all-important discourse. Using the hermeneutical, descriptive and analytical methods, the people's worldview is sieved from some of their traditional and cultural beliefs and practices as the Western classical philosophical ideas and some basic African thoughts are brought to bear on our subject matter. While attempting to posit a sound basis on the Igala ontology of Being in line with certain yardsticks, they proposed in defining the human person, the concept of solidarity and communal living is presented as a crucial desideratum in any meaningful reflection in this respect.

Key words: Igala worldview; Hermeneutical; African thoughts; Western classical philosophical ideas

Egbunu, Fidelis Elejo (2013). Personhood (one) in Igala Worldview: A Philosophical Appraisal. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 9(3), 30-38. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/j.ccc.1923670020130903.2460>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.ccc.1923670020130903.2460>.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a modest attempt at considering the concept of personhood in African Philosophy with the Igala worldview in focus. Naturally, a few pertinent questions such as, who or what is a person (*one*) in the Igala understanding? What does personhood (*one*) entail in the African, nay, Igala worldview? What is the philosophical

basis of Personhood? How do Africans generally see the human person in relation to the community? What is the Igala ontology of Being? Is it every type of human being that is considered to be a person? Or rather, are there certain qualities or characteristic yardsticks associated with a "person", as such? What are those yardsticks? Does this particular conception of personhood in Africa have a corollary on a general basis?

In the course of proffering solutions to these posers, the relationship between the community (*Udama*) and Personhood (*one*) shall be largely explored, using the analytic method. This is expected to lead us to a fuller understanding of personhood in our context.

ONE ECHE (PERSONHOOD, WHO AND WHAT IT ENTAILS)

The concept of a "person" (*one*) in Igala mind-set has different layers of meaning. First, "*one*" literally translated in Igala means person or human being. That is, anybody identified as a human being in contradistinction with animate or inanimate objects.

Second, is "*one*" as one who has come of age. This is in relation to physical maturity or psychological well-being.

Third, is "*one*" in relation to some traditions whereby certain individuals in the society are considered "free-born" (*amoma one* i.e. literally offsprings of "persons") in relation to other sets or groups of people termed descendant of slaves (*amoma-adu*) in specific areas of Igala land.

Fourth, is the description of "*one*" as a fellow possessing many virtuous or forward-looking qualities. It denotes the exhibition of a couple of such positive or promising characteristics which his relatives, friends, acquaintances or neighbors would be generally proud of. Qualities such as ability to live amicably with others, being amiable, harmonious living,

peaceableness, tolerance, patience, gentleness, loveability, trustworthiness, transparency, truthfulness, courage, temperance, modesty, intelligence, kindness, generosity, compassion, dynamism, resourcefulness, progressiveness and a generally attractive and magnetic life are considered as the yardsticks.

This very last category of personhood in Igala understanding which entails virtuous living in all its ramifications is largely our point of reference in this paper. As it were, the aforementioned characteristics readily bring to mind the need for unity, cooperation, togetherness, etc.

The varying layers or degrees of Igala worldview of “one” simply implies why a typical Igala would exclaim, “*efone li ib’ema*” (knowing somebody goes deeper than ordinary sighting). In other words, “it is not all that glitters that is gold” or better put, “you cannot judge a book by its cover.” It is in this respect that even though one’s physical stature or status or name may contribute to defining who one is, one may not judge the quality of a person just by such mere considerations. In Igala worldview, for instance, it is believed that “*odu ch’ajamu one*” (name is the bridle and bit for controlling a person), a name can make or mar a person’s entire life. It is in this sense that a typical Igala would hold that “*odu nyọ tokọ le*” (good name is to be preferred to money).

It is of utmost significance that it is the society or community that gives name (*odu*) to a child before that particular human person assumes his God-given space in the community. Obi (2008, p.199) in his *Philosophy of Names* harped on the fact that even though a name “moulds” and “cuts” one’s “separate identity” the person may not necessarily be reduced to the name since, reducing a person to the status of a name appears degrading as names are not conscious of themselves. In a nutshell, the human person is not confined to behaving in line with his name. He has the capability of choosing to have his behaviour at variance with his name. However, as it is often stressed, “without it, a child remains a nonentity since his name defines his personality in a community” (Ekwunife A., 1996, p. 37), “names are part and parcel of those elements of African culture that go to make African personhood unique.” (Umorem, 1973), they are capable of fashioning out his unique identity (Iwundu, 1994, p.57; Ehusani, 1997, p.131).

This carries with it a lot of social implications. In the course of searching for a marriage partner or business partner, for instance, it is not just the mere appellation that matters in considering his or her suitability, the person as such (in totality) is brought into focus. The family background, the person’s social habits or traits, economic status, religious tenets, political leaning, emotional maturity, educational background, and much even much more, form part of the yardsticks. There is a sense in which whoever is considered as not being a person in

the above light is denied marriage-partner, land or some business connections. It is noteworthy too, that unmarried and childless adults are said not to be full persons. We shall at this juncture pry into the classical philosophical basis of personhood.

PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF PERSONHOOD

Personhood is a derivation from the word “person” which literally means “an individual human being” (Chambers Dictionary, 1999, p.1033). It denotes the condition or state of being a person. Runes (1997, p.229) defines person in Max Scheler’s terms as “The concrete unity of acts. Individual person, and total person, with the former not occupying a preferential position.”

In Scholasticism, Boethius (475-525 AD) defines “person” as “an individual substance of rational nature” (Runes, 1997, p.229). It refers to the individual as a material being. Matter provides the principle of individuation. The soul on its own is not a person. Among the material beings, man in his composite being is known as person because he possesses the rational nature. He is endowed with dignity and rights and he is the highest of the material beings.

The doctrine of the human being as an explicit theme of philosophical reflection developed gradually through the ages. Most often, the era of Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy is mainly known for being “cosmocentric”, the period of Christian Medieval philosophy as “theocentric” and the age of modern and contemporary philosophy was tagged “anthropocentric” (Onah, 2005, p.161).

Even though earlier philosophers concentrated on the study of the physical world and God, and not man, the human being was always at the centre of the philosophical enterprise, though indirectly (Onah, 2005, p.161).

It is worthy of note that even though the words, “personhood”, “person” or “personalism” are relatively modern, the philosophy had existed as attempts at interpreting the “self” as a part of human experience. These elements of “Person” are traceable in the philosophy of a couple of philosophers, such as, Heraclitus (536-470 BC) in his statement “man’s own character is his daemon”; Anaxagoras (500-430 BC) in his Cosmogony while emphasizing that the mind “regulated all things, what they were to be, what they were and what they are” the force which arranges and guides, giving an anthropocentric trend; Protagoras (480-410 BC) in his famous saying that “man is the measure of all things” while stressing the personalistic character of knowledge.

The philosophy of persons found its highest point in Socrates (409-399 BC) in Greek philosophy, in his

recognition of the soul or self as the center from which all actions of man emanated. Plato (427-347 BC) acknowledged the person in his doctrine of the soul. However, he turned the direction towards dominance by the abstract idea; Aristotle (384-322 BC) insisted that only the concrete and individual could be real.

In the Christian Medieval Era, St. Augustine (354-430 A.D) held that thought, and therefore the thinker, was the most certain of all things. These personalistic concepts were better expressed in the work of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 A.D) who adapted the definition of Boethius, when he affirmed that the human person is "subsistent substance of rational nature". This was followed by an entire array of philosophers in France, Germany, England, and America. The most prominent among Philosophers in France was Descartes, who stood gallantly with all others against Positivism, Materialism and Naturalism under different cloaks. Their counterparts in Germany also developed personalistic philosophies with Schleiermacher (1768-1834) taking the lead; in England also appeared many theistic personalists such as Bishop Berkeley (1710-1796); in America were others too, such as Bowne, G.T. (1842-1921), J.W. Buckhan (1864). Then, other later Personalistic Movements that sprang up (Runes, 1997, p.230).

As a matter of fact, "personhood is seen as an ultimate fact" (Mautner, 2000, p.418) in opposition to the Naturalist reduction of the person to physical processes. Also against the backdrop of the idealist submission that the person is merely a transitory, less-than-real manifestation of the absolute.

In Heidegger's (Runes, 1997, p.242) conception of (Dasein), the sort of being that I manifest is not that of a thing-with-properties. It is a range of possible ways to be. I define the individual I become by projecting myself into those possibilities which I choose, or which I allow to be chosen, or which I allow to be chosen for me. Who I become is a matter of how I act in the contexts in which I find myself. My existence is always an issue for me, and I determine by my actions what it will be...

It is in this vein, Heidegger sees a human being as being essentially a *res cogitans* – a thinking thing and that there is nothing which we have more immediate access to than our own mind and its contents. This would carry a lot of implications for our understanding of a person. The human person, therefore, lives in a way that is genuinely self-determining and self-revising.

Kierkegaard (Runes, 1997, p.295), the quintessential existentialist's view is also very relevant here, according to him, existence is not just "being there" but living passionately, choosing one's own existence and committing oneself to a certain way of life. He decries a situation whereby a person would just form part of an anonymous 'public' in which conformity and 'being reasonable' are the rule, then passion and commitment the exceptions. He compares existence with "riding a wild stallion, and "so-called existence" with falling asleep in a

hay wagon.

Riccards di San Vittore sees Person as "an individual being, endowed with a spiritual nature that is also incommunicable" (Brugger & Baker, 1972, p.302). In other words, that "man exists and subsists only through the existence and subsistence of his spiritual soul".

Omeregbe (1999, p.36) makes a list of six major attributes of a person. The human person is seen to be "rational, moral, free, social, capable of interpersonal relationship and possesses individuality because "there is nothing like a collective person".

The word, "existence" employed in a couple of definitions above "already opens up the modern anthropological concept of a person in relation" (Brugger & Baker, 1972, p.302). Here, the concepts of community, communalism (*Ujamaa*) and "*Udama*" (Solidarity) in Igala are seen as being quite interrelated. This is what Beller (2001, p.30) refers to as "concept of person as "relationality". This brings us to the next sub-topic.

AFRICAN PERSONHOOD AND COMMUNITY LIVING

This concept of person as "relationality" as indicated above connotes a situation whereby the "person exists only by self-accomplishment in another person, in view of other persons" (Beller, 2001, p.30). For our purposes here, the symbiotic relationship between the person and the community is very crucial in our treatment of the anthropological connection.

The "I-you" relationship takes the back seat in this respect, as the "We" relationship takes pre-eminence. Cardinal Wojtyla's (Beller, 2001, p.31) essay on "Person, Subject and Communion" in relation to inculturation brings home this point, "The communion of "We" is this human plural form in which the person accomplishes itself to the highest degree as a subject". Okere (1996, p.151) in relation to the Ibo culture opines that the "self" is congenitally communitarian self, incapable of being, existing and really unthinkable except in the complex of relations of the community. It is a web of relations. The human person lives out his perfection in relation and personhood is therefore attained in relation. As Menkiti (2011, p.173) succinctly puts it, "The African emphasized the rituals of incorporation and the overarching necessity of learning the social rules by which the community lives, so that what was initially biologically given can come to attain social selfhood." That shows that personhood is attainable in relation to the level of participation in the communal life. Here, the message of the aphorism that "nobody is an island" is brought home more forcefully. There exists the primacy of the category of becoming over that of Being as in Hegelian mode of thought so that we can infer that some are more persons than others in the course of attaining certain qualities.

According to Beller (2001, p.31), for Wojtyla, Even if the human person pre-exists in itself in dignity and does not become a person for what it does, its rank as being, its dignity, lies actually in the capacity to transcend itself, to fulfill itself in relationship with other people. The communion, the “We” overcomes the “I-you” reciprocal relationship.

Besides, “what matters to them is a common good so great and so important that they may reappraise their own desires and needs in acting by mutual consent”.

In the same light, Nwoko (1985, p.23) elucidates on how in the African ambience man is seen as,

a family being. He is born and bred in the family; he lives, moves, marries and dies within the family of the living and the dead. This family within which man’s being oscillates already embodies the spiritual root on the basis of the conviction that all members of the family belong to one ancestry, which traces back to God. Human beings are connected as family beings, and all families trace back to God.

Against this backdrop, Nwoko arrives at the concept of “Universal Consanguinity” for “all men sharing a common blood despite colour, race, religion (Njoku, 2002, p.280). This is what Mulago meant when in no uncertain terms he averred:

By the fact that we are born in a family, a class in a tribe we are plunged in a specific vital current, which “incorporates”, moulds and orients us to live in a way of this community, modifies “ontically” all our being... in that way the family, the clan, the tribe, are a whole of which each member is only a part. The same blood, the same life partaken by all and received from the first ancestor, founder of the clan, flows in all the veins (Beller, 2001, p.36).

In a certain manner, it is the community that initiates one into personhood through some initiation, either formerly or informally. Naming ceremonies, circumcision, initiation into adulthood and especially into womanhood, marriage ceremonies and a host of other ceremonies form particular examples or instances of initiation into personhood at some stages of the African life. The crux of this matter lies essentially in the fact that the African as a human being, culturally speaking is formed or initiated and receives his “ontology” and “being” from the community (Maritain, 1948, p.72). To the African mind, the concept of separate beings is entirely foreign. As Ansah (2011, p.5) expresses it, “Africans hold that created beings preserve a bond with one another, an intimate ontological relationship”. We may need to step down on this issue by specifically treating Igala Ontology of Being.

IGALA ONTOLOGY OF BEING

As Heidegger would put it, the knowledge of the human being (Dasein) is the key to the knowledge of Being as such. This is owing to the fact that the human being is the only being capable of asking the question of Being (Onah, 2005, p.160).

In the Igala Ontology of Being, the human person is said to be made up of the “*Anọla*” (Body) and “*inmi*” (Soul). The latter, which is easily equated with life (*ọlai*) is often translated as breath and most often rendered as “*afu*” (air). Therefore, a typical Igala person holds the notion that God created the human person; he filled him with “*afu*” (air, spirit or breath) which is life in itself. It is likened to the manner vulcanizers pump air into a deflated tyre or blowing of air into a ball or balloon. This invisible part of the human being is described in terms of a “vital force”. In which case, the spirit is said to have sway, control over or rule over the entire physical body, even the “*edọ*” (heart) which is said to have the capability of working as the seat of love, functions along with the “*okoto*” (brains) which is the seat of decisions. The heart and the brain are said to be working hand in hand with the spirit of man to bring about “*ibe*” (thinking).

Another element of the vital force in man is said to be the “*Ẹbiẹ*” (blood), which makes the link with the ancestors (consanguinary affinity) through the nuclear and extended family line possible. So that, when an Igala person says, “*anọla akola nwu-i*” (he is being spoken to by his body) what it means is that “*Ẹbiẹ*” speaks (idiomatically the blood in his veins makes him feel). This happens especially when something negative has occurred to a family member and there is some kind of premonition. In this respect, the “*Ẹbiẹ*” (blood) and “*anọla*” (body) are inextricably related as one. Invariably, to talk of a living body is to refer to an active living flow of blood.

The “*Edọ*” (heart) which pumps blood is seen as the engine-room of life, courage, zeal, fervour, determination, candour, kindness, generosity, love, attentiveness, compassion, forgiveness, conversion, change, etc. The heart works with the “*afu*” (breath) in man to determine one’s level of social, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, economic, cultural and other spheres of life. Central to this whole array of functionality is that the “*afu*” (spirit, air, breath or soul) is what gives life. When the Creator takes the “*afu*” or “*inmi*” (breath) back, the body becomes helpless, motionless or inactive and man ceases to be a person because he is physically dead. However, the soul of a person is said to be immortal or indestructible.

There is also a sense in which an Igala person may assert that someone is “*okwu one*” (dead person) without the physical death occurring. In this case, it could mean social, spiritual or some other form of death. An indecisive person or a hardened criminal, for instance, could be considered dead in the Igala worldview. It is the spirit (*afu*) of a man which works in conjunction with the heart and brain and precipitates the action. The “*okai*” (sense of agreement) of the person then works with forces surrounding the destiny of the person to lead to the execution of whatever has been contemplated.

Armed-robbers, Kidnappers, ritualists, murderers are by every standard considered less-human metaphysically. This is owing to their anti-social activities.

The “*abiku*” (born-to-die babies or *ogbanje*) children, witches and wizards (*ochu*), sorcerers (*inacha*) are considered far less-human too and are in their own different category.

In this respect, the human entity who is not part of the integrally healthy and positive human community is only referred to sarcastically as an “*enwu-i*” (an “it”).

That goes to explain how the Igala person abhors deviant attitudes with passion or livid hatred. This is significant in relation to Igala general attitude to morals. Life gives back to you what you offer it. In other words, the entire atmosphere of the Igala traditional society seems to radiate the belief that One good turn deserves another. It is even most significant considering the fact that even a corpse (*okwu*) under normal circumstances is not referred to as an “it” – in the Igala worldview. At funerals, you could hear, “*enē kidachi-tē-i*” (this person lying here) out of respect, even though he is no longer fully “*onē*” because he is obviously lifeless. This seems to be what Ansah (2011, p.2) was alluding to when he noted that “Africans speak of what lives on after death as “the man himself”, “himself”, or it is “the little man”.

There is a sense in which the living is often said to be in communion with not only the living but “he lives, moves, marries and dies within the family of the living and the dead” (Nwoko, 1985, p.279). That is why when Mbiti says “I am because we are” it refers to an additive collective we” (Menkiti, 2011, 179). As Richard Bell (2002, p.60) rightly expressed it, “Africans do not think themselves as discrete individuals but rather understand themselves as part of a community”.

As Mbiti (1969, p.108) in his inversion of the famous “Cogito ergo sum” of Descartes stated it, “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.” And he earlier explained:

The individual owes his existence to other people... He is simply part of the whole... 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 very central in the African view of man. For the Igala “*ikere bimō ikereb’aju, ikerebeju ila ikerebimō*”(what affects the nose equally affects the eye and vice versa). It is in this spirit parents can easily “*dēwn kpalugba*” (offer up their needs) in order to satisfy their children. This is because in the spirit of sacrifice, the Igala parent is ready to offer anything within his/her reach in cash or kind so as to remove shame or embarrassment from the family. As it is often said, “*Igala tene achukatan*” (the Igala person abhors embarrassment or literally, anything that entails removal of their crown or destiny). As it were, the capacity for moral personality in the society largely has to do with the ability

to stand against anything which has to do with blatant breaking of acceptable moral norms or values.

From all indications therefore, personhood is attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life, through the discharge of the various obligations defined by one’s status (Menkiti, 176). We shall now explore what the “*Udama*” solidarity entails in Igala worldview.

“UDAMA” CONCEPT OF SOLIDARITY

The term, “*Udama*” in Igala language is etymologically a derivation from its verbal form, “*dama*” which means “altogether”, to bring two or more things to one position, to gather objects of different kinds together. It could also be viewed from the noun “*ama*” in Igala which incidentally means “clay” used in molding earthen-ware pots or vessels. Therefore, “*dama*” is the short form of “*du ama*” which literally denotes “take” (*du*) clay (*ama*). This would then mean to create oneness or unity. *Du* (take) *ma* (gum) could also be implied in which case it would mean “take and gum.” In these three senses of the meaning of “*Udama*” it is to be understood that the “U” that appears before the word “*dama*” is only for the sake of smoothness in pronunciation. As a rule, every typical Igala noun takes a vowel. In a nutshell, the word “*udama*” means the state of togetherness, wholeness or unity. It could also be rendered variously as reconciliation, at-onement, meeting, etc.

Among the Igala, there is that strong notion of “*Udama Ch’ukpahu*” (unity is power). Togetherness is seen as a great source of strength or power. As it is often expressed in proverbs, “*alu ma mujon ya fufon*” (if the lips do not come together, there can never be successful whistling); “*oli katete adago amud’okon*” (a tree cannot make a forest); “*omowo katete any’oji adina-n*” (no single finger can bring lice from the hair); “*Oli owō katete aneke gba’nen*” (a single broomstick can never sweep the floor); “*ema titō jugbo katete-n yaw u wowon*” (if you do not urinate on one spot it would not foam); “*ana du domi komi dud u wē onwu ch’anade*” (it’s rendering of helping hands from both sides that make in-lawship thrive. Variation: Love is reciprocal); “*owō awoto agw’awohi, awohi lagwawoto*” (the right washes the left hand and the left washes the right hand or true love is never onesided; one good turn deserves another). Whether some of the assertions or allusions made in the proverbs rendered above lack plausibility in certain situations is not our point of concern here. It is only necessary to note at this point that these ideas form a good part of the Igala understanding in relation to community life or cooperation.

This explains why in the Igala socio-political milieu, forming of associations and cooperatives (*oja eche*) is very prevalent among the different age grades. Even up till the present generation, one needs only take a cursory look at the society, either at the clan, hamlet, village or

township levels to observe how they often gather under trees or village huts (*atakpa*) or halls to hold meetings at frequent intervals. At such fora birds of the same feather flock together. Like-minds or age-groups gather to rub minds. Most often they are people of same sex or occasionally of mixed sex gathering under the same umbrella to trash personal issues, teething societal matters and share ideas on how to make progress. Every so often, they gather meager sums of money and take turns in hosting such meetings which also aid them in putting resources together to cater for their needs.

In fact, from childhood, children of the same age group consciously or naturally meet under the moonlight to share stories, myths, legends, folk-tales, fairy-tales, folk-songs, proverbs and wise sayings. Therein they learn societal mores and norms, play different games, including hide and seek, etc. Within this atmosphere, they get to know the dos and don'ts of the land. An adult mingling with such little children would be very absurd. This would be tantamount to "*ogijo ki a tido aka nugba*" (an elder who dances to the tune of ordinary play cans or tins). For the elderly ones are only expected to dance to the tune of real drum-beats. Again, "*ogijo ki joji ajuwen*" (an elder ought not habitually eat the head of the fowl) for among the traditional Igala, the head of the chicken is meant for children. In other words, a reasonable adult is not expected to stoop too low. It is within the context of such moonlight exercises, children learn traditional dancing steps with their peers and mimic their parents and generally the elders in the society, either for good or bad. They learn techniques of agreeing and disagreeing; develop certain skills of leadership and basic skills in home keeping, as the case may be.

Youngsters in their adolescence stage were often seen with their peer groups. The male-folk of same age group had their circumcision organized together and were termed the "*onoji*". This group would traditionally be offered gifts by passers-by in respect of their coming of age. They were often hailed as "*abokele*" (men) for attaining manhood. People of this age-group were often seen organizing "*adakpo*" or "*ailo*" which literally means "group work". They were able to set aside reasonable time to help one another in their father's farms, in building mud houses, raising roofs or in other energy-sapping or highly-engaging jobs. This often gave them some sense of healthy competition and by this token, they could weigh who was stronger and even know who is more endowed and energetic in one field of endeavour or the other. In the same token, the young ladies also organized themselves into groups seasonally, either in harvesting crops in their parents' farms, fetching of water or fire woods, in preparing palm-oil or cracking of palm kernel. It could also be in cooking for a large crowd at traditional marriage ceremonies, burials or land festivals. In such gatherings, certain traditional songs, such as, "*ugbo*

ch'anukwu-o, odokuta chanukwu igbele" (the natural habitat of the young ladies is the grinding mill) and "*godo godo onobule ategwu oli noro*" (climbing of tree is an odd and abominable deed for a woman) were sung in order to draw home some salient message on pristine customs, values and mores of the society. Igala men and women believed in playing complementary roles in their society. Allowing women to do hard jobs was often considered a taboo so as to encourage men to be readily available to help out. One therefore notices some form of solidarity while still creating room for some role differentiation, not by any means paving way for any form of ill-treatment of the women or inferiority complex.

In both sexes, there is often an under-girding principle of checks and balances and tendency towards uniformity as peer-groups are readily available to help each other in times of need. This is owing to the traditional Igala feeling that "*ule j'one meji*" (it takes two to tango). Literally, a long and arduous journey is made shorter and easier by the sheer fact of traveling with other good companions. In other words, "*aju we-e akpone*" (loneliness is not only boring but it kills). The above assertions do not mean that the Igala person does not and can not operate alone, but companionship is most often the preferred option and it is most cherished.

This is what partly informs the forming of cooperative societies, associations, unions as earlier observed. By this, it means they assert their solidarity and communal nature of life even in diaspora. In so doing, they support each other; sew same colour, quality and style of dress or outfits. They grow up with this attitude and every activity of theirs is virtually permeated with this spirit of solidarity.

That explains why even in adulthood, as married men or women, they are able to continue to render help to each other. It is actually with this background that they see themselves as one in the positive sense of it without undue sense of discrimination. And so, the good wind blowing in the typical Igala traditional atmosphere seems to be echoing and re-echoing,

Your husband is our husband
 Your wife is our wife
 Your daughter is our daughter
 Your son is our son
 Your father is our father
 Your mother is our mother
 Your farm is our farm
 Your problem is our problem
 Your joy is our joy
 Your pain is our pain
 Your promotion is our promotion
 Your demotion is our demotion
 Who hurts you hurts us
 Who fights you fights us
 Who derides you derides us
 Who insults you insults us

Who bewitches you bewitches us
Who pursues you pursues us
Our wife therefore must be cared for whether you are
alive or dead
Our children must be catered for whether you are dead
or alive
Our elders must be loved and protected whether you
are alive or dead.

Come to think of it, the *Udama* concept of solidarity or communal living, stands in direct contrast to the individualism of the west and all forms of discriminatory attitudes. No gainsaying, the fact that it is akin to what Julius Nyerere of Tanzania dubbed *Ujamaa*. Onwubiko's (1999, p.10) commentary is quite applicable here too, it:

Builds community and is opposed to all forms of discrimination.
But it does not eradicate distinctions. It respects stability,
statuses and therefore upholds hierarchy.

However, even though the extended family dimension of "Udama" cannot obviously be said to belong to a totally classless society which was the focus of Nyerere, solidarity is patently stressed. The Igala is innately most hospitable to guests, newcomers, foreigners, strangers, but he reserves different levels of respect for different degrees of personages. This is not unconnected to what probably informs the different modes of dressing or regalia for those in the royal families, the various types of tribal marks, drumbeats (tunes) or greetings in relation to position in the family, place of origin, nature and background of one's extended or nuclear family.

In the traditional Igala society, the naming of a child is made by consulting the "*ifa*" divination or oracle so as to ascertain who incarnated a particular child from the lineage. In which case it is hoped the world of the dead (ancestors) is relates with the living in order to offer support in their daily struggles. In certain cases, a child could be named *Iye-i* (this woman) or *Iyemi* (my mother), *Atayi* (my father). Or as the case may be. *Okwo* (Grandfather), *Omehi* (aunt), *omēnyi* (uncle), *omaye* (my brother or sister), etc. These are simply ascriptions meant to bring to memory the relationship of the beloved relative who is said to have incarnated. It could also happen that direct appellations or names by which such people were known while here on earth, are given to such children e.g. Ajine, Ataguba, Ochoniya, Ameloko, Itodo, Adigo, Iganya, Inikpi, Ocheja, Edime, Oboni, etc.

It can be said without any fear of contradiction that in the Igala traditional society, everybody is involved in the training of a child. The child belongs to the entire society. As it is often said, "*ichone katete an'oma-n*" (it is not only an individual that raises a child) or "*ichene kibioma katete anen*" (it is not only the parent of a child that raises him). That is why in the traditional Igala environment, virtually everybody takes responsibility in spanking a child who is red-herring. Anybody can feed a child who is hungry; anyone can train a child who has no sponsor;

anyone can clothe a child that is naked or wretched-looking; anyone can shelter a child that is homeless; and adoption of children by one's relations or friends is a common practice. That such practices are prevalent does not mean there are no undergirding principles or rules. Everything may not be alright in certain situations in relation to the above, yet this is by and large, practicable and life-enhancing in many quarters.

In marriage, partners could be given based on the cooperation, unity or harmony which is existent among parents, relatives or their ancestors in the immediate or distant past. And when the ceremony is being celebrated, very close relatives are not only expected to be on-ground but to partake in the benefits accruing from the giving of their child (especially in the case of daughter) in marriage. For instance, they have to share in the kolanut and drinks being offered. This is because, according to the Igala mind, "*akoje own n'ako jadu*" (to partake in eating implies togetherness also in salvaging situations). This denotes sharing in good times and in bad. With such a ceremony, each family would have to be solidly behind the other in times of need even at burials or second-burial ceremonies, they would have to show solidarity. Food items, masquerades and entertainment or traditional outfits are organized with the in-laws. And it is believed that by making the dead happy, the departed would also ensure the living are blessed through bumper harvest, peace in the family, bearing of good children, safety in their journies, all-round protection and security.

UDAMA VIS-À-VIS THE UJAMAA CONCEPT OF NYERERE

The full expression of the concept of "*Udama*" is "*udama chukpahu*" (unity is power or strength) as it relates to not only the nuclear or extended family but the larger society. It is more about solidarity. On the other hand, the full rendering of Julius Nyerere's concept of *Ujamaa* is "*uhuru n'ujamaa*" which literally means familyhood. In the traditional African family, Nyerere sees mutual respect, cooperation and togetherness. And the fact that family solidarity did not allow anyone to live below a certain level as they held many things in common, and everyone had the obligation to work for the common good (Iroegbu, & Izibili, 2004, p.179). In this vein, Nyerere brings into focus the famous principle that man is the centre of the universe or rather that "the purpose of society is man".

The thrust of "*Udama*" concept of Igala Solidarity is not so much that of community consciousness. It is more about familial solidarity which prevailed in the pristine African society. It is true that in the traditional African society, the individual is somehow subsumed in the life of the community that "without the community, the individual has no existence." As Onwubiko (1999, p.15) graphically puts it,

It is the wealth of the community and in the community that makes individuals rich and not the wealth of individuals that make the community rich.

In other words, the identity of the individuals is protected within the identity of the community... thereby depicting the community as the custodians of the individual (Onwubiko, 1991, p.18).

In the Igala ambience, for instance, the land and its wealth may belong to the clan or the family but certain individuals are made custodians of the land and all that accrues from it. Thereby, unlike the *ujamaa* of Nyerere those custodians can rightly claim ownership, until when they must have leased it out or shared it with others. It is a life based on "live and let's live" ideology (Ome, & Amam 2004, p.434). Like *Ujamaa*-communism, its basis is the extended family, but it goes further in such an expansive and elastic manner as to embrace not only the immediate society but the entire human race. The Igala Possesses such an attitude that stands in direct opposition to individualism that it is so manifest in his hospitality to guests as earlier stressed. To an Igala mind, "*ēju ononojo ma jome ubi nwu mara*" (you owe while the guest is before you with the hope of paying debts afterwards); again, "*ewn ki lola anya ruk en*" (anything soft is divisible). Does that not prove the large-heartedness of the Igala person? The typical Igala is ready to sacrifice anything in order to please others.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Putting "*Udama*" concept of Igala Solidarity side by side its other African corollary, the *Ujamaa* (concept of communalism of Nyerere), it is glaring that the Igala Concept of personhood (*One*) is practically based on the community-living spirit of the Igala people and especially their sense of solidarity and communion.

The "*Udama*" concept of solidarity may mean unity, harmony, concord and promotion of dignity as well as efficiency and increased productivity and human dignity (Iroegbu, & Izibili 2004, p.180) as enunciated also on *Ujamaa* communalism. But the idea of equality is not all that pronounced in the Igala mind-set as in *Ujamaa* communalism. As the traditional Igala belief holds, "*om'owo cho kwujon*" (the fingers are not equal) or as it is expressed in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, "all animals are equal but some are more equal than others". In the same token, certain persons are from royal families while others are subjects and others are experts in one field of endeavor or the other and are recognized and highly respected.

It is also worthy of note that *Udama* solidarity is practicable wherever one is located unlike the *Ujamaa* which entails quitting one's usual habitat to adapt to new villages constructed by the government.

The *Udama* concept of solidarity of the Igala does not have the capacity of raising so much dust at the

international level and therefore no threat, unlike the *Ujamaa* which is formalized and seen as a threat to the Western forces. However, the basic principles by which this *Udama* solidarity is to be worked out neatly remains a strenuous and arduous task before the Igala race.

At the center of the concept of Personhood (*one*) in Igala philosophy is the "*Udama*" interconnectedness. The "*one-ness*" (personhood) of the Igala person is defined in relation to his humane relationship with others in the society where he finds himself. "*Udama*" could be said to be the perfect expression of personhood in the Igala worldview. The ability to find his feet in such a healthy and integral manner in the community therefore forms the basic standard for judging a person's level of personhood.

REFERENCES

- Ansah R. (2011). *African concept of being, with special reference to the concept of witchcraft and medicine in Africa*. Retrieved from www.google.com/ansah_richard.
- Bell, R. (2002). *Understanding African philosophy: A cross-cultural approach to classical and contemporary issues*. New York: Routledge.
- Beller, R. (2001). *Life, person and community in Africa*. Nairobi: Paulines.
- Brugger W. & Kenneth B. (1972). *Philosophical dictionary*. Washington: Gonzaga University Press.
- Chambers 21st Century Dictionary (1999). New Delhi: Allied Chamber Ltd.
- Ehusani, G. (1997). *An Afro-Christian Vision "Ozovehe"!*. New York: Macmillan.
- Ekwunife, A. (1996). "What is in a name?" A philosophy of naming in Igbo Culture. *Bigard Theological Studies*, 16(2), 36.
- Hemmerle (2001). Comment on Wojtyla. in Beller. *Life, Person and Community in Africa*. Kenya: Paulines.
- Iroegbu, P. & Matthew I. (2004). *Kpim of democracy-thematic introduction to socio-political philosophy*. Benin-City: Ever Blessed Publishers.
- Iwundu, M. (1994). *Igbo anthroponyms: A socio-semantic analysis*. In Akagwu, J., (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Nigeria, Nsukka), *An Anyigba Elder. Oral Interview* on 21/10/2011, at 6.00pm.
- Abuh, J. (2011). A traditional Igala Musician at Idah. *Oral Interview*.
- Makinde, M. (2007). *African philosophy: a demise of a controversy*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.
- Maritain, J. (1948). *Existence and the existent*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Mautner, T. (2000). *The penguin dictionary of philosophy*. London: Penguin Books.
- Mbiti, J. S. (1969). *African religions and philosophy*. London: Heinemann.
- Menkiti, Ifeanyi. (1984). *Person and community in African traditional thought*. Retrieved from www.google.com/menkiti_ifeanyi.

- Njoku, F. (2002). *Essays in African philosophy, thought theology*. Owerri: Clacom.
- Nwoko, M. I. (1985). *The rationality of African socialism*. Rome: Tipolitografia.
- Nze, B. C. Sense and Non-sense in Igbo Names. *Nsukka Journal of Humanities*, 5(6), 19.
- Obi, A. (August, 2008). Chi: Basis of Igbo Ontology. *Uma: Journal of Philosophy and Religious Studies*, 3(1), 68-80.
- Obi, A. (October, 2009). Philosophy of Names. *Uja: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 10(2), 194-205.
- Okere, T. (1996). The Structure of the Self in Igbo Thought. In Theophilus Okere, (Ed.), *Identity and Change: Nigerian Philosophical Studies*. Washington: Paideia.
- Ome, E. (2004). *Philosophy and Logic for Everybody*. Enugu: Institute for Development Studies.
- Omeregbe, J. (1999). *Metaphysics without tears: A systematic and historical study*. Lagos: Joja Educational.
- Onah, G. (2005). Okere on the self – A Hermeneutical approach to an ontological question. In Oguejiofor, J. O. & G. I. Onah. (Eds.), *African philosophy and the hermeneutics of culture*. London: Transaction Publishers, 160-177.
- Onwubiko, O. (1991). *African thought, religion and culture* (Vol. 1). Enugu: Snaap Press.
- Onwubiko, O. (1999). *The church as the family of god* (Ujamaa). Nsukka: Fulladu.
- Runes, D. (1997). *Dictionary of philosophy*. New Jersey: Little Field, Adams & Co.
- Temples, P. (1959). *Bantu philosophy*. Paris: Presence africaine.
- Ubahakwe, E. (1982). *Culture content of the Igbo Names*. Ibadan: University Press.
- Umorem, U. E. (1973). *Annang-Efik-Ibibio personal names*. Owerri: Black Academy Press.