

**AKONAUCHE, PERSONHOOD AND SOCIAL ORDER IN
CONTEMPORARY IGBO CULTURE**

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ABSTRACT: *Akonauche*, an ontological and intelligent component of the human person capable of mediating and unifying the individual's facets of existence, is central in maintaining social order in Igbo culture. Existing studies have addressed the idea of *akonauche* mainly from scientific and aesthetic perspectives, without adequate analysis of the concept in relation to the unity of the individual as a being of many parts, significant to the attainment of social order. This study, therefore, investigates *akonauche* with a view to identifying the ontological roles it plays in mediating between the individual and the community in ensuring social order. The study adopted Strawson's theory on persons. Six relevant texts in Metaphysics; Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy (MFP), Collins' Selfless Person (SP), Kim's Supervenience and Mind (SM). Eight texts in African Philosophy, such as Mbiti's African Religions and Philosophy (ARP), Menkiti's On the Normative Conception of a Person (NCP), Ikuenobe's The Idea of Personhood in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (CATFA) and Animalu's Ucheakolam: A way of Life in Modern Scientific Age (WLMSA), were purposively selected. Hence, they addressed the issues of *akonauche*, personhood and social order. Conceptual analysis and reconstruction were deployed. Texts in Metaphysics reveal that human persons are in control of their well-being, do not consider the community as very significant in their explanations, and under-explore the connection between a person and the community (MFP and SM). Texts in African Philosophy show that the individual is bound to behave in certain ways laid down by the community, thereby inhibiting complete individual autonomy (ARP, NCP and CATFA). Igbo proverbs like, *nwata kwozie aka, o soro okenye, ne nri* (outstanding achievement is acknowledged and rewarded) not only affirms that *akonauche* is paramount in a person's relationships in the community, but also emphasises a person's creativity (WLMSA). Critical reflection reveals that the person is creatively intelligent and that the human will is autonomous because each individual has *akonauche* which supervenes actions and thoughts in a way that enhances social order. The Igbo proverb, *eruru sina obu ucheoma ka hajiri topu osisi ngwo, ma na, otu-otu ka ha bi* (Though we live individually, it is in harmony that we accomplish great feats), emphasises the synchronisation of personal and communal worth in achieving social order. *Akonauche*, an ontological component of a person, demonstrates that the human person is a metaphysical and social being with creative intelligence. Therefore, *akonauche* in Igbo culture plays both creative and mediating roles in the relationship between the Individual and the community in which social order is guaranteed.

Keywords: *Akonauche*, Personhood, Igbo Culture, Social Order.

INTRODUCTION

One of the central problems of metaphysics is what it means to be- a person. Scholars from various fields of endeavour have described one ascribable quality as that which underlines and

determines who and what a person is. Boethius, for instance, “gives the definition of person as an individual substance of a rational nature (*Naturce rationalis individual substantia*) (Leonard, B. 191). Peter Singer similarly defines a person “as a conscious, thinking being, which knows that it is a person (self-awareness) (Peter, S. 1985:52).

According to Nwala, the traditional Igbo believe that man or a person is both spirit and non-spirit. Man possesses two main parts- *mmuo* (spirit) and *ahu* (body). *Mmuo*- this is the spiritual part of man and it incorporates the elements of spirit, intelligence, feeling, emotion, conscience (Nwala, U. 1985:42) There are also other ontological characteristics of a person which are recognized in every personal identity. They are present in every person before you are described as a person. We have *Obi or Nkpuruobi* which is located in the heart and is the seat of the life- giving force, *ndu*. *Ndu* is understood as a life giving force, with an existence in which a person still functions in his or her natural mode. Most importantly is the *onwe* as the basic unit of autonomy. At this stage, the social realities and identity is not made reference to because these metaphysical constituents can exist without the social identity. It is important to note that among Igbo scholars, *mmadu* (person) is seen as both material and immaterial (*mmuo*). In the words of *Nze*, among the Igbo, in whose culture, the person *Mmadu* is conceived as integrally composed of a material element *Ahu*- the body and immaterial spiritual element *mmuo*, *nkpurobi*, *obi*- the heart which is often spoken of as a tripartite or could be casually and interchangeably labeled *obi*, the heart, *nkpuruobi*, the seed and *mmuo*, the spirit. , we are not going into this ontological or metaphysical aspect of man in Igbo perspective (Nze, C. 2001:259).

Nze is not alone in this line of thought. *Madu* agrees with *Nze* and *Nwala* that the latter sense speaks of *mmadu* as being (*ndu*) the activating principle sustaining all existence (Madu, R, 1987:159).

In this study, therefore, we argued that the community rights and reality of community taking precedence over the individual is not to be taken as an influence or reference to personal identity. It is to be taken as a communal and social reference of the many aspects that the individual person is able to live out. When we speak of the essence of a person or what really constitutes a person, we strictly refer to the metaphysical and communal schemes. In Igbo metaphysical scheme, *akonauche* is that faculty that enables a person to live out appropriately ways that should allow for growth, change, harmony and order between him/her and the society. The implication is that to become a person requires those ontological/metaphysical constituents which are quasi- physical (though immaterial) as soon as one is born, and are requirements for the acceptance of a person into his/her community.

Strawsonism and the Limits of Western Thought on Personhood

To his main work, *Individuals*, Strawson gave the subtitle: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics. Descriptive metaphysics is content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world (Strawson, P. F, 1959: 9). It is to be contrasted with revisionary metaphysics, which is concerned to produce a better structure. According to Strawson, the general features of our conceptual structure lie submerged under the surface of language and therefore descriptive metaphysics has to go beyond the examination of the actual use of words and expose this general structure (Strawson: 9).

He further says that, there are categories and concepts, which in their most fundamental character, do not change at all. They are not technical concepts of special sciences, but commonplaces of the least refined thinking. It is with these concepts and categories, their interconnections and the structure they form, that the descriptive metaphysics is primarily concerned (Strawson:10).

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

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

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

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

According to Cartesianism, when we speak of a person, we are really referring to one or both of two distinct substances of different types, each of which has its own appropriate types of states and properties. States of consciousness belong to one of these substances and not to the other (Descartes, R.1911:33).

Strawson's position differs from Descartes theory because for Strawson, the concept of the pure individual consciousness-the pure ego-is a concept that cannot exist; or at least, cannot exist as a primary concept in terms of which the concept of a person can be explained or analysed. It can exist only, if at all, as a secondary, non-primitive concept, which itself is to be explained, analysed in terms of a person.

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

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

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

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

Strawson names the predicates ascribing corporeal physical characteristics, M-predicates and those ascribing states of consciousness, P-predicates. All P-predicates may not be said to be ascribing states of consciousness on the part of that to which they are ascribed-predicates are essentially both self-ascribable and others-ascribable. One ascribes P-predicate to others on the strength of observation of their behaviour, but to oneself, not on the behaviour criteria. It is because of the special nature of the P-predicates, or of a class of P-predicates. To learn their use is to learn both the aspects of their use. We speak of ‘behaving in a depressed way’ and of ‘feeling depressed’. Feeling can only be felt not observed and behaviour can only be observed not felt.

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

The Asante Conception of Personhood

Having x-rayed the idea of a person from the western view, It is interesting to note that the Africans also have their understanding of what constitutes a person. According to Appiah, in order to make sense of the *Akan* theory of person, *onipa*, it is important to start by saying something about the *Asante* social organization. The reason for this is that Appiah believes that it is hard to isolate a theory of person from people’s general views of the world. Appiah states

that, “the Asante are a matrilineal clan. The family is taken as a subgroup of matriclan usually consisting of a group with a common ancestress in their grandmother or great-grandmother (Appiah, K.A, 2004:27). This group is referred to as the “*abusua*”, meaning clan.

The head of the family is a maternal uncle, but it may be a great uncle, nephew or brother, who holds property on behalf of the matriclan. Appiah says all of the *Asante* are divided into seven or eight *abusua*. Each person belongs to a particular *abusua* and it is this belongingness that determines key functioning which is normally restricted to fellow clanfolk. People of the same clan, for example, will share in the same taboos on food utterances. Membership of this maternal group is held to flow from the fact that a person’s body (*nipadua*) is made from the blood of the mother the (*mogva*) hence the *abusua* is sometimes called the *bogya*. The other two components of a person are the *sunsum* (individual spirit) and the okra of which the former— the *sunsum* derives from the father at conception, and the latter, a sort of life force, is sent to a person at birth from Nyame, the high god, and departs the body only at the person’s last breath (Appiah:27).

From this it is quite clear that the Asante have a tripartite conception of the ontological make-up of a person. The body, *nipadua*, the *sunsum*, which Appiah calls an individual spirit and the okra, which is seen as a life force that is given by the creator to every individual when he/she is born. These three elements combine to give a conception of person. Although descent is maternal Appiah also holds that the Asante people also belong to a paternal clan, called the *ntoro*, which also has its associated taboos. These taboos are seen as arising out of the fact that the members of the *ntoro* have souls that share a common source, and similarity between father and son are held to derive from this inherited *sunsum*.

However, Wiredu agrees with Appiah when he states that among the Akan. the constitution of a person is made of “*nzadua*” (a body) and a combination of the following entities conceived as spiritual substances: (1) okra (soul, approximately), that whose departure from a man means death, (2) *sunsum*, that which gives rise to a man’s character, (3) *ntoro*, something passed on from the father which is the basis of inherited characteristics and, finally (4) *mogya*, something passed on from the mother which determines a man’s clan identity and which at death becomes the *saman* (ghost)(Wiredu, K, 1980:47).

Personhood in Igbo Thought System

The idea of *onwe* is central in understanding what constitutes the human person in Igbo cosmology. The *onwe* is for the Igbo anthropologists, the basic unit of personhood. According to Nwala, “the traditional Igbo believe that man or a person is both spirit and non-spirit. A person possesses two main parts- *mmuo* (spirit) and *ahu* (body) *Mmuo*- this is the spiritual part of man and it incorporates the elements of spirit, intelligence, feeling, emotion, conscience (Nwala:67) There are also other ontological characteristics of a person which are recognized in every personal identity. They are present in every person before you are described as a person. We have *Obi or mkpuruobi* which is located in the heart not just biologically, but as part of the invisible constitutive elements of the person and is the seat of the life-giving force, *ndu*. *Ndii* is understood as a life giving force, with an existence in which a person still functions in his or her natural mode. At this stage, the social realities and identity is not made reference to because these metaphysical constituents can exist without the social identity. It is important to note that among Igbo scholars, *mmadu* (person) is seen as both material and immaterial (*mmuo*) In the words of Nze, among the Igbo, in whose culture, the person *Mmadu* is conceived

as integrally composed of a material element *Ahu*- the body and immaterial spiritual element *mmuo*, *nkpurobi*, *obi*- the heart which is often spoken of as a tripartite or could be casually and interchangeably labelled *obi*, the heart *nkpuruobi*, the seed and *mmuo*, the spirit, we are not going into this ontological or metaphysical aspect of man in Igbo perspective (Nze:258).

Although all persons can be said to be social by nature; what makes them persons is the mere possession of these key metaphysical elements as opposed to sociality of any form. Naturally, a key question that arises is whether these elements are sufficient for the constitution of persons without bringing in moral considerations. We seek to show that it is possible to articulate such a concept without violating any cardinal principle of African identity. In our view, most communitarians are content with articulating their communitarian position without paying attention to the metaphysical implications of their statements.

In Igbo cosmology for instance, children are recognized and by birth enjoins the metaphysics of personal identity. This is why the Igbo say, *nwata kwozie aka, osoro okenye re nri*- that a child that washes his/her hands neatly and who is hard working, dines with the elderly. This though might sound literary, but philosophically, it is significant in matters of personal identity because a child shares same metaphysical components of personal identity with the elderly.

The Idea of Social Order in Igbo Worldview

The Igbo understanding is such that there is co-existence and harmony among individuals and with the goal of achieving order. Since the human person is a member of the community, it is expected of him/her to conduct affairs in line with the ethos of the host community. By so doing, the society would enjoin orderliness and productivity.

However, *akonauche*, in the human person helps the individual in attending to issues of challenge in a way that peace is maintained and values added to the community. In Igbo culture and some other traditional African societies, the attainment of personhood has been discussed based on social identity and moral obligations (see. Menkiti,1979:162 and Ikunobe, P. 2006:127) with little emphasis on the role of *akonauche* and *onwe* as the basis of the metaphysical elements in matters of personal identity. *Akonauche* is an Igbo term for creative intelligence. *Akonauche* is the faculty of the human person that is part of the metaphysical components in matters of personal identity. In Igbo world view, a person is an entity with some ontological constituents. A person is seen as *mmadu* and *mmuo* —*ndu*. The next sub-section is devoted to conceptual clarification. In Igbo society, a person can be moral or immoral without any denial of his characteristics as a person. This, therefore, exonerates Unoka, in *Things Fall Apart*, who is seen by some scholars, like, Ikunobe, as a clear affirmation of one who the society thought was unable to meet up with social reality and identity. A proper understanding of what personhood is in relation to personal identity would agree with the fact that Unoka, even though did not meet the expectations of his community, still retained his personal identity.

Ikunobe fails to appreciate the dynamic interplay between the community as a metaphysically constitutive entity and the normative as an expression of the lived-out realization of the metaphysical demands of persons. The point here is that, to become a person, one must possess those attributes and characteristics of personhood. However, the ability to make the attributes or qualities of personhood worth emulated, depends on one's ability to define his/her worth in the society.

According to Animalu, the use of creative intelligence (*ako-na-uche*) ought to be applied to our entire cultural matrix- world view, religion, politics, economics, military and so forth- as a way of life, in order to find our way forward in the modern scientific age that contains space travel, television, computers, energy crisis, atomic destruction, and drug addiction, among other societal ills (Animalu, A. 1990:47).

Akonauche, Personhood and Social Relations

The cumulative result of all we have said so far is that Ndiigbo today need to wake up from their slumber and redress their steps. The ‘all can go attitude’ of some Igbo people should be checkmated with the situation in which the world at large is in. According to Nwogu, as earlier mentioned, a methodological question which must be posed and answered at this initial stage in order to avoid misdirection is whether the proposed world view is a synthesis articulated by the people being presented, or it is that of the presenter. In other words, when I say that ‘A’ is part of the world view of the Igbo, do I mean that ‘A’ is what the Igbo articulate as what they think, or do I mean that ‘A’ is what I configure that the Igbo think? Is the explorer looking for the theoretical explanations by the people of their experience or is he formulating the conceptions of agency which he considers as lying behind the patterns of behaviour of the people? Does he seek their explanatory categories or their effective agencies? (Nwogu, D. 1984:3).

The Igbo emphasizes on the *onwe*, even though not complete without the community is the basic unit of identity. But we should however note that the idea of community for an Igbo person is not restricted to communities in Igbo states. Community in this sense suggests the existence or coming together of a group, either as clan or as people living in the same locality. In this case, the community is the community of people. The community serves in man as in the capacity of duality. Hence the individual is still responsible for his/her actions. The Igbo say that, *isi kota ebu, ka o ga agba*- the head that scatters the swap’s nest has its head stunk. This means that the good and bad conduct of an individual is treated and assessed at the individual basis and not at the collective group. According to Nwogu, part of the perception of group identity is the recognition that the achievement of one person leads to the improved level of existence of the community, at the same time as the crime of one person can lead to abomination and the destruction and suffering of the town. It is this sense of corporateness that gives consistency to what should have been contradictory in some Igbo behaviour. There is, for example, the paradox of independence and yet mass support of individuals observed (Nwogu: 28).

Similarly, Okere says that, beyond the nuclear, but within the extended family, cousins and more distant relations are referred to as brothers and sisters and special rights and obligations accrue- taking care especially of children, widows and orphans and taking corporate responsibility on behalf of all members. The individual lives and moves within this orbit of solidarity. This solidarity continues in diminishing degrees towards the exterior peripheries of consanguinity, but it remains vibrant within the limits of the village-group or town (Okere, T, 1996:160).

The pre-fix Umu, the children of, attaching to hundreds of place names in *Igboland-Urnuonyike, Umukabia, Umuchima, Umuelemai, Umuleri*- demonstrates the important role of kinship in defining the Igbo person’s self understanding. He says, it makes a statement of corporate solidarity based on blood relationship even when some sub-groups are known to be relatively new immigrants. It also makes this statement of solidarity within the geographical

ancestral land shared by these villages, which is a piece of land consecrated and bequeathed by the ancestors, and ruled and protected by the earth deity, which thus confers on this solidarity a quasi-religious character. It is this convergence of blood and soil which creates and supports the living space and the network of relationships where the onwe/self sees itself as part of a community and this community as a constituent part of the self. This is why in this culture, the self is a congenitally communitarian self, incapable of being, existing and really unthinkable-except in the complex of relations of the community (Okere:160).

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

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

Akona Uche and the Praxis of Social Order

In a multidimensional society, a period in which contemporary scholars/scientists have described as a global world, in a situation where there are conflicts of interest, clash of cultures, loss of values, a society that must survive and retain its identity both personal and communal must apply in its maximum the faculty of *akonauche* in their discharge of program. *Akonauche* and the praxis of social order seeks to answer its lead question- what should be the attitude of individuals, the place and role of *akonauche* in this hyper-globalised world where what matters in a certain culture does not matter elsewhere. How can in this jet age, an individual maintains certain high values for him/herself and translate such into communal good? How do we excel in a world where there are extreme differences in ideology, understanding and desires, and where individual interest seems to be taken too much precedence than that of the community? How can an individual control and guide against its excesses for the sake of social harmony and order? According to Chinweizu, even while drowning in our present sea of anarchist individualism, we have to recognize the primacy of the group interest and do all we can to promote and defend the group interest and subordinate our personal interest to it. We must learn to pursue our personal interests only in ways that are consistent with and advance the Ndigbo group interest (Chinweizu, C, 2015: 45)

She further says that, in my view, our most dangerous problem is that of anarchist individualism. It needs to be identified, named and given special attention. Its pervasiveness is shown by this generation's fondness for the Ikenga concept and its statuette emblem. Ikenga, we must realize, is by its nature a totally self-centred and individualistic spirit. It is not concerned at all with the interest of society. Which is why its predominance makes it an anarchist force. In fact, it is fair to say that *Ndigbo* are dying from the Ikenga spirit run amok. This Ikenga-anarchism is a cultural problem and requires a cultural cure (Chinweizu: 45).

From the above quotation, one sees the scholar's worry. Her worry is not that the individual has no power to legislate for him/herself certain laws and ideas that guide its actions and deeds, but she is in a way appealing to the individual to carry its communal interest alongside with

theirs. The individual can only attain to this objective level with the help and application of *akonauche* in its dealings. This Nwoga explains when he says, it is important to note here that the Igbo do make a distinction between different kinds of intelligence. Some tortoise stories are used to show the difference between wisdom, and cleverness “*akonauche*” which are praise worthy on the one hand, and on the other trickery and treachery *aghugho* which deserve punishment as over cleverness (Nwoga:49).

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

Conclusion

The Igbo person is principally an Identity. The reflective pronouns-oneself, himself, herself, myself, yourself, are not merely compliments to emphasize statement but they are based on the pronoun, self, which a dictionary goes into great strains to define as an identical person, personality, ego: a side of one’s personality: what one is: personality: identity. When the Igbo person uses *onwe m*, he/she is dealing not in imagery but in primary statement of reality. For the Igbo, it is this identity that is made manifest in the biological, social and religious activities in which the individual engages or in which he/she is involved. According to Nwoga, that identity has a reality of its own which has characteristics that cohere to it. The biological processes are essential to the person. He/she has to eat and drink and keep the body from harm. Religious activities invigorate the person, supplying him with help from deities and unseen external forces and also protecting the person from dangerous activities of spirits. But though the person is dependent on these activities, they do not define the person. There is still the person whose valour is aided and abetted but not subsumed under these other activities. That is the identity that sickens and /or strengthens to determine the status of the person (Nwoga: 46).

Okere agrees with Nwoga that the *onwe* is one basic entity that defines the person. It is the basic unit of other experience. Yet it is indefinable but known through *akonauche*. In this regard, Okere says, It is not easy to figure out the complex relationship between these elements and the *Onwe*, or with each other. Cumulatively however they make up, not *Onwe* itself, but the sum total of all the functions and actions attributed to *Onwe*. And if any new functions or activities are ever found, they will still be attributable to *Onwe*. This goes to point out that *Onwe* is neither defined nor definable, but remains essentially the ultimate subject of all attributions. One can distinguish, but cannot separate, these functions, qualities and actions from their subject of attribution. Neither can this subject be reduced to any one of them or any combination of them. The self/*Onwe* is neither this nor that attribution, but is rather the sovereign and ultimate proprietor of all attributions of the individual. The *onwe* is not just *onwe* of nothing, it is *onwe* of something. The Igbo say, *onwe m*, at this point, it becomes epistemological because, the individual is conscious and knowledgeable of self. The knowledge of the *onwe*, its functions and existence, vicissitudes and desires are arrived at and informed by its *akonauche*. Okere opines, it is the *Mmuo* in man that is responsible for the following activities without which the idea of *Onwe*/Self could neither emerge nor be sustained: (I) *Uche, Iche echiche*—Thinking, considering, reflecting with some anxiety over one’s lot. *Chebara ya echiche*, think it over. *Icheedi gini*, what is it you are ruminating over? *Uche awaala ya abuo*, His thought is split into branches, he is in doubt or he is full of thoughts.

(2) *mi eruru*—to reflect deeply, usually on some sad, *sombre*, tragic subject. *Eru m i.iwa rn*—I am reflecting on my world (lot), my bad luck, fortune, destiny, comprehend, to appreciate the full implications of. *Ighotala ihe m n'agwa gi?* Do you understand what I am telling you? The image suggests that understanding amounts to getting a firm grip on a rather slippery object or getting some hold on a complex and confusing mass. (3) *Ako*—Cleverness, Wisdom, Prudence. *Onwere ako* -is the prudent one. *Nwaevula-ako* is the wise, little ram of folk-tales who outwits the notoriously clever tortoise (Okere: 153).

According to *Ohia*, in Igbo epistemic world view, concepts such as *Ako* (wisdom or moral knowledge) *amamihe* (dispositional or intelligence) and *uche* (thought or thinking) make up the epistemic circle which in turn expresses the ideas of knowledge as continuous (Ohia, P. 2006:128).

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

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

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