
THE CONCEPT OF CHI IN THE IGBO PHILOSOPHY OF THE PERSON

Emmanuel Nweke Okafor
Siam University, Thailand

ABSTRACT

In African philosophy and cultural studies, there have been many debates concerning the concept of the human person. Many earlier examinations of African thought by European academics have emphasized the merely communal nature of the African person. Yet in traditional African thought there is also a tension between this communalism and a recognition of individuality which relates to the dignity of the human being as created by God. This concept of life of the individual is called “Chi”. This paper investigates the seemingly complex concept of the human person, not from the Western perspective, but from an African perspective, particularly the Igbo perspective. Because the individual and his/her society share an inseparable symbiotic relationship, this paper aims to show how such a concept can lead to a better understanding of the balances between individual life, with the communal relationships of one’s culture and one’s environment. This balance is a weak spot in much of Western thought.

Keywords: Igbo Philosophy, Individuality, Chi, Communalism

INTRODUCTION

A human being, according to the Igbo perspective, is a unique being to be understood first, as existing individually, and second, as a collective being existing communally. Human life is seen as man's greatest asset in the Igbo concept of the human person, and this is projected in the meaning of the names they use to portray the significance and the value of life in their belief system. Names like: *Ndubuisi*, (Life is Supreme), *Ndukaku*, (Life is greater than wealth), *Nduka*, (Life is greatest). This life-centeredness of the Igbo concept of the human person does not introduce individualism into the Igbo perspective of human life. Rather, it emphasizes the importance of human life in his relationship with one another. Therefore, the concept of the human person in the Igbo perspective is viewed better in his relationship with God his creator and other spiritual beings, and his fellow human beings whom he lives within the community.

The concept of the human person has been a subject of much debate. Dwelling on the concepts in this contemporary time, it is not to eradicate or abolish earlier notions of the concept of the human being, rather, to have an introspective view on the significance of the human person among the community he lives in. This will be done by considering the development of man in connection with his community from prehistoric times, down to contemporary times. The concept of the human being needs to be studied through the theory of 'communalism' and its historical development. While this work is limited basically to the African view of human beings, but more restrictedly, to the Igbo concept of a human being, the problem of the definition of the human being in relation to his community is of universal relevance. But yet the idea of the human being as a member of the community needs to be balanced by the concept of the individual which is often overlooked in African philosophy. This individual life-force is characterized in Igbo philosophy as "Chi."

THE IGBO CONCEPT OF HUMAN BEING (A PERSON)

Earlier in history, the 'God-Man' and 'Man-World' association was the chief way to give definition to the human being. This approach

focused fundamentally on man's relationship with God. However, with Descartes' idea of "Cogito ergo sum", man became aware that he could be the ground and basis of his own self-meaning and philosophizing.¹ This was aided by the fast growth of social sciences such as sociology, psychology, and cultural anthropology. Within these disciplines, man became central and remained in the spotlight. Thus, Peter Gay has it that, "Man is free, the master of his fortune, not chained to his place in a universal hierarchy but capable of all things."²

From an African perspective, the concept of the human person differs in so many ways from the Western views. For European outsiders like Leopold Senghor, the *Homo-Afrikanus* was a being considered as a being, more emotional than rational. This was to suggest that emotion is "black" while reason is Greek.³ Thus, for him the African person is only a participatory being; otherwise, he/she would lose his/her personhood.⁴ For Nkrumah, *consciencism* is the principle of egalitarianism and the view that man is an end, not the means.⁵

However, the history of man and his origination, different eras of human existence, vary in terms of intellectual benefits and ideologies. This is traceable from medieval times to modern times in which man's interests ranged from philosophy to technological development. Despite those advancements, some concepts barely change, such as knowledge, love, creativity, beauty, and realization of morals; the significant and ultimate goals of humanity. Man through self-searching cannot understand himself/herself; rather, man's work, lifestyle, qualities, and personality are used to describe him or her. To understand effectively the origination of man, certain philosophies deserve to be more deeply examined.

The being called human has not been completely examined and has posed great difficulty. This is partly because unlike pure science, philosophy does not essentially build on itself, instead it changes, constantly propagating new views or new ideologies. It is speculative and obtained by a continuous and high level of meditation. Unlike a scientist who easily passes on his innovations, a philosopher does not have that ability. The best he or she could do is to encourage others to perceive things

the way he or she does; he or she is often suggestive and not persuasive.

However, the understanding of man as the climax of God's creation gives uniqueness to the human person in Igbo spirituality. Therefore, any anthropological study centering on man is progress towards an enhanced comprehension of the mysteries of human existence. This makes the way for the Igbo world because there is something in an Igbo man which is beyond the psychological world.⁶ In this regard, Ezedike suggests that:

Another important aspect of Igbo life view is the unity of life as the centre of cohesion and solidarity. By this, we mean a relationship of being, and life between each individual and his descendants, his family, his brothers and his sisters in the village, his antecedents and also with God, the ultimate source of life. One can say that unity of life is the vital link which unites vertically and horizontally the living and the departed; it is the life-giving principle which is found in them all. It results from communion or participation in the same reality, the same vital principle which unites a number of beings with one another.⁷

Currently, theologians have paid attention to theism as the foundation and the only concept that matters. Fascinatingly, not even science in all its discoveries has been able to give a generally accepted view of man. Occasionally, scientists in their efforts to explain man, leaves the whole subject matter ever confusing, showing the inability of science or other fields of study to elucidate man's nature, origin or final fate. In this work, it is necessary to understand effectively Igbo people's culture and their spiritual facet in understanding the human person as a whole. Once decoded or examined meticulously using their results, objectives, properties, mechanics, and differences, then can the mystery-man be unraveled. To this effect, Ezedike argues that:

From the ancient tradition of Igbo humanism and their metaphysics comes the life view of the people. For them, life is a gift, Chinyelu (Gift from God). Because it is from God (Chinwendu), it is a mystery. It is to be lived to the fullest because it is a gift from God. The Igbo accepts the totality of life, both joy, and suffering, for to live is to know conflict and to experience the tension of being pulled in different directions by many forces. Yet these tensions are good, reflecting a fundamental acceptance by the people. Life is a gift from God, and from this belief, everything else follows and develops.⁸

In earlier times, man was understood through his association with God. Consequently, man's behavior was in harmony with order set by God and his commandments given through his various prophets. This is still present in the Igbo cosmology since everything was viewed from the point of its connection with God and human interactions with other spiritual beings. Based on the religious assumption, the root of this notion is the Christian Holy Bible, which claims that the human being is "Created in the image and likeness of God."⁹ Being the zenith of creation, God gave authority to man over every other created things following the biblical version. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the mission of man on earth is to love God, serve him in this world and to be with him in the world to come.

From this religious perspective, the study of man is mostly seen as unimaginable or impracticable, but when examined closely, one is forced to conclude that it is actually a possibility. Man is a religious being, seeking absolution from sins and guilt. Thus, from the religious angle, the human nature becomes not only co-existent with other human persons but also co-existent with another personal "thou" that is, the person of the Absolute.¹⁰ Thus it is believed that once a person dies, the soul goes back to *Chukwu* (the God). Olisa puts it more clearly as he submitted that:

We Igbo, living in this part all believe that inside the body of every man is a soul, which we call Nkpuluobi and that without this, a man cannot see or touch, but a thing which they can feel. It is without form, or substance such as man or animal has and we believe that, all souls are of one kind, and that each person has not more than one soul.¹¹

This point buttresses the central objective of the Igbo cosmology, yet from the traditional perspective. Man is by nature a social being existing with males and females of different ages, sizes, not excluding races and tribes. Here, one sees again the power of communalism in the Igbo system of living. This is expressed in the famous Igbo proverb, ‘Otu osisi anaghi emebe ohia’ (a tree does not make a forest). In the Igbo cosmology, this remains outstanding for whatever one does, considering the positive effects it will be to the entire community. The human person, therefore, is geared towards the concordant growth and development of that society.¹² The concept of a person is vital in Nyerere’s idea as he describes “Ujamaa villages” as people who are socially linked.¹³ Maquet identifies the human person in Africa as discovering one’s being in his/her kin, lineage, and ancestors, marrying many wives, existing for others, and being in harmony with nature.¹⁴

In these analyses, the communalistic aspect of Igbo cosmology and the supremacy of the human person in the human-divine interactions remain undeniable. A person, therefore, becomes significant only when he has been recognized and accepted by the community. Spirituality is centered on the personality of the African, and certainly points to the ability to embrace the life of others and their concerns. Senghor describes the African way of life as “A community society”, where more stress is put on the group than on the individual. This quality means that an individual cannot organize his life without the influence of his family, village or clan.¹⁵ Individual autonomy is thus dependent on the community such that it is said that the individual exists because the community exists. To this, Ezedike argues that:

By this, we mean a relationship of being and life between each individual and his descendants, his family, his brothers and his sisters in the village, his antecedents and also with God, the ultimate source of life. One can say that unity of life is the vital link which unites vertically and horizontally the living and the departed; it is the life-giving principle which is found in them all. It results from communion or participation in the same reality, the same vital principle which unites a number of beings with one another.¹⁶

In a society like this, an individual exists both for himself and others because he is completely dependent on the forces upholding the community for his development and contribution. Thus in the words of Senghor: “The member of the community society claims his autonomy to affirm himself as a being but feels and thinks that he can develop his potential, his originality, only in and by society, in union with all other men.”¹⁷ So, it can be said that the personality of an African, hinges on community spirituality and manifests in the self-surrender of the “I” to the “We”.

Hence, for the Igbo, the human person is so cherished and connected, such that the process through which a person is born is communally valued and honored. This tends to spot the birth of the Igbo regard for their lineage as a great contributory aspect in their spirituality and value system, such as the marriage system. The Igbo consideration of marriage is as sacred as it is an honorable thing to do. Hence, the polygamous way of marriage hints at the Igbo’s reverence for the human power of procreation. According to Munonye, a woman who could not bear children becomes a big problem. Thus, he opined that “We could never call her wife until she has produced children for the family; for what use is a kolanut tree if it fails to bear fruit?”¹⁸ This also echoed the expression of Nwapa on Igbo and the human person. In her novel *Idu*, she presented the case of a woman who was ill-fated because she could not give birth a child for the community.¹⁹ It is therefore pertinent to observe

that these religious and ritual observations are aimed at: the preservation of human life through procreation²⁰ and the Igbo cosmology which is great life-affirming. In line with this belief, Olupona summarized the concept of a human person among the Igbo this way: “When a person wears an amulet or sits on a divine throne, divine power is brought into spatial-temporal connection with that person.”²¹

The Igbo concept of human person has a firm religious foundation and it is knotted with the concept of ‘*Chi*’, “The divine spirit that animates human beings.”²² It is this ‘*Chi*’ that is the fulcrum borne in mind by the Igbo man in his spiritual dealings; as nothing is done without allusion to one’s *Chi*. For Madu, “Every life is unique in a significant way and is subject to series of unforeseeable hazards and unexpected rewards all mapped out by the *Chi*.”²³ For Ekennia, ‘*Chi*’ is the greatest component in comprehending the concept of a person. The idea of ‘*Chi*’ according to Ekennia, “Is a unique life force, which each person possesses. No two persons have the same ‘*Chi*’. It is regarded as the Igbo principle of individualization [...] each person is unique and irreplaceable.”²⁴ In line with this position, Ojike echoed that “No one’s *Chi* is like another because no two persons are identical.”²⁵ The Igbo then has it that, ‘*Onyena Chi ya*’ (each with his own *Chi*). The Spirituality of most African communities fundamentally centers on the belief and worship of the Supreme Being called God, belief in the lesser deities, belief in the ancestors and belief in the after-life.

CHI AS THE PRINCIPLE OF A PERSON

Chi is a unique personal life-force that is different in each person. Each person possesses his *chi*, believed to be the spiritual force that accompanies the life journey of the individual. According to Ekennia:

Chi gives each person infinite possibilities to realize himself in the community and this personalized inner force in each individual is always in harmony with the person. When the person acquires mastery of himself or has attained certain

self-knowledge, he examines the inner force and becomes fully in control of any situation. It is at this point that the Igbo's say "Onye kwe, chi ya ekwe."²⁶

Thus, the Igbo person regards his chi as the explanatory principle for his success and failures in life. Even though the Igbo person can have some control over his 'chi', there is an aspect of determinism in his life usually manifested when the person records failures in his life despite his determined efforts. He sees himself as '*onye chi ojoo*' (an unlucky man). While on the other hand, he is seen as '*onye chi oma*' (a lucky one with good chi).²⁷ Religiously speaking, therefore, the Igbos are united by their belief in one God (Chukwu) and the spirits and ancestors. Their belief in God is responsible for their inseparable relationship with God and the members of the community. This relationship also extends to non-Igbos. According to Mozia:

Each individual has a unique bond with God because he possesses his unique 'chi', the guiding spirit which assists him to make such a relationship possible... consequently, his religious commitment to this one God creates a personal bond between him and other members of the human community. But because of the special ontological dimension of solidarity with the members of the 'umunna community', which includes the ancestors, he feels himself specially bond to this community. From the religious point of view, he believes that God is responsible for creating such an ontological bond and consequently, he feels religiously committed in a particular way to this community.²⁸

Chi is responsible for human existence which is given. Existence is one of the primary meanings of *mmadu* (a person). Arazu would say that: "The word *mmadu* comes from two Igbo words, '*mma*' which means 'goodness' and '*du*' which means 'exist'. These words were first pronounced by God (Chukwu) when He looked at the world that He has made and said, '*mmadu*' meaning 'let goodness exist.'²⁹ The term *mmadu*

distinguishes the human species from other beings. It is often used in contrast to ‘*mmuo*’ (spirit) which are the invincible counterparts of humans. The Igbo refers to both of them as persons, that is, spiritual persons and human persons (*ndi mmadu na ndi mmuo*). The only difference is that the spirits are invincible and are exceedingly more powerful.³⁰ *Mmadu* is the main protagonist in the drama of life while the spirits are the moderators. In the Igbo thought system, *mmadu* refers to the human person, irrespective of his age, sex, and status.³¹

Consequently, a person (*mmadu*) lives in the visible realm of nature (*uwa*), an idea made clear when one says that *mmadu* is at the head of things or controls affairs, that is, *mmadubuisi*. The idea is also stressed in the Igbo saying *maduka* (the human person is a superior creature), *mmadubundu* (the human person is life). *Ndu* is the active principle of life, sustaining all existence and also implies being alive and active. The meaning of the word *ndu* as an active principle sustaining all existence is succinctly highlighted in the word *maduka* demonstrating “man’s supremacy and primacy in the created order.”³² This concept clearly portrays the material and immaterial part of a human person in Igbo society.

THE MATERIAL AND IMMATERIAL PART OF A PERSON

Body (*Ahu*) is the Igbo term that stands for the material aspect of a man. The term has different senses. First, it designates the bodily dimension called flesh.³³ In that context, it can mean the abstract expression of the living being without the soul. Secondly, *ahu* points to the whole man. And there are expressions like, ‘*ahu gi kwanu?*’, meaning ‘how is your body?’³⁴ Generally, the term *ahu* means the material body as perceptible to the senses and located in space. *Ahu* is thus “The whole of man filled with energy that may be hurt or helped by forces within man and his environment.”³⁵ Ibeh on his submission argues that:

The general belief of the Igbos of Nigeria is Primarily based on their understanding of their world and the interaction of things therein as caused... The world of man and the world of the spiritual (ancestral) world is in a constant causal relationship that the activity of one affects the other.³⁶

Man is composed of body and soul. According to Ede, the body is *ahu* but the soul has no general term among the Igbos. Among the three terms that he identified, *Mkpuruobi*, *Chi* and *Muo*. *Muo* was the most suitable that conveys the idea of the soul. This is so because immortality suggests that which is unseen as against that which is seen. Thus every activity that is not of the body must be from the soul.³⁷ Metu dealt on four different principles in discussing the immaterial aspect of man; *Obi*, *Chi*, *Eke*, and *Mmuo*. For him, “Obi is a man’s life-force, the animating principle which links man with other life forces in the universe. It is also the seat of affection and volition. *Chi* is the destiny spirit believed to be the emanation of the creator in man. *Eke* is the ancestral guardian which links him to the family. *Mmuo* is the spirit that comes from God and goes back at death.”³⁸ For Nwala, “Man is composed of body (*ahu*), soul (*mkpuruobi*) and spirit (*mmuo*). *Mkpuruobi* is the location of the life-giving force, *ndu*. *Mmuo* incorporates the elements of spirit, intelligence, feeling, emotion, conscience. It has no shape or form.”³⁹ For Madu, the immaterial does not stop at *mkpuruobi* and *mmuo* but includes *obi* which is the seat of emotion. *Mmuo* (ghost) is attributed with the ability of separate existence.⁴⁰ From a deliberation of the three classes of traditional medical practitioners (*Dibia*) in Igbo land, Ukaegbu put forward the idea of the tripartite nature: “*Dibia Ogwu* - Physical - Body (*ahu*), *Dibia Afa* - Psychological - Mind (*obi* and *uche*), *Dibia Aja* - Spiritualist - Soul/Spirit (*mmuo*).”⁴¹ In the position of Okoye:

The Igbo believe that the *Ahu* and *Mmuo* constitute one whole, called the self. This necessarily entails that the Igbo maintains a dualistic not a tripartite conception of the self. For the Igbo people, the *ahu* self is made up of two entities

namely: the spiritual and the physical as in the *Mmuo* and *Mmadu* respectively.⁴²

These different functions point to different aspects of the human person. All these considerations point to the fact that *Muo* or *Mmuo* (spirit) refers to something immaterial. Fundamentally, it designates the invisible spirit world – *ala mmuo* or *ndi mmuo* as different from *ala mmadu* (the visible world).⁴³ Thus the meaning of *mmuo* depends on its use. For Nwala, it “Incorporates the element of spirit, intelligence, feeling, emotion and consciousness.”⁴⁴

The Igbo people always have a desire to nurture a closeness and long-lasting relationship with God, this they tend to attain through pouring oblations and offering sacrifices to the ancestral spirits believing that good things come from him alone, they often offer this sacrifices with a strong belief that it will bring favors from the gods. Therefore, the completeness of a person is when he or she is in communication with God and the community. This completeness is seen in his or her constant sacrifices to God.

There has been a disagreement among the Igbo scholars regarding how the Igbo people offer sacrifices to their gods. Some Igbo scholars think that humans do not offer their sacrifices directly to God, while others insinuate that Igbo people hardly ever sacrifice to God directly. The respectful follower of the traditional religion believes that their sacrifice is a perfect way of glorifying God but hardly do they offer this sacrifice directly to God. Rather, they do that through a spirit who will help carry their sacrifice to God. For Arinze, “Igbo people offer sacrifices to God because of four main reasons which include: reparations, sacrifice to avert the attacks of the unknown spirit, solicitations, and appreciation.”⁴⁵ The idea of sacrifice connects the living and the dead in Igbo society.

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

There is an African (Congo) proverb that says, “The human being is a social product; he is what he eats, learns, hears, sees, feels, and

lives”. There is another from the Ashanti that says, “One person may kill an elephant, but the whole community may share it”. Following the above African proverbs, they have already inculcated communalism into the essentials of their culture. The Igbo exemplifies it in their saying, “Bunu bunu ibu anyi danda”, meaning, “It is with the cooperation of other ants (danda) that the ants lift heavy load”. *Danda* is the ant known as the “Working Ant”, or the “Working Bee”. They are known for unitedly moving and dragging loads of food into their holes together. This comparison is brought into the Igbo community to inculcate the spirit of unity; living and working together. Therefore, the Igbo society is characterized by their manner of working and living together, known as ‘*Ofu Obi*’, ‘One Heart’. Should this principle of ‘*Ofu Obi*’ be introduced into other cultures, our places of work and learning, it will go a long way to boost the morality of the society it has touched. ‘*Ofu Obi*’ does not involve perpetrating evil together, rather it goes in the positive sense of fighting evil, maintaining peace, protecting lives and properties, keeping good legacies for the living and the yet unborn, and keeping to the rules of the community; preserving posterity. If this is to be maintained and well observed in the society, it will ensure wonderful benefits to both the individuals and the society, and incur blessings from the spiritual beings to whom they have recourse to.

The tradition of the Igbos (*Omenala*) is reflected in their daily lives and existence, and it is in this, that their spirituality is encapsulated. The mind and soul are incorporated into the body to signify that somebody is fully alive. At death, however, the mind and the soul leave the body and undergo a process of transformation in which the individual becomes a spirit person, ‘*onye mmuo*’. He/she adopts a ‘nonphysical body’ because he/she is still in communication with the corporeal world. The fact that the soul and mind are immaterial, presupposes the incorruptibility and immortality of man, and it is in this, that the Igbo spirituality lies.

Besides, it is pertinent to highlight and observe critically the role of *chi*, the protector/ personal god in Igbo traditional religion, which the Igbo strongly believed that (*chi*) accounts for the success or failure of a

person in life, his/her progress and decline in life as he/she toils day after day. At the center of this belief lies an enormous effort to understand what destiny is all about and an inquiry into the choice of one's destiny. This phenomenon has sparked much debate amongst Igbo Scholars. Some see destiny as a pre decision made by the individual and concurrently with his/her *chi* before birth which he/she is made to be oblivious of as he/she wakes in the real world; others have it that *chi* being the personal god of a particular individual is being created with that individual and is assigned with the responsibility of guiding and protecting the destiny of that individual. Hence, the function of the *chi* is a person's guardian spirit which guards and directs the individual to follow the path that leads to his destiny. The consequences of going against one's destiny is disastrous. the question arises whether the individual has nothing to contribute in the fulfillment of his/her destiny when his/her life has already been orchestrated and placed in the care of his/her *chi*? Does this not go a long way to contradict the belief of the Igbos that has it that hard work has no limit in the self-actualization and accomplishment of a person in the socio-cultural Igbo society? This paper argues that though the Igbo believe system emphasizes the power of community but the notion of *chi* has made it very clear that such a community can only be recognized when an individual is fully realized. This can be seen to reverse the popular notion "I am because we are" to "we are because I am". Without the 'me' (the individual), there will be no "us". This is the prominent point that the concept of '*chi*' addresses which is often ignored by some African scholars.

The Igbo concept of *chi* is a realistic concept and is lived out in an individual's everyday life and experiences within the community. Moreover, it is an effectual principle that has an ongoing and long lasting effect on the individual and whatever he/she stands for. The notion of *chi* in Igbo traditional religion plays a very important role as regards interpretation of a person's behavior and achievements in life. In order to understand life and comprehend its meaning it would be difficult if the recourse to *chi* is taken for granted. Thus, the Igbo 'principle

of individuation' is reckoned in the manner whereby *chi* controls the destiny of the individual and becomes responsible for his/her success or doom in life. Hence no two persons have the same *chi*, each person's *chi* individuates him/her from the others. An important part revealed as regards to *chi* affirms an essential communion between the individual, his/her *chi*, the choice he/she makes of his/her destiny and the way his /her goals are actualized in life. This had nothing to do with the community but the individual. However, the question still remains of who is actively responsible for the choice of this destiny which directs the self-actualization and accomplishment of an individual? Thus, identity is a difference that is peculiar to a person which distinguishes an individual as a unique being from other persons in the community. Therefore it follows that identity is a constant factor in the discovery of one's self. The *chi* helps the individual in the acknowledgment of himself or herself, in doing what is expected of him/her in the community. Thus without this individuality, the community becomes dead or inactive. It is rather *chi* that influences and creates an impact on the sharpening and construction of the individual not the community.

Furthermore, describing other aspects of Igbo thought in *chi* most conveniently in its relation to identity construction and self-actualization in the Igbo world holds some elements of absolute which also suggests that Igbo community is simply a place to actualize the self. The possibility is that one's *chi* might resist an individual points to the necessity for the individual's to follow his/her *chi*. This suggests the independent nature of *chi* and in its mode of operation which the community has no control over. This also means that one's *chi* always supports him/her once the individual is determined to succeed. The community would have a minor contribution. Thus, the role of *chi* is very significant in the life of the individual. It requires a 'handing over' ceremony which is performed for every individual personally and separately. Immediately the choice has been made and the child born, his destiny that has been chosen would be guided by his *chi* throughout his life time and which cannot be altered by the community, hence, a person's destiny is permanent so to say and cannot be changed.

However, to understand well the relationship between *chi* and individual fulfillment in Igbo community, there is the need to consider other self-actualization indicators in the Igbo world view with greater reference to the family and the society. There is also an understanding that the existence of an individual in the Igbo society is rooted in the family, the kindred, the village, the society in which he lives in, the dead, the living dead (ancestors) and the unborn. As one progresses in life he/she struggles towards the realization of one's self-worth. This individual self-worth is made manifest in the community as he or she shares with the other people in the community. With this, some Igbo scholars agree strongly with the idea that there is a special influence by the community in the life of an individual living in a given community in the quest for self-realization and acquaintance. This individual self-actualization is accomplished through various means of dialogue and communication within the community which influences his/her belief system of which the *chi* concept plays an all-encompassing role. Thus, it can be argued that there is a deep principle of individuation inherent in Igbo thought process. This individuation is also present in many other African worlds with some little variations.

ENDNOTES

¹ Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in Elizabeth Haldane and G. Ross, Trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1931), 140-150.

² Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*. Vol. 2: (New York: Alfred, 1967), 266.

³ Leopold Senghor, *On African Socialism*, in Mercer Cook, Trans. (London: Pall Mall, 1964), 24.

⁴ Ibid. 74.

⁵ Chuka A. Okoye, *Onwe: An Inquiry into the Igbo Concept of the Self, Ogirisi* (A New Journal of African Studies Vol. 8, (2011): 51-66.

⁶ Okafor, F.C. *Africa at cross-roads* (New York: Vantage Press, 1974), 15.

⁷ Uzoma E. Ezedike, The Concept of Human Person in African Ontology: A Critical Reflection on the Igbo Notion of Man. *African Research Review* Vol.13, (April 2019): 131-137.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Francis Spellman, *Holy Bible* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company), Genesis 1:27.

¹⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 114.

¹¹ Olisa, M. S. Taboos in Igbo religion and society, *West African Religion*, Nsukka 2, (1972): 1-18.

¹² Keame Nkrumah, *Consciencism* (London: Panaf Books, 1974), 79.

¹³ Julius Nyerere, *Symposium on Africa* (Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College, 1960), 149.

¹⁴ Jacques Maquet, *Africanity, the Cultural Unity of Black Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972),3.

¹⁵ Battista Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology. Man: An Impossible Project?* In Myroslaw A. Cizdyn, Trans. (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1985), 1-5.

¹⁶ Ezedike, *The Concept of Human Person in African Ontology*, 131-137.

¹⁷ Senghor, *On African Socialism*, 1-5.

¹⁸ John Munonye, *Obi* (London: Heinemann, 1987), 99.

¹⁹ Flora Nwapa, *Idu* (London: Heinemann, 1987), 34-41.

²⁰ Stephen. N. Ezeanya, *The Dignity of Man in the Traditional Religion of Africa* (Nsukka: unpublished article, 1976), 6.

²¹ Jacob K. Olupona, *Beyond Primitivism. Indigenous Religious Tradition and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 32.

²² Ralph, O. Madu, *Problem of Meaning in Philosophy and Theology: The Hermeneutic Solution* (Academic Paper at the Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu Graduation Ceremony, 1995),33.

²³ Ibid. 34.

²⁴ Justin N. Ekennai, *Bio-Medical Ethics* (Owerri: Barloz Publishers Inc., 2003), 27.

²⁵ M. Ojike, *My Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1955), 183.

²⁶ Justin N. Ekennai, *Bio-Medical Ethics* (Owerri: Barloz Publishers, 2000), 154.

²⁷ M. I. Mozia, *Solidarity in the Church and Solidarity among the Igbos- An Anthropologico-theological Study* (Rome: Tipografica, 1982), 184.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ R.A. Arazu, 'A Cultural Model for a Christian Prayer' In *African Christian Spirituality* (New York: Orbis Books, 1980), 114.

³⁰ Ikenga Metu, *African Religion in Western Conceptual Scheme, The Problem of Interpretation* (Onitsha: IMICO Publishers, 1991), 109.

- ³¹ Uzodinma Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy* (Lagos: Literamed Publications, 1985), 41-42.
- ³² Ibid. 43-44.
- ³³ E.M.P. Edeh, *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985), 98.
- ³⁴ Ralph O. Madu, *African Symbols, Proverbs and Myths, the hermeneutics of destiny* (New York: Peterlang Publishing Incorporation, 1992), 160.
- ³⁵ Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy*, 42-43.
- ³⁶ Ibeh, *The Nature of Igbo Society* (Awka: Free Press Ltd., 1995), 75.
- ³⁷ Edeh, *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics*, 80-82.
- ³⁸ Metu, *African Religion in Western Conceptual Scheme, The Problem of Interpretation*, 110-111.
- ³⁹ Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy*, 42-43.
- ⁴⁰ Madu, *African Symbols, Proverbs and Myths, the hermeneutics of destiny*, 160-162.
- ⁴¹ J. O. Ukaegbu, *Unpublished Lectures on Anthropology* (Enugu: Bigard Press, 1992),
- ⁴² Okoye, *Onwe: An Inquiry into the Igbo Concept of the Self, Ogirisi*, (2011): 51-66.
- ⁴³ Madu, *African Symbols, Proverbs and Myths, the hermeneutics of destiny*, 166.
- ⁴⁴ Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy*, 42.
- ⁴⁴ Francis Arinze, *Sacrifice in Igbo Traditional Religion* (Onitsha: St. Stephen's Press, 2008), 64.

REFERENCES

- Arazu, R.A. 'A Cultural Model for a Christian Prayer' In *African Christian Spirituality*. New York: Orbis Books, 1980.
- Arinze, Francis. *Sacrifice in Igbo Traditional Religion*. Onitsha: St. Stephen's Press, 2008.
- Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. In Elizabeth Haldane and G. Ross. (Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1931.
- Edeh, E.M.P. *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985.

- Ekennia, Justin. N. *African Modernity Crisis*. Benin, Nigeria: Barloz Publishers, 2000.
- Ekennia, Justin. N. *Bio-Medical Ethics*. Owerri: Barloz Publishers Inc., 2003.
- Ezeanya, Stephen. N. *The Dignity of Man in the Traditional Religion of Africa*. Nsukka: unpublished article, 1976.
- Ezedike Uzoma, E. *The Concept of Human Person in African Ontology: A Critical Reflection on the Igbo Notion of Man*. African Research Review Vol.13, (April 2019): 131-137.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967.
- Gay, Peter. *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*. Vol. 2: New York: Alfred, 1967.
- Ibeh. *The Nature of Igbo Society*. Awka: free Press Ltd., 1995.
- Madu, Ralph, O. *Problem of Meaning in Philosophy and Theology: The Hermeneutic Solution*. Academic Paper at the Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu Graduation Ceremony, 1995.
- Madu, Ralph, O. *African Symbols, Proverbs and Myths, the hermeneutics of destiny*. New York: Peterlang Publishing Incorporation, 1992.
- Maquet, Jacques. *Africanity, the Cultural Unity of Black Africa*. London: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Metu, Ikenga. *African Religion in Western Conceptual Scheme, The Problem of Interpretation*. Onitsha: IMICO Publishers, 1991.
- Mondin, Battista. *Philosophical Anthropology. Man: An Impossible Project?* Myrosław A. Cizdyn. (Trans.). Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1985.
- Mozia, M. I. *Solidarity in the Church and Solidarity among the Igbos- An Anthropologico-theological Study*. Rome: Tipografica, 1982.
- Munonye, John. *Obi*. London: Heinemann, 1987.
- Nkrumah, Keame. *Consciencism*. London: Panaf Books, 1974.

- Nwala, Uzodinma. *Igbo Philosophy*. Lagos: Literamed Publications, 1985.
- Nwapa, Flora. *Idu*. London: Heinemann, 1987.
- Nyerere, Julius. *Symposium on Africa*. Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College, 1960.
- Ojike, M. *My Africa*. London: Heinemann, 1955.
- Okafor, F.C. *Africa at cross-roads*. New York: Vantage Press, 1974.
- Okoye Chuka A. Onwe: *An Inquiry into the Igbo Concept of the Self. Ogirisi*. *A New Journal of African Studies* Vol. 8, (2011): 51-66.
- Olupona K. Jacob. *Beyond Primitivism. Indigenous Religious Tradition and Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Senghor, Leopold S. *On African Socialism*. Mercer Cook. (Trans.) London: Pall Mall, 1964.
- Spellman, Francis. *Holy Bible*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1963.
- Ukaegbu, J. O. *Unpublished Lectures on Anthropology*. Enugu: Bigard Press, 1992.