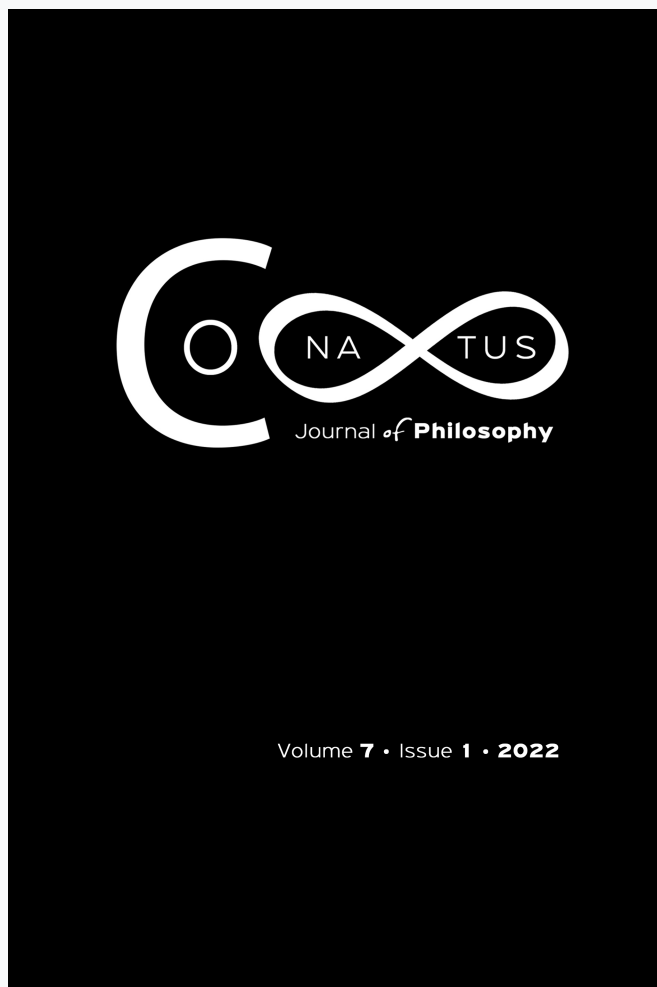


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*Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu*

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# An Igbo Understanding of the Human Being: A Philosophical Approach

**Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu**

*University of Nigeria, Nigeria*

*E-mail address: anayochukwujp@gmail.com*

*ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0465-5277>*

## **Abstract**

*The conception of the human being remains a philosophical controversial discourse among scholars to include Igbo extraction. The discourse has taken many dimensions describable as social, ontological, theologico-anthropological and even normative. Questions now follow: is the human being entirely a spiritual or physical being, or socio-political being, or even anthropological being? What differentiates his existence from the existence of other realities – be it physical or spiritual? It is in addressing these questions that this paper presents a socio-ontological conception of the human being held by Umuoka People which holds that the human being is Maadjvuru which interprets ‘Sustained-Survived/Surviving-Spirit.’ Doing this, the paper shall employ hermeneutical and phenomenological approaches to critically evaluate and undertake the discourse. The paper is expected to present more insights into the discourse by showing that the human being is a manifestation of the spirit, a concretized-spirit with complex physical and spiritual components whose existential experiences underpin his complex nature.*

**Keywords:** *Maadjvuru; Mmadu; Umuoka; Igbo; Africa; man; spirit*

## I. Introduction

There are series of theses from both Igbo and, generally, African and non-African scholars as to what man (human being) implies and signifies to the Igbo. These theses turn to discourse through various perspectives to include, social, theological, socio-ontological, theologico-anthropological, normative and even ancestral approaches. However, the influences that stem from the specific background, the social status, the cultural dispositions, the existential experiences and religion can explain the non-inclusiveness of many of the theses. Be that

as it may, a critical cross-examination of these hypotheses will show their non-inclusiveness.

It is thus against this backdrop that this research, which argues that the socio-ontological conception of man held by the Umuoka People, the, in the present day, Ojebe Ogene Clan in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria, stands an all-inclusive thesis. For them, the human being is *Maadjvuru*, which translates into ‘Sustained-Survived-Spirit’ or ‘SustainedSurviving-Spirit.’ This conception of the human being explains why he/she displays his/her nature as consisting of both virtue and vice.

Following the nature under which this discourse would be taken up, the research will apply analytical and linguistic hermeneutical tools, expository and phenomenological approaches underpinned in an ontological perspective, in order to critically evaluate and undertake the course. Ultimately, the research outcome will prove that the human being is only but a fragment of the Supreme Sustaining-Spirit, in whose sustainability man ontologically draws his own. It will also show that man is a complex being whose existential composites are large in number, and this is what might explain his mystery.

Finally, the research outcome will be divided into several segments to include: first, with regard to a literature review, to critically scrutinize hypotheses about what the human being could mean and imply, and by extension, what personality attributes could be ascribed, as a result, to the African. Second, an analysis and exposition of the term *mmadu* as the most appropriate term to describe what the human being could ever mean and imply and how it plays out in the existential tendencies of man. Third, how the Umuokan conception of the human being, regarding the meaning and implication of *mmadu*, describes the human being as an all-encompassing being whose existential quiddities underline its existential disposition, and as an ontologically ‘sustained-survived’ or ‘surviving-spirit.’ Fourth, an inclusive, phenomenological and linguistic hermeneutical elaboration of all the components of the human being in social and ontological undertones. Finally, a precise and succinct summary is provided of all that has been said in the research paper as a conclusion.

## II. The African (Igbo) conception of man

Man as a human being has been considered one of the most difficult ideas to conceptualize, analyze and even control, perhaps because of his complex nature and vigorous qualities, even though the Bible portrays him as the most precious and sacred being, not only because he possesses life, but also because he is made in the image and likeness of God. The Igbo term for human being is *mmadu*, and this term has been variously interpreted; whereas some interpretations convey alignments with the Biblical view, others maintain

that the term expresses only the actuality of existence, whilst others provide different explanations. However, the understanding of man among realities cannot be anything but imperative for man, who, although the weakest, is at the centre of the ontological experiences. Every being is considered as both important and influential at its different categorization of existence, but, at the same time, all aspects are in endless interaction of reciprocal nature, either in a positive or a negative sense.

Drawing from this consciousness, the Igbo would always religiously conceive of realities – be it in the visible or the invisible realm of existence. This is as a result of the all-encompassing conception of the Igbo worldview that is characterized by religion, ontological-man-centeredness, value and continuous interaction of all beings that reside at different existential spheres. Unlike the West, the Igbo views the universe in such a religious manner, that even evil is punishable by Nature itself.<sup>1</sup> Apparently, the African person is portrayed as the man who is so drawn to nature and who uses religion to reconcile himself with nature, having gained access to exploring it. Buttressing this point, in relation to the attitude of ‘being-with’ (African communitarian personality), Okolo insists that “‘being-with’ as characteristic of the African mode-of-being-in-the-world means also openness to nature in positive and sacred relationship.”<sup>2</sup> For the African person,

nature is sacred and mystifying. The African seeks harmony with it by sharing in its life, its spiritual and material blessings... the task of man is however to exploit nature and to the full, too.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, in this manner, any “damage to nature is a breach of Cosmic harmony and order which attracts penalties from the gods and when venerated, good fortune and blessings, material and spiritual, abound.”<sup>4</sup> This aligns with Onunwa’s position that “the primacy of man in relation to the rest of the world is due to his central position in the universe.”<sup>5</sup> Suffice it to say, then, that “humans are not seen as rulers of creation, but rather, as a central element

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<sup>1</sup> George Ohabuanyi Abah, and Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, “A Discourse on the Meaning and Cultural Implications of Ala to the Igbo,” *International Journal of Humanitas Theoreticus* 5, no 1 (2021): 201-205.

<sup>2</sup> Chukwudum Barnabas Okolo, *What Is To Be African? Essay on African Identity* (Enugu: Cecta, 1993), 21-22.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Udobata Onunwa, “Humanistic Basis for African Traditional Religious Theology and Ethics: A Challenge to the Church in Nigeria,” *Filosofia Theoretica: An African Journal of Invention and Ideas* 1, no. 1 (2011): 44.

of the system on which human impose a centripetal orientation.”<sup>6</sup> Man is, therefore, a being whose existence is defined as ontologically interrelational. As a result, this worldview conception addresses the issue of why many Igbo scholars in the process of interpreting man hold metaphysical approach, whilst others social, normative, ancestral approaches based on lineage, etc.; hence, man is an embodiment of *Matter* and *Spirit*.

For Iroegbu, man is a conglomeration of *ahu* which he sees as the essence of *mmadu-ness* in the purely physical perspective, *Uche* (this term also means mind, intellect) which is responsible for man’s ability “to reason, to dialogue reasonably, to do things in a way different from other beings with bodies, i.e., brutes,”<sup>7</sup> and *Mmuo* (Spirit), which he interprets in the Christian view as the ‘Soul’ and which he sees as “indestructible immortal element,”<sup>8</sup> eternant of a person’s personality, supra-empirical, and which survives death and travels back to “*Ala-mmuo*, the spirit-world, to sojourn with the ancestors. From there it will return... in reincarnation”<sup>9</sup> to this physical world. In line with Okolo’s position, Iroegbu insists that for the African, the characteristic “starting point of the definition of personality is not the individual, atomic or autonomous self, but the social, communal and relational self,”<sup>10</sup> noting that man and community are inseparable. In his words,

My identity is partly constituted by the community. What I am is partly what the community has made of me. I do not have the definition of my *self* pre-alably, a priori, or outside of community ties, obligations, care, love, rules, and custom and tradition (*Omenala*).<sup>11</sup>

Suffice it to say that for him, “to be a person (an African, Igbo person) is to be involved: creatively, albeit critically, yet constructively, with the community. Our definition of personality would, therefore, derive from the phrase: *Mu na ndi ozo*, I-with-others.”<sup>12</sup> Conclusively, he re-affirms that man is, internally, a composite of body, mind and spirit (soul) and, externally, a socio-communal being whose external characterizing properties express his internal composite.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>7</sup> Pantaleon Iroegbu, *Metaphysics: The Kpim of Philosophy* (Owerri: International Universities Press, 1995), 352.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 353.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 353.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 355.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 358.

Making it succinct, Nkrumah stresses that the characteristic principles of humanism and communitarianism that identify man in the African conception “arises from the fact that man is regarded in Africa as primarily a spiritual being, a being endowed originally with certain, inward dignity, integrity and value. This idea of the original value of man imposes duties of a socialist kind upon us. Herein lies the theoretical basis of African communalism.”<sup>13</sup> This infers that, for Nkrumah, man is understood as a dual entity containing both the physical and the spiritual existential aspects, but whose spiritual sphere is fundamental and primary. African existential identities – humanism and communitarianism – are ontological, hence the metaphysical approach to the African understanding of man. To understand man, thus, goes with a lot of duties and obligations towards dealing with man for he, essentially, is a spiritual being and there lies his dignity, integrity and sacredness as a being. In fact, for Ki-Zerbo, the emergence of ‘civilization’ with its principal tenets – ‘individualism, and privatization’ of the supposed-communal-properties signifies the emergence of evil – depersonalization and ‘decommunalization’ of the African person and community.<sup>14</sup> However, the reconciliation of the individual’s freedom and volition with the African communitarian personality, and to avert the possible cheat of the weak on the strong, is still in question.

For the Akan people of Ghana, even though a disagreement is, to some extent, observed on the sphere of nature, but not the existence of *Okra*, there are fundamentally five outstanding components of human person according to Kwasi Wiredu,<sup>15</sup> namely: *Nipadua* (Body), *Okra* (Soul-approximate or life-giving entity), *Sunsum* (that which gives a person’s personality – by interpretation, it could imply character – and, which for Gyekye, is Spirit), *Ntoro* (fatherly genes), *Mogya* (Motherly genes – which stands for the ghost that emerges after death). He emphatically describes the *Okra* as “the innermost self, the essence, of the individual person,”<sup>16</sup> “the individual’s life, for which reason it is referred to as *Okrateasefo*, that is, the living soul,”<sup>17</sup> “the embodiment and transmitter of the individual’s destiny [fate:

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<sup>13</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization* (London: Heinemann, 1964), 69.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Ki-Zerbo, *African Personality and the New African Society: Pan-Africanism Reconsidered* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 267-282.

<sup>15</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, “The Concept of Mind with Particular Reference to the Language and Thought of the Akans,” in *Contemporary Philosophy, vol. 5: African Philosophy*, ed. G. Floistad (Dordrecht: M. Nijhoff, 1987), 160-161.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

nkrabea],”<sup>18</sup> or the “spark of the Supreme Being [Onyame] in man.”<sup>19</sup> Through measuring Wiredu’s analysis in the Igbo thought, we can deduce that *Okra* is the ‘Christian Soul’ or the Igbo *Mmuo* or even *Chi* in the sense of *Akara-Aka* (Destiny). However, unfortunately, Wiredu would never agree that *Okra* would be translated into English as ‘Soul’ and perceived by the West as ‘Soul,’ as, for him, ‘Soul’ is

a purely immaterial entity that somehow inhabits the body. The *okra*, by contrast, is quasi-physical. It is not, of course, supposed to be straightforwardly physical, as it is believed not to be fully subject to spatial constraints. Nor is it perceivable by the naked eye. Nevertheless, in some ways it seems to be credited with para-physical properties.<sup>20</sup>

Going further to defend why he terms *Okra*, which stands for ‘soul-approximate,’ differs from Gyekye’s view, Wiredu insists that identifying *Okra* as ‘Soul’ is “quite definitely wrong,”<sup>21</sup> and, therefore, holds that as the life-giving entity the presence of *Okra* “in the body means life, and whose absence means death, and which also receives the individual’s destiny from God.”<sup>22</sup> For him, soul is entirely spiritual while *Okra* is almost physical and possesses para-physical attributes. Man is, thus, seen as a complicated being, an existent that has both natural and supernatural compositions. Regarding the issue of hereafter, Wiredu maintains the notion that Akan, just like many African peoples, conceive the ‘afterlife’ or ‘here-after’ itself in a quasi-material manner.<sup>23</sup>

However, for Gyekye, the Akan conceives man in terms of four metaphysical elements, namely, the Soul (*Okra*), which is the life-force and it influences breathing (the immaterial), the Body (*Honhom* or *Nipadua*), the Spirit (*Sunsum*) and, then, Thought (*Adwen*) which is the activity of the *Sunsum*.

By laying more of an emphasis on *Okra*, Gyekye insists that it is clearly explained, through the descriptions of it “as divine and as having an ante-

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>21</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 47.

<sup>22</sup> Wiredu, “The Concept of Mind,” 162.

<sup>23</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, “Death and the Afterlife in African Culture,” in *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*, 1, eds. Kwasi Wiredu, and Kwame Gyekye (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992), 139-140.

mundane existence with the Supreme Being.”<sup>24</sup> He insists that “the *okra* can be considered as the equivalent of the concept of the soul in other metaphysical systems. Hence, it is correct to translate *okra* into English as soul.”<sup>25</sup> For him, therefore, the *Okra* is ‘Soul-equivalent’ and entirely immaterial, not quasi-material as Wiredu holds, because following what Wiredu indicates is seen as running

counter to the belief of most Akan people in disembodied survival or life after death. For a crucial aspect of Akan metaphysics is the world of spirits [asamando], a world inhabited by the departed souls of ancestors.<sup>26</sup>

Apparently, Gyekye believes that with the *Okra* component, there is the possibility of survival after death through reincarnation. In other words,

from the point of view of the Akan metaphysics of the person and of the world in general, this seems to imply that a human being is not just an assemblage of flesh and bone, that he or she is a complex being who cannot be explained by some laws of physics used to explain inanimate things and that our world cannot be reduced to physics.<sup>27</sup>

According to this, it becomes clear that the Akan’s conception of a person is more metaphysical, rather than physical. This perception completely denies scientific approach with regard to the study of man, unlike what a number of European scholars, like Darwin, the Atomists, the Naturalists, psychologists, sociologists, etc., would propose. Man cannot be mechanically studied, for he is more than just materiality. However, the fact remains that the concept of *Okra*, as far as the composition of man is concerned, is indeed a critical and uneasy aspect to explain, as it sometimes is almost non-physical, it can conceptually survive death, being perceived as soul-approximate and as receptor of the individual’s destiny, yet it seen as almost physical, possessing para-physical attributes. Once more, there is a great confusion caused by the possibility of it being comparatively likened to the Igbo concept of *Chi*, which both receives man’s destiny and stands for the principle of individuation among men, but which is purely metaphysical!

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<sup>24</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 85.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 86

<sup>27</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 160-161.



Okere, regarding the Igbo conception of man, states that man is a composition of *Mmuo* (spirit), *Onwe* (Self), *Obi* (heart), *Chi* and then *Ahu* (Body). Through this, it becomes clear that the human person is more of spiritual constitution, and the combination of these different elements make him superior to the mere physical constitution. By this, the Igbo conceives man as a bond of ontological being whose personality is communal inclinations, hence he posits that “the self is never alone... never a pure, isolated individual,” rather “the self is a congenitally communitarian self.”<sup>28</sup> That is to say that the self is discovered in a community of interrelatedness or among other ‘selves;’ and reiterating this, Okere asserts:

Man is not just an individual, an island, left to himself and sufficient to himself, on his own. Man is essentially community. No one ever came to being as a bolt from the blues, like an oil bean seed falling from the sky, as our proverb says, ‘I am always we.’ We in the nuclear family, we in the extended family, we in the village and town, etc.<sup>29</sup>

Okere’s position portrays the ontological nature of man, the state in which man is essential conceived as a legion of forces of beings. His existence becomes meaningful and his desires easily achievable in the community. Both as individuals and as groups, people need the protective cover that community-life offers, if their lives are to have any meaning or significance; and the community is essentially present in order to help the individual achieve human social goals and aspirations. The African, more than any other people, understands this.<sup>30</sup> A man as an ‘I’ does not exist, but men as a ‘we’ in a community does, and this highlights Opoku’s position, that “a man is a man because of others, and life is when you are together, alone you are an animal.”<sup>31</sup> In this regard, the vitality of Malcolm X’s Letter from Mecca surfaces when it suggests that “when ‘I’ is replaced by ‘we’ even illness becomes wellness.”<sup>32</sup> This, thus accenuates Okoye’s position that man is essentially a constituent of the Soul and the Spirit (in the immaterial perspective), and the Body (in the material perspective).<sup>33</sup> The Igbo, therefore, sees the immaterial in a more fundamental manner, as a life-source and essential to

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<sup>28</sup> Theophilus Okere, “The Structure of the Self in Igbo Thought,” in (ed.), *Identity and Change: Nigerian Philosophical Studies 1*, ed. Theophilus Okere (Washington: Paideia, 1995), 159-160.

<sup>29</sup> Theophilus Okere, *Philosophy, Culture and Society in Africa* (Nsukka: Afro-Orbis, 2005), 3.

<sup>30</sup> Christopher Agulanna, “Community and Human Well-Being in an African Culture,” *Trames* 14, no. 3 (2010): 282-298.

<sup>31</sup> Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion* (Accra: FEP, 1978), 92

<sup>32</sup> Malcolm X, *Letter from Mecca*, accessed June 8, 2022, [http://malcolm-x.org/docs/let\\_mecca.htm](http://malcolm-x.org/docs/let_mecca.htm).

<sup>33</sup> Chuka A. Okoye, “‘Onwe’: An Inquiry into the Igbo Concept of the Self,” *OGIRISI: A New Journal of African Studies* 8 (2011): 51-65.

the material. However, the value of the self is, thus, dependent on its interrelation with other selves, where a communal relationship is formed, hence from *onwe m* to *onwe anyi* – from ‘myself’ to ‘ourselves.’

For Omoregbe the essential constituents of man include the invisible elements: soul (the Creator’s spark), spirit (which he finally fails to tell us what it really is), mind, which he holds (that is a faculty, the cognitive faculty, the power to think and to know), and the element of the visible element: body.<sup>34</sup> Substantially, he upholds that the mind and the body are “but only one substance which constitutes the human person.”<sup>35</sup> By this, he also denies the problem of mind-body interaction between the invisible mind and the visible body, on the basis of them being the substantial element by which the human person is made; the mind-body problem is, hence, a pseudo problem. He, however, shows here the influence of Dualism and Double Aspect Theory. Be that as it may, what makes a person different from animals and other inferior beings, he opines, is that man possesses mind, not just the brain, with which he thinks, unlike other inferior to him animals, that possess only the brain, even though there is a close connection between the two.<sup>36</sup>

For Ozumba, man is randomly and essentially a composite of *ahu* (body), *mkpuru obi* (soul) and *mmuo* (spirit).<sup>37</sup> He argues that even though man is composed of both physical and metaphysical components and that his physical condition is dependent on the spiritual, it is the principle of individuation *Chi* always prevails in each individual’s existential progress. However, he contends that lineage remains an essential identity marker of a man, hence the indispensability of paternal and maternal homes. That is, the African person, he contends, is a product of his paternal and maternal ancestral homes.<sup>38</sup> However, this brings to the fore the vitality of Wiredu’s mother and father’s genes in the composition of the human person in the Akan thinking. Still in the same vein, the Luo people of Kenya hold similar views, when they see man as a composite of

*del* (body), *obuongo* (brain, but also intelligence when used in an active sense) and *juok* (a spiritual element in which reside several human capabilities, particularly what is rendered in English as “will”).<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Joseph I. Omoregbe, *Philosophy of Mind: An Introduction to Philosophical Psychology* (Lagos: JOJA, 2006), 32.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Godfrey O. Ozumba, “African Traditional Metaphysics,” *Quodlibet* 6, no. 3 (2005): 2-20.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Dismas A. Masolo, “Western and African Communitarianism: A Comparison,” in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, ed. Kwasi Wiredu (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 490.

*Juok* is an ancestral inheritance (spirit) which defines a person's ancestral lineage, and, thus, assumes an essential position in a person's personality and identification. Similar conception/belief hold the Dogon people of Mali. For them, the self is a constitution of the ancestral spiritual forces – *nommo*, *a nyama*, and *a kikin* say, and these forces “give humans their general characteristics as members of the human species as well as members of specific clans and families, and finally as unique individuals.”<sup>40</sup> Being more emphatic about *a kikin* say, Masolo informs us that the people believe in it being

the seat of a person's capacity to exercise will and use their intelligence. In union with another element, *nani*, it is the individuating principle which makes every individual unique from every other.<sup>41</sup>

However, in what seems as a follow up opposition, Oyowe and Yurkiuska posit that since the African personality is communally based, therefore, the concept of personhood cannot be gender-neutral, since those who make up the community form a relationship and are either patrilineal or matrilineal in character. Thus, the communitarian concept of a person may encourage one form of gender violence and discrimination.<sup>42</sup> Despite this, one may wonder what would become the fate of those who are born outside wedlock and who only have an immediate home together with the mother, but not a grand home.

Wahba presents us with a theory where a person is identified as a composition of body and soul and his body is physically self-evident, unlike the soul.<sup>43</sup> However, as a substance that gears towards eternity, it can be proved on three grounds: metaphysically, as its acts are exposed “through the mind and the will”<sup>44</sup>; psychologically, as “man has an inbuilt natural inclinations toward eternal survival”<sup>45</sup>; morally, as man's actions are at last, examined by a Supreme Being.

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<sup>40</sup> Marcel Griaule, *Conversations with Ogotemmeli: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

<sup>41</sup> Masolo, “Western and African Communitarianism,” 490.

<sup>42</sup> Oyowe, and Yurkiuska, “Can a Communitarian Concept of African Personhood be both Rational and Gender-Neutral?” *South African Journal of Philosophy* 33, no. 1. (2014), 85-99.

<sup>43</sup> M. Wahba, “Rationalism in the Contemporary Arab World,” in *Contemporary Philosophy: A New Survey*, vol. 5: *African Philosophy*, ed. G. Floistad. (Dordrecht: M Nijhoff: 1987), 266-270.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Egbunu, verging on a metaphysical dimension, informs us that the term *One* is used to denote the notion of person in Igala. *One* can also variously mean any person who is now of age, free born, as well as a person who is now morally conscious. This implies that even if a person is biologically related (free born) but becomes disconnected from the community, perhaps through ostracism, exile, excommunication, etc., he does not share in the traditional etymological meaning and implication of this term. As a concept of person, the term strictly is used to depict only human beings and, in the Igala traditional understanding, it is innate to names of human beings. Through this nominal universal characteristic, human beings are portrayed as a community of beings who are in constant interrelationship with one another.<sup>46</sup> By implication, the African personality is identified with the African's communal spirit to love and relate with one's fellow member of the community. However, from one point of view, it is questionable the fact that slaves, morally-unconscious and not-yet-of-age, are not, in a sense, considered as persons in Igala.

Nze, through the traditionally etymological route, informs us that the Igbo term for man (*mmadu*) is derived from the term 'mu-du' which means 'I exist.'<sup>47</sup> He insists that it connotes the whole sense of existence, and that this existence, for the African, is intrinsically communal-characterized. He contends that the African Communalism depicts the extended family system where the spirit of brotherhood prevails for all the members are in ontological relationship as fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, nephews, cousins, nieces etc., and so, does it extend to the clan, village or even town levels.<sup>48</sup> Just like the principle of Stoicism, the emphasis is on universal brotherhood rooted in human feeling. Expanding further, he explains that the African communalism is built on the principle of humanism and the deity-status and on the ontological purity of *Ala* (mother Earth) that supervises all the activities of men regarding one another. The African has great regard for *Ala* and fears possible punishment from it, in case of guilt. This regard and fear for *Ala* serve as ontological binding forces which go a long way in uniting the people as extended family members. The African person, thus, is identified with the attitude of 'brotherhood' towards his fellow, which is "a system of life that recognizes the humanity in every individual; a life that encourages a certain human attitude,"<sup>49</sup> an attitude which Okolo terms "an involvement-with" or

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<sup>46</sup> Fidelis Elejo Egbunu, "Personhood (One) in Igala Worldview: A Philosophical Appraisal," in *Cross-Cultural Communication* (Canada: Canadian Academy of Oriental and Occidental Culture, 2013), 30-38.

<sup>47</sup> C. B. Nze, *Patriotism: A Cultural Emanation* (Onitsha: Veritas Press, 1994).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

a life of “sense of communion.”<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, today, the African-European contact has defiled this fear of these cultural phenomena, which serve as the ontological binding forces for the African communitarianism.<sup>51</sup>

Nwala states that *Mmadu* (a term he consistently writes as *Madu*) (Human Beings) “refers to both the living and those about to be born”<sup>52</sup> and is categorized under the visible realm of nature. However, it is irreconcilable to adhere to a conception of man that is both visible and invisible (living and yet unborn) and to, still, have him categorized entirely under the visible realm of reality. The unborn person is invisible and cannot be part of the physically living man, whom Nwala categorizes as a visible reality. Nevertheless, Nwala goes on to assert that “man is conceived as both spirit and non-spirit,”<sup>53</sup> implying *Mmuo* (a term which though he consistently writes as *Nmuo* – spirit) and *Ahu* (body – the non-spirit). In trying to analyze these two main components of man, especially the spirit-component, Nwala presents us with a contradictory and irreconcilable view of man. He posits that *Mmuo* “is the spirit of man and it incorporates attributes of spirituality, intelligence, feeling, emotion, and conscience” and finally, “is associated with *Nkpuru-obi* – soul which is located in the heart.”<sup>54</sup> Some of the attributes given to *Mmuo* could also adequately be given to other components of man. For instance, ‘intelligence’ could be ascribed to *uche* (mind) and ‘feeling/emotion’ to *Mkpuru-Obi*, which, I insist, is heart. He also equates *Mkpuru-Obi* (a term he consistently writes as *Nkpuru-Obi*) to ‘soul,’ but would soon assert that “the interpretation of the Christian concept of soul as *Nkpuru-obi* is definitely wrong” hence “*Nkpuru-obi* in Igbo ontology is materialistic.”<sup>55</sup> Why then equating it to Soul? Again, how does *Mkpuru-Obi* (heart), and to which extent, associate with the *Mmuo* (spirit)? Nevertheless, he is of the opinion that *Mkpuru-Obi* is located in the ‘heart’ which he argues is ‘material’ and which he later equates to the ‘heart,’ and, again, to the ‘soul.’ So confusing is the equation of ‘soul’ to *Mkpuru-obi*, which he also thinks of, as material (heart), in contradistinction to and criticism of the Christian metaphysical concept – the soul. And, to crown this contradiction, he states that *Mkpuru-Obi* (in the context of the Christian soul concept) is located in the heart. The epistemological question is the following: is the invisible precisely locatable, lest it being even in the heart? Nonetheless, he continues, and informs us that *Mkpuru-obi* has “a definite

<sup>50</sup> Okolo, “What is it to be African,” 11, 19.

<sup>51</sup> Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, et al, “A Critical Review of African Communitarianism,” *Thought and Action Journal of Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2022): 69-79.

<sup>52</sup> Timothy Uzodimma Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy* (New York: Triatlantic, 2010), 57.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

material shape and location in the heart”<sup>56</sup> yet it is “the location of the life-giving force, *ndu*.”<sup>57</sup> And my simple question is: what is, then, the difference, for Nwala, between the ‘heart’ and the concept of *Mkpuru-obi* in the Igbo ontological conceptual scheme? And, based on that, how can the *Mkpuru-obi* be located in the ‘heart’? Deductible here is the point that, for him now, *Mkpuru-obi*, which he sees as material, has “a definite material shape and location in the heart”<sup>58</sup> and it is where the life-giving force *ndu* is located. *Ndu* (life, the facticity of visibly human existence) now has a material location in the heart which is still material in the Igbo ontological system. This is indeed a total oblivion and ontological catastrophic conceptual scheme posited on the Igbo metaphysics of man’s nature and worldview entirely as it were. The same *Mkpuru-obi* “is equally the location of *Nmuo* i.e., the spirit,”<sup>59</sup> yet “*Nmuo* is that which reincarnates after death and thereafter sojourns in the spirit world.”<sup>60</sup> At another point, he refers to *Mkpuru-obi* as heart – “the *Nkpuru-obi* of certain animals (i.e. their heart).”<sup>61</sup> Finally, he contends that “there is no difficulty in differentiating between *Nkpuru-obi* (the heart) and *nmuo* or *obi* (spirit),”<sup>62</sup> hence “the human heart is certainly the part of the body, which is the definite residence of the spirit or soul.”<sup>63</sup>

Critically, as feasible as it is, according to Nwala, with regard to his position that there is no difficulty in differentiating among some metaphysical concepts and components of human beings, it has soon turned an aberration seeing him equating *Mmuo* and *Obi*, not *Nkpuru-obi* this time around. And the question is as simple as this: In Igbo language or even ontology, is *Mkpuru-obi* the same thing as *Obi*, and are they the same things as *Mmuo*? *Mkpuru-obi* literally means ‘the fruit of the chest,’ referring to the ‘seed-like part’ located at the thorax region (chest), however, more critical interrogation of the term will be done under the section dedicated to *Mkpuru-Obi*. The necessity, although, of this clarification is linked to the fact that even when Nwala would suggest that he means the ideal implication of *Obi* as ‘conscience,’ it still does not equate neither to *Mmuo* (spirit) nor to *Mkpuru-Obi* (heart). The conclusion deducible from Nwala’s conceptual analysis of man is that man is entirely material, hence the two main components of man *mmuo* (spirit) and

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

*ahu* (body) are material following his position that the *mmuo* and even *ndu* (the life-giving force) are all finally to be located in the heart which is purely reduced to material just like *ahu*. In short, we can posit that he is not too careful in interpreting these metaphysical terms which centrally characterize the Igbo conception of man.

Edeh considers the proper term for Being as “‘Ife-di’... because it covers all entities, both visible and invisible, as well as the note of existence which we commonly associate with being.”<sup>64</sup> However, he further maintains that the understanding of *Ife-di* begins with the understanding of the ‘subject’ (man). Man in Igbo according to him means *Madu*, which is a short form of *mma-du*. The term *mma-du* is formed by the conjunction of two Igbo words, according to him: *Mma* (good) and *du* which, now, through an application of linguistic game, turns to *Di* which derives from the Igbo verb (Ngwa) *idi* (meaning, ‘to be’), hence man (*Madu*) means ‘good that is.’ Having now seen that man is the ‘good that is,’ Edeh advises that we must restore this existential paradigm as ‘good that is,’ and so, we must treat man with everything good; to accenuate this, Edeh coins the term EPTAISM, in order to represent Edeh’s Philosophy of Thought and Action where the ideal ‘goodness’ is concretized.<sup>65</sup> For that reason, identifying the African personality with the fact that man is communally and ontologically centered in the universe, Edeh suggests that man is essentially a ‘participatory-being’ and in his communitarian participation with regard to one another, the paradigm of the nature, substance and essence of his Creator, who is the *Summum Bonum* (the Supreme Good), ought to be the guiding principle, the centre of the ontological communal participation. In his words,

the Igbo notion of “good that is” must be understood in the context of creation... divine creation. To say that man is the “good that is” is not to say that man is “good in se,” for no one is “good in se” except God.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, the goodness, or a man’s status as the ‘good that is,’ is achieved only by participating or sharing in the goodness of his Creator.

On a critical note, the implications of Edeh’s work show that so long as man is primarily and essentially ‘good that is,’ then: (1) His nature, substance and essence is (good and not evil, that is), because, he is nothing but a *paradigm* of his Creator – the all-good-God, (2) he was made in the image and likeness

<sup>64</sup> Emmanuel Mathew P. Edeh, *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics* (Enugu: Our Saviour Press, 1999), 96.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

of God, his Creator, (3) he shares or partakes in the goodness and holiness and all-goodness nature of his Creator. But in a sharp follow up contradiction, Edeh later states that no man is good *in se* except God. He equally notes that “the problem of evil is as old as man”<sup>67</sup> and that “evil is a phenomenon common to all peoples of the world. It is present at all levels of beings.”<sup>68</sup> So, if evil is as old as man, if some evil actions are acknowledged as quite natural,<sup>69</sup> and if it is a phenomenon in life and in the world, how can we then explain the understanding of *Mmadu* (Man) and, indeed, reality in general, as the ‘good that is’? If some evil acknowledged natural, how can we explain and defend the idea that the nature, substance and essence of man’s Creator is ‘all-good’? Or, does this mean that God cannot explain the emergence of evil? Again, to designate generally the understanding of *reality* holistically with the term ‘good that is,’ following the fact that all existents (perhaps, without evil) comes from God, is very wrong. This is because the term ‘good that is or exists’ comes only from the etymological meaning of *mmadu* (man) as *mma di* (good that is/exists). So, *Osisi* (tree), *Mmiri* (waters), *Okwute* (stone) *Aja* (sand) are not literally, or rather, etymologically ‘good that is/exists,’ as their meaning differs from that of man – *Mmadu*. And if everything that exists should be designated with the term ‘good that is or exists,’ just because they are all created and by God, the Creator of man, then they should be designated with a name/term relative to creation, not from the etymological meaning and implication of man as *mmadu*. This goes to say that all existents should be defined and described with a name that would emerge from creation to pinpoint their realities, or even, take from their own etymologies. Furthermore, some Africans or Igbo may not agree with the creation theory, the Biblical accounts, and so, the terms and the logic behind that, which abide by it due to their virtue of creation, become all fallacious and foul.

Abanuka contends that in as much as the discourse on reality or Being is concerned, the Igbo proper term that pictures reality or Being is *Chi*, hence in his words: “In no other word in the Igbo language is this more apparent than in the word *chi*.”<sup>70</sup> Elaborately making this claim, he posits that

if metaphysics is the basic philosophical discipline, in so far as it describes the general characteristics of reality as a whole, then...  
(i)n Igbo metaphysics, the idea of *chi* corresponds to the idea of being or reality.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 102-103.

<sup>70</sup> Bartholomew Abanuka, *Further Critical Studies on the Igbo World* (Onitsha: Spiritan Publications, 2009), 55.

<sup>71</sup> Bartholomew Abanuka, *Two Enquiries in African Philosophy* (Onitsha: Spiritan Publications,



Giving reasons for the choice of the term, he says that first, *chi* stands for the ‘principle of identity’ and by this, it performs “a metaphysical, but more precisely ontological function.”<sup>72</sup> Second, *chi* stands for the ‘principle of uniqueness,’ and by this it becomes “the ground of epistemology.”<sup>73</sup> Third, “*chi* is a subsidiary principle in the sense of being a subordinating or causal principle,”<sup>74</sup> hence it founds ethics. However, Abanuka, peradventurously taking influences from Edeh, posits that *Mmadu* (‘human being’ though whom he always refers to as man), is a product of two Igbo words – *mma* (beauty) and *du/di* (to be, is) meaning ‘beauty that is.’<sup>75</sup> Buttressing this point, he asserts that the “Igbo philosophical anthropology does not view man as the measure of all things, but as the mediate origin of beauty in the world.”<sup>76</sup> Further differentiating his point from any other one possibly to represent his, he notes that ‘beauty’ here inheres both ‘aesthetic and ethical connotations.’ Critically, just as his conception of human being shows influences from religion as a Roman Catholic Priest, all he could see and say about human being proceeds from the perspective of divine, never from the negative perspective which inherently characterizes human being. Abanuka in a place posits that man is “a composite of mind (spirit) and body”<sup>77</sup> or better still, “mind (whose content is spirit).”<sup>78</sup> It is very absurd to agree to such a position, following the implications that, first of all, ‘mind’ is equal to ‘spirit,’ second of all, ‘spirit’ is a content of the ‘mind,’ thereby making the ‘spirit’ inferior to the ‘mind,’ while, in the very opposite way, the ‘mind’ depends on the ‘spirit’ to function, and that is why even when man is insane, bad, or in an uncoordinated state of mind, his brain and all physical functions still work and he still lives. If Abanuka’s position is true, then any damage to the capacities referred to the ‘mind’ presupposes damage to the ‘spirit.’ That is, however, wrong; even when the ‘mind’ ‘malfunctions,’ so to speak, the ‘spirit’ supports the person, for it is the last existential reality in man that its absence signifies non-living state (lifelessness) in that very being. Abanuka does provide an extra point on this discourse.<sup>79</sup>

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2003, 2008), 11; Abanuka, *Further Critical Studies*, 55-74.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 70, 73.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>79</sup> Bartholomew Abanuka, *History of African Philosophy* (Enugu: SNAAP Press, 2013), 23-41.

At this juncture, we have been able to examine the conceptions of man by many African scholars. However, giving a general analysis and overview of their conceptions, we can say that from the Igbo etymology of the term *Mmadu* (Human Being), we can deduct that three outstanding conceptions stand out: *Mma Ndu* (the Beauty of Life), *Mma Di* (the Good that Is) and *Mu Du* (I [who] Exist[s]). Also, from the human compositions, man is conceived as a composite of both the *metaphysical components* to include *Mkpuru Obi* (on the Soul context), *Mmuo* (Spirit), *Onwe* (Self), *Obi* (Heart), *Chi*. Through the process of widening the scope, to include the whole Africa, as other conceptions suggest, we have in addition *Adwen* (Thought), *Ntoro* (Fatherly Genes), *Mogya* (Motherly Genes). The *physical components* include *Ahu* (Body), but noteworthy is the fact that it encompasses all the things physical in the composition of human being.

### III. The term *Mmadu* as the all-encompassing term that reveals the reality of human beings

Before engaging into the critical analysis of the term *Mmadu*, it is, however, important to point out that it is gender-insensitive to use the term 'man' to mean 'human beings.' The Christian Holy Book, meaning the Bible, and other sensitive existential books and materials of knowledge are not equally free from this non-inclusive representation of the concept 'human being' through the use of the term 'man.' This is because in Igbo 'man' means *nwoke* (a male human) and that does not constitute a *nwanyị* (a female human). Hence, it is wiser to use the appropriate term that should account for both genders, which is *mmadu* (human being), as opposed to non-human being. Nevertheless, 'man' should still, in this context, be understood as 'human being,' in this essay.

Be that as it may, in the Igbo thought the true expressions, definitions and descriptions of man (human being – as against non-human beings) are explained in the etymological term *mmadu*. This term explains in its entirety the existential reality and conditions of human beings. All the etymological explanations and attempts to etymologically analyze Man by Igbo scholars as cited above are all unfortunately half-done, and it is the onus of this paper, as we have said earlier, to fill this knowledge gap, as having foresight. Their attempts are not 'all-inclusive,' and that is why all the existential aspects of man are not therein explained. Those who gave definitions according to the Igbo conception of man see only the positive aspect/explanation of the etymological term – *Mmadu* – perhaps to exonerate themselves from attributing evil-tendencies to the nature of man and his Creator. But contrary to that, it is pertinent to know that man is intrinsically or naturally 'good and evil.' From the etymology of 'human being,' we get the term *Mmadu* which could be critically dissected and explained in the following analysis below in order to be holistic.

By its etymology, 'Human Being' – *Mmadu* could mean *Mmā Ndu* ('Beauty of Life' – in terms of *Mmá* as in 'Aesthetics'; or 'Good of Life' – in terms of *Mmá* as in something 'Right, Approved, Accepted, Better/Best, Right Quality/Standard,' etc. (moral connotation)), *Māā Ndu* (Spirit of Life), *Mmā Ndu* (Knife/Machete of Life), *Mmā Di* (Beauty and Good that Exists/Is), *Māā Di* (Spirit that Exists/Is), *Mmā Di* (Knife/Machete that Exists/Is), *Mmá Duru* (Survived Beauty and Good), *Māā Duru* (Survived Spirit), *Mmā Duru* (Survived Knife/Machete), *Mu Di* (I Exist or I who Exist) and finally *Mu Duru* (I who (have) Survived). From this analysis and etymological implications of *Mmadu* (Human Being) in Igbo, it is clear that *the human being is a Beauty or Good or Spirit or Knife (who) that Exists/Is, Beauty or Good or Spirit or Knife of Life and that (has) Survived; or a portrayal of the facticity of Human Proclamation of Human Existence or Survival. As Beauty, the human being is depicted as the most beautiful creature, ontological center of aesthetic attractions among all beings. As Good, s/he is an embodiment/expression of morality-consciousness and is depicted as the most right, best, accepted, quality-endowed, precious, sacred among other beings. As Spirit, s/he is portrayed as the most complexed in nature, considering the human 'physical' and 'metaphysical' existential components. As Knife/Machete, which symbolically stands for both peace and disaster/violence, s/he naturally stands as a symbol of both peace (good) and disaster (bad/evil) as existentially lived. And, finally, the term can also portray the ascertaining, proclamation and facticity of human existence and survival. From this stand point, Mmadu is essentially, naturally and substantially primarily an embodiment of metaphysical and physical compositions and in full potency of being either a peace/disaster-ambassador, or an icon of beauty, or a good(morality)-paradigm or facticity of reinstating existence/survival. He is an embodiment of both vices-and-virtues-in-potency, hence both good and evil are natural and intrinsic in the nature of man. This may, basically, have been the reason some scholars, like Hobbes, etc., insist that evil is an essential part, and associates to the inclinations of man; whilst others, like Heraclitus, etc., believe in the principle of opposition and change as the reality behind every being. This may equally explain why some theorists like Machiavelli, etc., come up with theories that encourage both vices, so as to counter or balance man's nature and inclinations to virtues.*

#### IV. The Umuokan conception of man (human being)

The conception, analysis and lingual definition of the human being (*Mmadu*) according to the Umuokan scheme of thought is quite interesting, captivating, enlightening and insight-giving. In Umuokan language, just as it is applicable and implicating in Igbo language generally, the term *Mmadu* means 'Human Being.' But for Umuokan people, this term *Mmadu* is a combination of *Maa*

(Spirit) and *Duru* (Survived). In the central Igbo language, *Mmadu* stands for 'Human Being,' but in the Umuokan thought, the central Igbo *Mma* is *Maa* and *du* is *duru* but the *ru* is silent in pronunciation. For them, the pronunciation of this term, *Mmadu* (which for them sounds like that *Maadjvuru*, that is, *Maadjvu*) is the same with that of the central Igbo language, but in their thinking, it simply means 'Survived Spirit.' By implication, the human being is *Maadu*, that is, spirit that is/exists, having sustainably-survived. He only exists, or is through the facticity of his/her sustainability into survival.

Basically, the pronunciation of the central Igbo *du* as in *Mmadu*, in Umuokan language sounds like how possible it could be when *djvu* are combined as a word. However, meaningfully, when the two words – *Maa* and *djvu/ru* – are joined together, we get something like *Maadjvu/ru* (Survived Spirit) which in the central Igbo language could be written thus *Maadu/ru*. But significantly, this 'survival' is never conceived without the sense of 'sustenance.'

Thus fundamentally, the root of the definitive completing word (of *Mma/Maa*) which is *du/duru* spurs up from the facticity and meaningfulness of the term *Ndu* (denotatively meaning Life, but connotatively meaning Existence/Survival). Practically, when an Umuokan wants to ask, for instance, if a crop his neighbour planted survived/has survived, he would say: *ihe ahụ ikuru o djvuru* (*duru*)? Meaning, 'did the crop you plant survived?' The affirmative response to this would go thus: *o djvuru* (*duru*) (it survived/has survived). So *idjvu* (*idu*) 'to survive' or *ndjvu* (*ndu*) or *odjvudjvu* (*odudu*) 'survival' depicts nothing but the facticity of 'surviving or existing' which refers to nothing but *ndu* 'life/living or existence.' And significantly, this 'life/living or existence/existing' is a process that is begun from and in the spirit, towards the physics, is being continuously sustained or is ever in sustenance by ontologically the Progenitor or Sustainer who is also the Owner, and socially within the (context of) the 'other,' and more significantly again, grows unstopably to/into eternity through the sustenance it ever and constantly gains from the Sustainers. Thus, 'human being' as *Maadjvu* or *Maadjvuru* according to the Umuokan means a 'Sustained-Survived/Surviving-Spirit' whose sustenance is socio-ontological. That is purely an ontological conception of the human being; normative perspective becomes a qualitative and secondary aspect of existence and another existential issue entirely. Importantly, thirteen significant implications stand out in the this Umuokan conceptual scheme of thought.

Firstly, the Umuokan conceptual scheme of the human being as a 'survived/surviving-spirit' presupposes 'sustenance,' hence, 'survival/existence/living' for the Umuokan, is never imagined without 'sustenance.' This 'sustenance' initiates the human 'survival' and physically leads it through the visible

world, and back to the invisible world – its origin state. Hence, the sense of ‘sustenance’ precedes the actuality and sense of ‘survival/existence/living.’

Secondly, the sustenance is socio-ontological, in the sense that (from) the invisible realm begins the principle of the sustenance; and its continuity necessarily revolves around the ‘other’ – fellow existents most nearest of whom are fellow human beings. Perceptibly, the sustenance is ontologically vertical – referring to the sustenance initiation from the invisible, Divinity; socially horizontal – referring to the facticity of the sustenance remaining in continuity within fellow existents – beginning from fellow humans, lower animals, trees/vegetatives, lifeless objects, etc. Thus, in the horizontal sustenance and in the community of ‘others,’ the Divine sustenance extends and reinstates.

Thirdly, by the social or horizontal perspective of the sustenance, humans are naturally condemned to socialization (the activity of being-in-the-world) wherein humans live. This sustenance instils the human nature of not just socialisation, but in-the-world; that is, being existentially condemned to the world. Without the world, the human existence/survival is incomplete, for the vertical perspective of the sustenance necessarily needs the horizontal perspective for a holistic human existence. But unlike the Western counterpart as seen in Heidegger for instance, humans can be conceived without the world, but they cannot be holistically and existentially fulfilled so as to complete the human nature of socialization for self-actualization, without the world. Even the reality of the invisible existence is never perfected without the visible existence (being-in-the-worldness) of the visible realities.

Fourthly, the Umuokan conceptual scheme positions the human being as an embodiment/epitome of morality-consciousness. Human existence is the standard of morality, hence anything ‘anti-human’ is ‘anti-morality.’ Thus, the human being stands as a symbol of what moral-consciousness means and implies. S/he is the only being in whose existence it necessarily is, to ask/raise existential moral questions. S/he is thus a moral being(agent); and as such, existentially ought to stand some moral measures/standards for human-welfarism. The human existence alone expresses what ‘morality-consciousness’ stands for.

Fifthly, the existential nucleus (sustenance) of human beings portrays humans as beings-in-potency. The sustenance is neither static nor does it exist within time. With the sustenance, humans are kept into the ocean and realm of non-stopping-existence through which they accomplish their aspirations and grow (exist) towards infinitum from the visible to invisible realms and vice versa. On this continuous existential process, humans become what they are not and stop being what are hitherto. By extension, the conception upholds two outstanding views: one, that humans are not already-made; two, that humans express their virtue and vice nature through the exercise of their nature

as possibilities hence evil and good are natural, and any of them that triumphs over any human being has its way. Thus, whether or not a human being is moral, s/he is vulnerable to the fate/blindness of evil and good. Even though the level of moral consciousness in a human being plays a vital ontological role towards human welfarism, however, the strife of evil and good over humans still maintains a strong maximum point in human existence.<sup>80</sup> To live, to exist, intrinsically expresses ‘survival.’

Sixthly, the conception brings out the novelty in the African conceptualization of value: that anything of the African value must be modified or characterized by the sense of ‘humanism’ and ‘community’; that is, humanist and communitarianist-ontology.<sup>81</sup> Anything of African value must be ‘human-based’ and ‘community-minded.’ Because of the African awareness and consciousness of the fact that life is sacred, and ought to be preserved with utmost dignity, and following the existential reality that it is in the community that the African communes with the ‘other,’ therefore, the sense of humanism and community-consciousness stand prior in the African value conceptualization. Thus, it is deducible that by the identification of the human sustenance within the community of fellow humans where the continuity of the sustenance is assured, the sense of humanism and community-mindedness therefore prevails in the human community. This conception is based on and drawn from humanist-ontology and not racist-ontology as could be seen in the Western counterpart from scholars like Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Hume, Kant, Meiners, Hegel, Heidegger, Popper, Levy-Bruhl, Westermann, Carothers, Horton, Finnegan, Gobineau, the two French neuropsychiatrists, Gallais and Planques, etc.<sup>82</sup> Simply put: that it proves the dual fold of African conception of the human being where it is humanism-ontologized and community-bounded.

Seventhly, standing on the fifth significant implication, the conceptualization bestows on each human being the humanistic consciousness by which s/he ought to approach his/her fellows. Put differently: it points to the ‘duty’ perspective of the conception where each human being is obliged to ensure the duty of preserving the humanness of the ‘other.’ It is a conceptualization

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<sup>80</sup> Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, and Leo C. Ozoemena, “Reality Explained from Parmenides to Heraclitus: An Insight into the Nature of the Christian God,” *OWIJOPPA* 3, no. 1 (2019): 97-108; Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, “The African (Igbo) Concept of *Akara Aka*: A Philosophical Reassessment,” *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* 5, no. 3 (2019): 61-81.

<sup>81</sup> Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, et al., “A Critical Review of African Communitarianism,” *Thought and Action Journal of Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2022): 70.

<sup>82</sup> Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, *The Notion of the African Person in Chukwudum Barnabas Okolo* (MA diss., University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2019), 1-2, 32-37; Ikeagwuchi I. Ukwuoma, *Okolo’s Notion of African ‘Being-with’ and Heidegger’s Idea of ‘Baeing-with’ (Mitsein)* (MA diss., University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2021), 7-15.

that is human duty-bound for the humanistic value of the 'other' and the community-welfarism that makes the existence of both humans and their community palatable and continuity-assured. The conceptualization portrays the sanctity/sacredness/divinity of life/existence/survival; and the right of every being, not to take (damage or end) any life/existence/survival of the other. Existence thus bounds in duty, moral obligation. To live is to live in indebtedness, to live in ever-obligation and moral duties towards the living of the other. It is engulfed in moral responsibilities and that makes the human being a moral agent and by extension, proving the existential authenticity of life/living.

Eighthly, this conception brings to the fore the fact that the being existing or surviving is not the real owner of the life/existence it possesses, or is using/enjoying, rather it is divinely, though necessarily, bestowed on it. This portrays the sanctity/sacredness/divinity of life/existence/survival, and the right of every being, not to take (damage or end) any life/existence/survival of the other. Existence, thus, bounds in duty and moral obligation. This infers that all that can be said about reality is the *facticity of existence*, not water, air, fire, reason, will, earth, number, event, etc. as held by Greeks. All these first of all do exist, and then stand upon *the facticity of existence* as the primordial to every reality. However, deducing from the fact that humans' existence just like every other existents' is not theirs in a strict sense, makes them ever-indebted-beings.

Ninthly, it conveys the point that the Existence/Life-Giver-and-Sustainer is naturally condemned/conditioned to live for ever-giving-and-sustaining the life/existence given to the beings enjoying this gift and intrinsic aspect of the giver's, sustainer's nature. By this, the giver/sustainer proves the ownership/mastership of existence/life, for it is in the giver's/sustainer's nature, substance and essence to not just give life but also tirelessly dutiful to the sustenance of the given life/existence. Thus, it is necessary that the Life-Giver and Sustainer gives or bestows life/existence on beings; and it is necessary also that beings, humans inclusive, exist/live and survive so as to stand as proofs of real ownership/mastership of life by the Giver and Sustainer. Put in other way, the Necessary Being necessarily needs to share/open its beingness/belongingness to/with the contingent beings in order to prove its necessity in, to and for them – the contingent beings. No wonder then the Bible says that even if humans refuse to praise God, He (God) will make stones and other lifeless beings to praise Him. It (Bible) would have rather said that He (God) will make Himself to praise Him (God) instead of stones and lifeless beings to do that. By and large, the necessity of the lower, powerless, contingent beings to the proof of the superiority of the Necessary being is existentially inevitable and necessary. Thus, the existence/life-Giver and Sustainer has 'its' beingness conditioned by 'its' nature, substance and essence. 'It' is never

conditioned by ‘outside’ factors, rather ‘inside’ factors embedded in ‘its’ nature/substance/essence. However, whenever, wherever and whatever ‘it’ does is solely and ‘self-necessitated’; it is never ‘extended-necessitated.’ ‘It’ is self-exclusively-influenced, though ‘it’ necessarily needs self-existing-beings, humans inclusive, to enjoy ‘its’ self-operative-system (modus operandi) or nature/substance/essence.

Tenthly, another outstanding point is the clarity of the Divine-implication of this ever-sustaining-existence as portrayed in the existential-characteristic of the Supreme Being. The ‘ever-sustenance’ here could be an implication of the existential Quality of the Supreme Being, the real ‘Existence/Survival//Life-Sustainer’ by the Igbo which is definitively explained in His name *Ose-buru-uwa* [*Ose* who ever carries (depicting ever and continuous love, care, provision and sustenance) the world in His hands]. This name is all about the Igbo popular saying and song: He (God) holds/has the whole world in His hands. ‘Having/holding’ the whole world in His hands does not only imply here, showing His (bragging) ownership of the whole world, or ability to smash it any time He dare wills, but also showing His ever-dutifulness in caring, overseeing, well-managing and accounting for the whole world – every existent in the world – or the whole universe as a whole. However, going into detailing, analyzing and defending this position may be out of scope here, nevertheless, the point of emphasis here is that an aspect of this conception of the human being by the Umuokan depicts God – the Supreme Being – as the Sustainer of all that is/exists, humans inclusive, the very Sustainer that plays in the existential mode of living of *Maadjvu/ru*.

Eleventhly, in this conception, we see an ever-processing-sustaining-survival/existence/existing. That is, a process-existence, ever-sustaining/sustained-existence or eternity-growing/belonging-existence; an existence/survival/livingness that is not only ever-sustained, but also that lives or sustains-into and till eternity. At this juncture, we must recall and juxtapose this conception of man with Iroegbu’s analysis of Belongingness as the fact of Reality. Iroegbu starts his articulation on the concept of ‘being/reality’ by saying that “to be is to belong” and “to belong is to be.” That is ‘to be-on,’ ‘to emerge’ (be existentially concretized) on this world (*uwa*) and, by that, to overcome non-being (existential abstractism or nothingness as to oppose to concrete-existence or somethingness). Buttressing the position by analyzing the first stage of Belongingness, he writes,

The ‘belong’ involved in Belongingness is a turning on of being in general and abstract into being as concrete expressed entity. It is a ‘being-on’ in the *Uwa* (World, Cosmos)... To be on therefore is to escape the contrary of being on, i.e., to be off.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Pantaleon Iroegbu, “Being as Belongingness: A Substantive Redefinition of Being,” *Ekpoma Review* 1 (2004): 7-19; Iroegbu, *Metaphysics*, 372-382.



Thus, at the next stage,

having been turned-on into *Uwa*... the being now goes on... There is always process both in the act of becoming being, and in the practice of getting along in being: the maintenance of being.<sup>84</sup>

Here, Being through the activity/engagement of Belongingness keeps going-on in his emerged existence/survival, the On-goingness of being, through maintenance/sustenance, without which, he dies off, and which would equally signify that the activity/engagement in the on-goingness/existence/survival/life of being is no more endless thereby now being disjointed. But, on the contrary, however, “being is something that goes on. In going on however, it is both itself (identity) and something else (difference).”<sup>85</sup> In this On-goingness of being, any being that “belongs today cannot... be regarded as not belonging tomorrow... Not even death can break the Ongiongness of being defined as Belongingness.”<sup>86</sup> This On-goingness as Belongingness stays “as long as ever,” because “Belongingness of being is open-ended.”<sup>87</sup> Here, the existential nature/facticity of belongingness of being has no end, once it starts. The survival of man as a spirit has no end, hence, it has started, continues existing (on-going) and is endlessly sustained/being-sustaining by a Sustainer. So, the sustenance-inherence of survival/life/existence of being (man inclusive), which is the mode of living/existing/surviving of being (man inclusive), is both survival/life-existence-and-sustenance into and till-eternity.

Twelvethly, very insight-giving in the Umuokan scheme of thought on who *Maadjvu* or *Maadjvuru* – central Igbo *Mmadu* (Human Being) – means and implies, is a mode of being that inherently portrays ‘Survival/Surviving and Sustenance (SS).’ The human being as a ‘Survived Spirit’ means that the human being is a spirit, his/her survival is seen or ensured by the Divine, and his/her survival is a sustaining(or sustained)-one still by the Divine. The definitive term ‘survival’ of humans here does not only and exclusively mean ‘the facticity of existence or living,’ but also ‘sustaining-survival, sustaining-living, sustaining-existence.’ Put in another way: that his/her survival/living/existing inheres or characteristically carries the facticity of sustenance. Existence is inseparable from sustenance. His/her beingness is a sustaining-survival/living/existing which is endless but sustainably-survives-into-eternity. Thus, the human being is not just a survived spirit, but also a survival-spirit, in that, s/he survives-and-is-constantly-sustained

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

spiritually and by the Divine. So, even in death, the human being is still being sustained-in-survival; s/he is still surviving and never leaves the circle within which s/he has visibly survived.

Thirteenthly and finally, this conception lays more emphasis on the spiritual living/existence-surviving of the human being rather than physical. Life/existence/survival starts from the unseen/invisible world/domain and in activities/process, transits/grows back towards the unseen/invisible world/domain (eternity). Appropriate attention and care must be assured to the spiritual affairs and concerns of humans just as the physical affairs through justifiable and reasonable way of living the physical affairs. Any mistake in the physical living/existence/survival of humans greatly mars, disrupts and limits the spiritual. The two existential affairs are as important and complimentary as two sided-coin. They both compliment each other. Even though the spiritual stands for Necessary Existential Affair, it necessarily needs the complementarity of the physical and its contingencies.

Finally, we will have to further analyze the components of man as enumerated above. In doing this, we will largely base them on the metaphysical components as the physical components are clear to the understanding of an average (Igbo) man.

#### V. Components of man (human being)

For the Igbo, in the Umuokan scheme of thought, *mmadu*, or *maadjvu(ru)*, is basically a composite of two main 'existential phenomena/spheres': *Physical and Metaphysical*. His Physical existential phenomenon/sphere comprises of the presence of *Ahu* (Body). In his bodily existential sphere, we have *Mkpuru-Obi* (Heart), *Uburu/Uvuru* (Brain), *Akpukpo Anu-Ahu* shortened (Anu-Ahu) (Skin) *Aji* (Hairs), *Obara* (Blood), *Okpukpo* (Bones), *Akwara* (Veins), *Anu* (Flesh), *Mmiri* (Waters including the sex cells and all the moisture-contents) and *Ihe-Mmebiga* (Wastes). His Metaphysical existential phenomenon/sphere comprises of the presence of *Mmuo* (Spirit) *Onwe* (Self), *Uche* (Mind/Intellect), *Echiche* (Thought), *Ako* (Wisdom), *Onyinyo* (Shadow), *Nghota* (Understanding), *Ume* (Breath), *Oyime* (Ghost), *Ehihe* (the Doubleness of Man) *Agwa* (Attitude), *Obi/Mmuo-Ikpe* (Conscience), *Onatara Chi* (Natural Talent/Skill), and *Chi*. Based on this, we can see that man is such a complex being that almost every aspect of his life is a component of himself in the Igbo thought. Reincarnation as an outstanding belief of the Igbo is manifestable through both the physical and metaphysical components. In this regard, among these components, the foremost components that are centrally active, vis-à-vis the reincarnation belief, include *Anu-Ahu* (Skin), *Mmuo* (Spirit) *Onwe* (Self), *Ako* (Wisdom), *Nghota* (Understanding), *Agwa* (Character/Attitude), *Onatara Chi* (Natural Talent/Skill) and *Chi*. Questions on reincarnation always and mainly revolve around these human components.

However, before engaging in the critical analysis of these components, it is important to make it clear that the ‘Soul’ concept is not Igbo, but western. The concept of the ‘Soul’ could be traced to the Hebrew word *Ruach* (literally meaning ‘breath,’ which symbolizes ‘living’). ‘Breath’ signifies ‘living’ and as such, anything breathing possesses the principle of living which soul stands for; and for the Greek, the person possesses *Pneuma* which translates to ‘Spirit.’ Breath therefore expresses the reality of the ‘Soul’ or ‘Spirit’ in the body, and that is ‘living,’ and so, the absence of the ‘Soul’ or ‘Spirit’ in the body signifies death. By this, the immaterial expressed by breath has now parted with, or withdrawn from the material in which it expresses its presence.<sup>88</sup> In fact, it is believed by the Hebrews that this animating force resides in blood. The Igbo also believes that life lives in blood, which explains why, for him, spilling of blood is a taboo, for that is wasting of life, of the divine phenomenon offered to man; it is not a man’s own property, but given to him to make a well utility of, for a better hereafter. However, the implications in this conception include: one, the independency, but, most importantly, the necessity of the immaterial (Soul/Spirit) over the material (body); two, the independency of the former over the latter; three, the possibility of resurfacing of the former (Soul) in another body explaining transmigration. These three implications, by inference, can be said to inform the practical details of the western philosophy, or, to be precise, metaphysics as expressed by Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, etc. In fact, Socrates, when interrogating the concept of death, in every means of simplicity asks if it is not

simply the release of the soul from the body? Is death nothing more or less than this, the separate condition of the body by itself when it is released from the soul, and the separate condition by itself of the soul when released from the body? Is death anything else than this?<sup>89</sup>

In the Platonic thought,

the soul is most like that which is divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, and ever self-consistent and invariable, whereas the body is most like that which is human, mortal, multiform, unintelligible, dissoluble, and never self-consistent.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Jerome A. Shaffer, *Philosophy of Mind* (Hoboken, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 2-3.

<sup>89</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 64c, as in Hendrik Lorenz, “Ancient Theories of Soul,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2009 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ancient-soul/>.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 80a-b.

Be that as it may, the Aristotelean creed differs, as he opines that even though there are material and immaterial, unlike Platos' separation-conception of reality as a whole, the two are inseparable aspects of reality, hence they both (matter and form) make up the actuality or substance of reality.

Nevertheless, as shown above, as a proof of external (western) influence on the African people and mind, some Igbo scholars still refer to the soul as *Mkpuru-Obi* – a word etymologically formed by the conjunction of two Igbo words: *Mkpuru* and *Obi*. *Mkpuru* literally and simply means 'Fruit or Seed,' and *Obi* on this context refers to 'chest, i.e. the thorax region.' Suffice it to say then that *Mkpuru-Obi* as a word, now refers to that 'fruit-like-organ' we see in the chest (thorax region) when it is opened; and that is no other thing than the 'Heart.' From this, it becomes clear that *Mkpuru-Obi* does not truly and literally mean the 'Soul,' rather it realistically and literally means the 'Heart' – the fruit/seed-like of the chest or located at the thorax region. How then did it come to mean soul? The term is used to designate the concept of the *Christian Soul* when Missionaries came and tried to explain what the Soul is to the Igbo-Africans. But due to inadequacy in language and random and grounded understanding of the concept of 'Soul,' the Igbo presumed it to be the 'Heart.' The reason for this presumption stems from the vitality of the Heart in man's life, coupling with its significant stoppage when a man dies. For the Igbo, during this state, life has gone physically for its vibration/expression (breath) has stopped (in death), and the Spirit (not any phenomenon like soul) as the principle of life would then leave the body. But the missionaries convinced and confused the Igbo that when a man dies, the 'Soul' leaves the body and goes back to God, who was the one to place it in man during creation, for the process of judgment. All these were attempts made in order to understand the Christian concept of 'Soul' as taught by the Missionaries. But, now, drawing on experience, when a man dies, the 'Heart' significantly stops beating and the body becomes lifeless (the assumption that the 'Soul' has left the body), and so, the Igbo consequently mistook the 'Soul' for the 'Heart' and, through considering the functionality, linked it to the 'Heart,' meaning now that the force of the seed/fruit-like organ which beats in the chest (*Mkpuru-Obi*) has left the body because the sound/beat is no more there. This is an expression of the western philosophy in their religion so as to create a dual avenue for the existence of the material and immaterial as the holism of reality. It is on this influence that many African scholars, many of whom are Christians, have stated that there is soul different from the spirit, albeit not being capable of plausibly differentiate between them. Many even end up making laughable and delusory explanations on the concept of the soul. Njoku denotes that,

The soul or *obi* in Igbo is the principle of life. If one is breathing, it means that one's *obi* (heart) is functioning, and that one is still alive. In this sense, *obi* is a biological principle. It is also a metaphysical principle in sense that it is that which is the form of life without which one cannot be said to have life. Psychologically, *obi* is the seat of character, such that a good person is said to have *obi oma*, and a bad person has *obi ojoo*.<sup>91</sup>

While I agree with Njoku on the biological and psychological functionalities and implications of *Obi*, I strongly disagree with his confusion and substituting *Obi* for 'soul' in one hand and, for the 'heart,' on the other, and on his metaphysical conceptualization of *Obi*. There is no reasoning on how a biological phenomenon should rightly be said to be "the principle of life." Every description attributed to *Obi* therein should go to *Mmuo* (spirit). However, he goes further as to inform us that "'obi' can refer to both the organ of the body called heart or the soul, that is, the *form* that animates the body,"<sup>92</sup> but when prefixed as *npuruobi* (dialectic), centrally written in Igbo as *Mkpuru-Obi*, it therefore "seems to refer solely to the immateriality of the heart or that animating principle of the body – the soul."<sup>93</sup> There will never be anything like "the immateriality of the heart"<sup>94</sup> for the heart remains material. What animates the body, or the force behind the body, is the spirit, for no phenomenon is like the 'soul' to the Igbo.

Amaechi observes the same problem, but fails to address it properly. He states the fact that the word *Obi* equaling to soul is wrong on the basis of these reasons: 'lack of criterion of precision or clarity,' and "the glamour of english language over the Igbo language that only expands its vocabulary through tone-marking."<sup>95</sup> Thus, he opines that the precise Igbo word for soul appropriation is *Chidi* not *Obi*, for "to express the soul as *Obi* like the biological heart will be outrightly rejected by the philosophical empiricists as it is scientifically unverifiable."<sup>96</sup> He argues that the word *Obi* could variously mean the soul, the mind, the heart, a rest house, or even a digger, and following this imprecision, the word disqualifies from being the appropriate

<sup>91</sup> O. F. C. Njoku, *Ana-Atutu: Igbo Philosophy, A Study in the Public of Identity and Conflict Resolution* (Owerri: Goldline & Jacobs, 2009), 58.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Oliver N. C. Amaechi, "Let Igbo word for Soul be *Chidi* not *Obi*," *The Leader* (October, 2005), 8.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

representation of the soul. The representation is too poor following his conception of the soul as the “*De anima* of the scholastics, *De persona* of the humanists, the *ens qua ens* and the *quiditas* of metaphysical existentialists expressed as the being.”<sup>97</sup> The *Chidi* proposed by Amaechi to appropriately represent the Christian ‘soul’ is an Igbo word which Njoku interprets as ‘God in me.’<sup>98</sup> That is, however, incorrect, for ‘God in me’ translates into ‘Chi/Chukwu n’ime m.’ Even though the expression/content, and not the term per se, is what we finally use to picture/suggest what the soul could mean in Igbo, it is certainly not what Amaechi’s *Chidi* means in Igbo. *Chidi* is an Igbo term formed by *Chi* (variously meaning God, luck/fortuna, destiny, personal guardian, day-light)<sup>99</sup> and *di* meaning ‘is/exists;’ hence *Chidi* in the specific context he refers to means ‘God (who) is/exists.’ Going further, Amaechi informs us that “the soul is the principle of life, feeling, thought and action in man.”<sup>100</sup> In this, one may wonder what could the functional implications of the conscience, mind, etc., be in a man. He, however, dares to describe the conscience, saying that the “conscience is the spirit of God in man.”<sup>101</sup> Furthering his argument, he opines that “the operations of the soul in man is the voice of conscience. From the above, both soul and conscience are synonymous and psycho-spiritual principles.”<sup>102</sup> Amaechi harmed his own cause by his choice of grammar; he clearly notes that the concepts of soul and conscience are not interchangeable, but later says they are synonymous, hence if they both are not meaning the same thing, how can they be synonymous, all of a sudden? From his explanations, what functionally differentiates the soul from the conscience, based on the final analysis, is uncertain, as it appears that he treats them both as same phenomena. Eventually, though, that does not mean the Igbo is unaware of the spiritual elements of a man, for he knows that man is not entirely physical, but also metaphysical. However, Iroegbu renders in his own words the discourse regarding the ‘Soul.’

Since the advent of Christianity the term *mkpuru-obi* is used to translate soul... since the heart is in every creature the source of physical life and force of energy... But *mkpuruobi* is a poor rendering of *mmuo* because it is materialistic in overtones, it localizes the *mmuo* in the heart. *Mmuo* remains the standard and

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Njoku, *Ana-Atutu*, 62.

<sup>99</sup> Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, “The African (Igbo) Concept of *Akara Aka*: A Philosophical Reassessment,” *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* 5, no. 3 (2019): 65-70.

<sup>100</sup> Amaechi, “Let Igbo Word for Soul be *Chidi* not *Obi*,” 8.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

original word for that aspect of the human person that is the spiritual, the invisible and the determinant of the ontologico-transcendental being and functioning of *mmadu*.<sup>103</sup>

Iroegbu has always thought and written in Igbo, and that deserves a commendation. But here the influence of western tradition and his religious social status has played out. He rightly observes that the Soul is a foreign concept and redering it as *Mkpuru-Obi* is materializing it knowing the religious implication. But as a Christian and Priest of the foreign religion, it must be maintained, hence the description of it now as *Mmuo*. But, if the Soul now means *Mmuo*, what should the Spirit be called? Or is the Spirit same thing with ‘Soul’? Or should the concept of the Spirit be discarded from the Igbo thinking scheme?

Nonetheless, going by the biblical description of the ‘Soul,’ it can be called in Igbo *Mmuo*, or *Mkpuru nke Chukwu na Mmadu* (God’s Spirit or Fruit in man), or even *Chukwu-na-Mmadu* (God-in-Man), which God inserted in man during creation. Though this attempt to describe and define the ‘Soul’ in the Igbo thought spurs from the Christian influence and reflection because the ‘Soul’ is of Christian origin to explain the mystery of God, especially in creation account, and to equally establish a communication-means between God and His creatures, as it is regarded by many philosophers, like Aristotle, that every being, even the invisible ones, possess ‘Souls’ in accordance with their existential categories *cum quiddity*.<sup>104</sup>

At this juncture, we begin our analysis of the components of *mmadu* (*maadjvuru*) from the *Physical Sphere* to the *Metaphysical Sphere*.

*Ahu* (Body): The term *Ahu* could be etymologically dissected as *A* (an affixation) and *hu* implying ‘see, to see, seeing (ihụ).’ The *A* is affixed to *hu* to make it an activity, an on-going phenomenon (to see, or to be seen). So, *Ahu* implies a phenomenon to be seen, condemned to be seen. But *Ahu* as a term could be used in reference to ‘sickness’ whose effects could be visibly seen on the sick individual. Again, it could equally be applied to refer to somebody with small stature. It could also be used to refer to the (endearness) pleasantness of a child to parents when used in name/naming. It could equally be used to show the depth of feeling/emotion in somebody at the sight/hearing of a shocking/breaking news. Okere made a more elaborate attempt on this.<sup>105</sup> However, by *Ahu*, the Igbo literally means ‘muscle/flesh (as covered by the

<sup>103</sup> Iroegbu, *Metaphysics*, 353.

<sup>104</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. F. H. Peters (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1906), 1177a11-19; 1178b5-8.

<sup>105</sup> Okere, “The Structure of the Self,” 154

skin),’ but whose philosophical discourse and complexity extends to the hairs, blood, veins, bones, waters, flesh and other physical (both wastes, sex cells and moisture-contents) constituents of man. Extensively, the Heart and Brain are indicated in *Ahu* concept as physical components, but we will separate their discourse due to their sensitivity and essentiality in human life. Thus, *Ahu* is used to designate the ‘physicalities’ of man, but with its own critical and complex issues lying in the blood and human sex sells *cum* genes through which traits, attitudes and mysterious diseases from without to within are transmitted. It extensively comprises of ‘physicalities’ through which non-physical elements get into and out of the body – the physicality of man.

*Mkpuru-Obi* (Heart): *Mkpuru* means ‘seed’ while *Obi* means ‘chest,’ in this context. As we have rightly pointed out earlier, *Mkpuru-obi*, literally means ‘the fruit of the chest,’ and by this, it refers to the ‘seed-like thing/structure/part/organ’ located at the thorax region (chest).

However, *Obi* broadly connotes dual meanings; materially speaking, *Obi* means *chest, the thorax region*, and ideally speaking, *Obi* could mean the following: First, *Obi* could generally refer to ‘thought, opinion, intention or suggestion’ in an issue. Expressing this, the Igbo would ask a fellow: ‘*gini bukwanu obi gi?*’ meaning ‘what is then your mind/opinion or intention or take,’ with regard to a particular issue. Second, it could refer to guts/audacity/courage or in a losed tone ‘mind’ to do something – in this sense, the Igbo would say ‘*i nwere obi ime m ihe a?*’ (‘so you have the mind/guts/audacity to do this to me?’) – probably because the act is so bad that the actor is thought by the action-receiver to have the mind to kill. Third, though an extension of the second, *Obi* could mean gesture or the attitudinal disposition of doing either good or bad – such that when one does good to you, you can say *o nwere obi-oma ebe m no* (he/she has a good heart towards me) while otherwise speaks also volumes of having same *obi* (attitudinal disposition), but in this instance a negative one, towards another. Fourth, it means *conscience*, and that is why the Igbo would say: ‘*obi ya n’ata ya uta*’ (‘his/her conscience is pricking/blaming him/her’).

However, we think that for a proper defense of *Obi* as ‘conscience,’ some sort of affixation should be done with *Obi* so as to properly picture conscience as a concept. That will be done when we analyze conscience as a concept that composite the metaphysical components of human beings. The term *Obi* in the second leg of its etymological meaning and linguistic implication, thus, acquires a metaphysical status, implying a metaphysical concept that is very essential in the ideal components of human beings. Be that as it may be, fundamentally, *Mkpuru-Obi* does count in the composition of man but it is purely physical and biologically highly influential in man. But the *Mkpuru-Obi*, which others term the *Soul*, does not exist in the Igbo



ontological thinking vis-à-vis the composition of man, hence, for the Igbo, there is no *Soul*, rather there is *Mmuo* (Spirit). *Soul* is brought by the foreign religion, precisely Christianity as have elaborately discussed above. However, we have tried to designate the Christian introduced concept- ‘Soul’ with the term *Mmuo* or *Mkpuru nke Chukwu na Mmadu* (God’s Spirit or Fruit in man) or even *Chukwu-na-Mmadu* (God-in-Man) in accordance with the biblical creation account and principle of deduction from the biblical influence.

*Uburu/Uvuru* (Brain): This is a very essential part of man which may be physical but functionally appears or extends to the domains of non-physical. A serious damage on it causes an intrinsic malfunctioning of the human person, even mentally. Its unique way and pattern of functioning makes many materialists – Gilbert Ryle, the Atomists, the Chinese Room Argument Participants, among others – to believe that man is entirely mechanical and physical/material-composited, thereby denying the possibility of elements of spiritual-composition of man. It works in the mental realm, which is ideal even though the effects are measured physically; this may have informed Descartes’ conviction/belief that the body-mind interaction takes place in the central region of the brain – the Pineal Gland. It functions alongside the intellect, and in coexistence with all the intrinsic and internal human instincts ranging from memory, emotion, cognition, interpretation, etc., as gathered from the empirical/physical background/sphere. Just like the sex cells, it remains a mystery about the human person, existence and well-being.

*Onwe* (Self): *Onwe* stands as the principle of the individual self, and in the light of reflexive pronoun, noun-in-apposition. The self is spiritual but distinct and specific to individuals. It is a universal existential quality to every man but differs among individuals as a principle of individuation. As a component of man, it is the internal part of man. It is the internality of a man, and it functionally associates with other metaphysical faculties and constituents of man like the mentality and the whole activities of the mind, the psychological ability to comport the body as a whole, and also the character. Basically, *Onwe* has, ideally, a functional link with *Azu Abuo*. As an expression, the Igbo can say ‘*onwe ya na-agba ya ntaka*’ (‘he is internally disorganized, restive’). *Onwe ya* (him/herself) here does not point only to the ‘physical person as a whole,’ but, also, to his/her ‘internal’ person – his/her ‘internal self’ which could be so-linked to the person’s ‘spiritual affair,’ ‘mental affair/state,’ or any other ‘internal make-up or component’ of the physical man as a whole.

*Mmuo* (Spirit): Primarily, the term *Mmuo* refers to ‘spirit.’ But it could, in the Igbo ordinary linguistic expression, mean ‘conscience,’ and this is expressed when the Igbo admits his fault and says ‘*Mmuo m n’atazi m uta*’ (‘my conscience is now pricking me’). So far, we can see how, on the basis of context, *Mmuo*

and *Obi* could both mean ‘conscience.’ But in this context, it is very wrong to use *Mmuo* which means ‘spirit’ when one refers to conscience-related-issues. However, more emphasis is put on this leg of discussion, as it relates and expresses that the concept of ‘conscience’ would resurface under the discussion of ‘conscience.’ That said, we must note that metaphysically speaking, *Mmuo* is that part that ceases to operate when a man dies. It is that which “has travelled at death to the *Ala-Mmuo*, the spirit-world, to sojourn with the ancestors. From there it will return... in reincarnation,”<sup>106</sup> as Iroegbu puts it. For Iroegbu, what is reincarnated is the Spirit of the *Departed-living*, or as Iroegbu insists, of the ancestors, and reincarnation, by this logic, becomes “an expression of the ontological longing of man to *live on*.”<sup>107</sup> *Mmuo* is a general quality of every man. It is that means-to-journey-back to joining the dead, among whom are the Saints – *Departed-living* – and whom many scholars called different names – living-dead, ancestors, etc., in the spirit world.<sup>108</sup> It symbolically manifests itself into breathing in a more biological experience. It can go out from the body but can also return later (as in the case of coma, trance, etc.). This belief is the reason the Igbo encourages not to bury the dead immediately, for the *Mmuo* may return, as it is believed that somebody (via spirit) can go out or journey to the land of the spirits and learn some moral lessons, or teach others to be morally conscious for the welfare in the hereafter, or be sent (forced) back to life to complete life-assignments. It is with and in this *Mmuo* realm that somebody can transcend (go off) in the case of *ndi dibia* and other medicine men, and can still return. But if something goes wrong on the process, the person may not return and inhabit the body again, and when this happens, the *Mmuo* can be roaming around in the community, and this can finally lead to death of the person. This experience can still play out in the case of *onwu ike* (sudden death, say- accident, etc.), the spirit may be out, and upon returning and not finding its body, it may proceed to the spirit world prompting the death of the physical body. Significant here is the question of the place of an event, or the ‘howness’ of the happening of the event, and this expresses in the Igbo saying that ‘*ebe ihe siri bido bu ebe o sikwa ana/ala*,’ or ‘*ka ihe siri bido bu ka o sikwa ana/ala*’ (where or how something started, it ended).

At this juncture, to elaborate more on these two phenomena, *Mmuo* and *Onwe*, man approaches his fellow man with the ‘self’ to form the aggregate of ‘selves,’ and, so, from *onwe m* (myself) to *onwe anyi* (ourselves); but *mmuo* (spirit) is used to approach the invisibles in the other existential sphere/world.

<sup>106</sup> Iroegbu, *Metaphysics*, 353.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>108</sup> John Samuel Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1969), 107; Edeh, *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics*, 75-6; Bartholomew Abanuka, *A New Essay on African Philosophy* (Nsukka: Spiritan Publications, 1994), 37.

Therefore, we can have *onwe anyi* (ourselves) but never *mmuo anyi* (our spirits); and even when we mistakenly use *mmuo anyi*, we quickly emphasize it by coming down to individual 'self' by applying an expression of *m* (me) or *onwe m* (myself). Sometimes we mistakenly say in expressing our feelings '*mmuo anyi anabataghi ya*' ('our spirits did not accept it') instead of '*onwe anyi anabataghi ya*' ('ourselves did not accept it'), if literally expressed. But, in a clever manner, after this, we quickly emphasize, or, in subsequent comments, say something like '*dika, onwe m anabataghi ya*' (that is, 'myself did not accept it'). The 'self' is spiritual, but expresses the experiences within the 'physical existence of man,' but the 'spirit' shares the space with the 'invisible beings in the other existential sphere/world.' Both are in the metaphysical realms of human beings, but while *onwe* (self) is 'particular' and associates with the 'human affairs here and every time,' *mmuo* (spirit) associates with the affairs 'there in the invisible world.' The 'self' does not go to answer for judgment at the last day and be rewarded (if there is any, or according to the Christian belief), it is the spirit that does. The metaphysical realm of communication in man therefore passes through *onwe* (self) to *mmuo* (spirit) and then finally to the 'invisible beings' including the Supreme Reality. Thus, African communality is rooted in *onwe* (self) because it is through 'self' that the other 'selves' have sameness of experiences that encourage the emergence of *onwe anyi* (ourselves) and community-formation. But we must know that the identifying socio-ontological attitude of the African does not end here, it extends to the invisible world. So, from here, the 'self' plays vitally; and being in the same metaphysical realm with the 'spirit,' it easily passes every existential experiences of man to the 'spirit' that will now associate those experiences to the 'invisible beings in the invisible world,' and from there on, the invisibles or ancestors, whom we refer to as the 'Departed Living,' will now judge the person as to whether he will be accepted in their folk (which is the core African-Igbo belief of existential reward) over there or not.

*Oyime* (Ghost): The experience explained above gives rise to the question of *Oyime*. *Oyime* goes out first, before death occurs properly, and ends immediately after death occurs. It is seen through spiritual eyes and strong minds. From testimonies, it is skeletal in nature, disappears, does not usually touch the ground, it is very difficult to describe and can be chaotic in nature, depending on the nature of the person's spiritual state which could draw from his/her *azu-abuo* (man's-animal-part) of the person about to die. Thus, *oyime*, though still in a very serious realm of metaphysics, expresses to an extent, the beingness of a person's *Ehihe* (the person's doubleness). Somebody's *Oyime* can even visit the relatives of the person about to die, and as a spiritual visit, there could be, by expectation, a certain level of incongruities, which may manifest in the form of sleeplessness, ants' disturbance, unusual animal

cries and in a very ungodly hours for some days, constant experience and visibility of unusual animals, strange sight and behaviour of certain animals, etc. Certain sounds of birds, and other animals truly stand for *oyime* as is the African, Igbo experience. In fact, the *oyime* of an *Ozo* differs from the *oyime* of a non-*Ozo*. Different still, is their duration of happening and manner of happening also tells a lot as to which category of person is about to die. It can even express itself in things other than animals like *ero/eru* (mushroom), etc. This explains why a man would, in the state and regarding the level of filial love and endearness existing between him and his relative, tell him: '*aga m adara gi ero/eru ma obu anu*' ('I will provide mushroom or meat, meaning animal, for you'). This goes to show that *oyime* can be expressed by a strange behaviour of an animal. A dear person could equally be promised a gift, a gesture which could finally be fulfilled by an unknown person. To fulfill this, the relative could be provided with amazing mushroom where the person may have passed by yesterday and did not see anything resembling a mushroom growth there, or being granted the luck of finding an animal to kill and eat, an animal that, on a normal basis, he/she could not kill, among other mysterious signs. Regarding this, he/she would be told '*e gbugoro gi ya na mmuo*' ('they' have killed it, meaning the animal, for you in the spirit). This 'they,' who have killed for the person in quote here, presents this ontological influence that the dying person, spiritually, has on the animal. Such is an expression of love to relatives; but when it concerns to anything edible, it may not be giving that real taste of that item of food, unlike when it is ordinarily got. *Oyime* can be seen/experienced personally or communally and can be havoc or peaceful depending on the spiritual state of the dying person, his *azu-abu*, perhaps. When it is havoc, it creates violent scenes. A story is still today told of a woman whom, when she was about to die, her *oyime* came out physically and pursued a group of women performing a traditional rite while she was yet among the women folk performing the traditional ritual, and she ran for her own dear life as well like others. She did not know it was her *oyime* in the form of violent women who would sparkle light and violently move towards the folk and all would run. No one recognized the face or could say it resembled this or that person/thing. It was only those who could see spiritual knew it was the women, and in the night, she fell sick, and the next day, she died. The simple implication of this is that she was an *ogbanje*, a possessed woman, and she expressed that state through being violent. That does not imply that her doubleness was directly *ogbanje* for *ogbanje* is a state of being, not an animal, but *ogbanje* which is inherently negative and stands for violence-nature of her animal-part.

*Ehihe* (the 'doubleness' of man): *Ehihe* has no English equivalence, however, it could also be called *azu-abua mmadu*. In fact, it is from this reference (*azu-abua*

*mmadu*) that it takes its appropriated English equivalence (the ‘doubleness’ of man). Hence, *Ehihe* is believed to be the *azu abuo mmadu* (the ‘doubleness,’ or better still, primarily the ‘animal-part’ of man). The simple implication of this is that it is the animal-in-apposition to every physical man. Basically, *Ehihe* is believed to exist only in animal kingdom, most commonly occurring, regarding wild animals and not domestic ones. A significant deductible point here is that as man takes the existential position of higher animal, his *Ehihe* takes the existential position of an inferior animal. Again, while man takes the habitat position of domestics, his *Ehihe* counterpart takes the habitat position of wildness/non-domestics. *Ehihe* is not believed to be in any other kingdom of reality like tree, water, etc. However, *Ehihe* can be found in human form, but only when the person is at the verge or threshold of death. At this point of transcendence, it could be termed *Oyime* (ghost), no more *azu-abuo* because it has taken another existential form and would transcend from a sphere of existence into the invisible realm of existence. At this point, it becomes the leaving, though still living person, and after this point of transubstantiation, death becomes the next available inescapable occurrence with immediacy – perhaps not more than *izu* (the traditional Igbo week, with the four days being *Eke, Ori, Afo, Nkwo*). Only human beings have *Ehihe*, spirits, trees, animals, etc. do not have one. It is mostly believed that when one’s *Ehihe* is killed, the person would die physically for the *Ehihe* is the second of the person in the world/family of animals it belongs to. That is why if someone’s siesta lasts till 4 pm, he/she would be woken so that the returning hunters would not kill his *Ehihe* according to the Igbo belief. A possible deductible existential experiential lesson is that this waking up tames siesta duration. It trains and punctuates man within a particular time range (duration) of sleeping in the afternoon. Nevertheless, it is in *Ehihe* (*azu-abuo*) *mmadu*, at the very point it returns to the human form of the person and very immediately about to leave from this sphere of existence, that the person can be pursued back to life. Any person who can pursue a dying person whose *Ehihe*, or *Oyime* (ghost) so to say, has now come back to human entity, must be a strong person, and who can spiritually see well and far. That is because it is a dangerous journey to embark on and anyone who dares to embark on bringing a person back to life through *azu-abuo* must be a man of surplus vigour, who is strongly willed and minded, very spiritually determined and one with much moral values whose morality/uprightness fights for. The rescuer, if care is not taken – say he/she is not spiritually strong, willed and determined – could be exchanged for the person he/she tries to pursue back to life, or even the two of them might taken by those spirit-beings who have come to take (drag) the dying person spiritually to the spirit world. What is still clear is that a dying person is accompanied/escorted to (in the process of being dragged) by a group of spirit of the dead, to the spirit land. This dying person

dragged in the spiritual realm to the spirit land is no more in the sphere of *Ehihe* but in that of *Oyime* now, hence being in human form when returning to this world where he came from. They are always seen by the gifted and people who can see in a spiritual sense in the community; and, significantly, they always follow the olde path/way, for that is the path these accompanying/escorting spirits knew before their departure from the physical existence. This journey is so dangerous that any who does not see spiritually who blocks the way/path can be severely hurt, and if so unfortunate, can get deformed perhaps deaf if slapped, deformed at the neck if severely hit there, or even get seriously injured if hit or pushed down spiritually, by these spirits undergoing this spiritually dangerous mission. Apparently, at this juncture, that is not just a mere and physical fight alone, it is supportively spiritual as the spirits of the relatives of the dying person may join (by divine/ontological intercession/interference) to help the fighting person to succeed in pursuing back the dying person to life, though this greatly depends on the moral status of the person being dragged spiritually to the land of the spirits. But this is not the only way a person could be sent/pursued back to life, for if it were to be, it would mean that every person must have to pass through the scenario explained here. Hence, a person can be pursued back to life in the dream through a spiritually strong willed individual; it could be a physically living person or a dead person. Even in the dream fighting/rescuing mission, the same process of caning (revolt) could be applied to pursue the person back to life and when the person returns to his physical body, the immediate inevitable step is to wake. Same thing happens when the mission is being carried out physically. The person would wake or shake their body to show the sign of life expressing a state of still-living. Peculiar sign could be to sneeze, among other signs. Generally, this way of pursuing back to life in dream shows the existence of spirit elements of reality. The fact that the dead pursue a person back to life from the spirit world in dream shows the ontological reality of the dead, especially when they are in a better place, namely paradise, in the hereafter, which denotes that they are still living as spiritual (counter) parts of the physical living members of the family. This is the base or rationale for describing/designating the dead in paradise in the hereafter as departed-living. They have departed from this visible existential sphere to the invisible existential sphere but are still actively living. During this fight, canes/sticks of a particular tree called *ozas* are used. *Ozasi* is a sort of tree believed to have some spiritual potencies, is medicinal and whose leaves are used to preserve kola nuts locally and its sticks used in such event because of its highly spiritual-contents. It is a highly conceived spiritualized tree which *Dibia* (native doctors/diviners) use for medical/herbal concoction and spiritual journey. It is the same plant used in the event of *igba agha* (war-revolt/protest) always done by the women folk. *Igba agha* simply means 'revolt, a deep ontological event where the women

folk in unity and agreement with the spirit counterparts revolt against an ongoing negative/abnormal event ravaging the community and which they have physically decided to ontologically revolt against, in unison with the spirit beings, so as to put a stop to and redress for social progress and more social development.’ That said, the *watchword* of the rescuer during the fight would be ‘*onye n’agba nsi/ogu nwanne anaghi ebue/evu akpu n’onu*’ (‘he who is fighting for his relative does not get wounded but survives’). The successfulness of this spirit-rescue-mission may not entirely be because the fighter/rescuer is strong physically, but through divine/ontological intercession and interference and *aka nkwu-m-oto* (blamelessness/uprightness) of the rescuer/fighter.

Comparatively, to some Umuokans, *Oyime* and *Ehihe* are the same. But, we believe that they are not. *Ehihe* concept begins with the existence of a person, while *Oyime* concept begins only in regard to the person’s death. In other words, *Ehihe* is linked with a person’s beginning of existence but *Oyime* begins at the tap by the person’s *mmuo*, serving as a signal that the person has begun the process of dying. This explains why *Oyime* as a procedural phenomenon/existential experience can take a long time before death properly occurs. However, *Ehihe* has a lot of implications as far as *Oyime* is concerned, for these two concepts can both be expressed in many forms. Perhaps, this may explain why the European holds that the African believes that souls abode on the trees, stones, waters, etc. Nevertheless, it is of importance to enquire how the two relate with the *Mmuo*. Simply put that they are manifestations, expressions of the reality and presence of the *Mmuo* in the human being.

*Uche* (Mind/Intellect): The term *Uche* in a loosed sense could imply ‘intention, wish, opinion.’ This explains why the Igbo could tell a neighbour, ‘*kwuo uche gi*,’ that is, ‘speak your mind,’ or ‘express yourself,’ in terms of opinion or wish, on a particular matter at hand. Importantly, we must recognize that this ‘expression’ is still an act of voicing out what the mind thinks/says about the matter in quote. However, from a relative sense to this work, *Uche* is the thinking faculty of man. It exists in the mentality of man and it is functionally linked to the brain, the right state of the individual’s health, psyche, memory, etc. It can, however, be lost or appear malfunctioning when a serious damage is inflicted on certain sensitive organs of the body, like the brain, etc. Too much thinking, worries, stress, mental instability, imbalance or insanity can very clearly bring about its malfunctioning. That is why sometimes the Igbo says ‘*Uche ya anoghizi ya* or *onarago ya Uche*,’ that is, ‘he has lost his mind,’ due to one of the factors listed above.

*Echiche* (Thinking): *Echiche* is the thinking (activity) that *Uche* does. A man’s course of action and manner of thinking go a long way to truly define him and show his personality. It depicts the presence of *Uche* in man but the quiddity of his *Echiche* through *Uche* is greatly influenced by *Ako*. It shows the level of

a man's wisdom and while it is not wisdom, it serves as a way through which wisdom is demonstrated. Overall, it is tied to *Uche* and *Ako*.

*Ako* (Wisdom): *Ako* is wisdom. Wisdom is *Onatara Chi* (God's gift or Nature-bestowed). *Ako* brings out the beauty and effectiveness of proper state and functioning or essence of *Uche cum Echiche*. It is not learnt, though seen as a percentage it is incomplete without proper formal education. It can informally lead a man, but not formally, for certain ingredients, such as *mmuta* (knowing/understanding), are enjoyed with *Ako* so as to create a solid intellectual balance. In its informality it is limited and imbalanced. In some Igbo tongues and conceptions, *Ako* translates as *Amam-ihe* or *Awam-anya*, and out of language game the expression of *Ako* could be referred to as *Nti-Ako* (*Iti-Ako*).

*Nghota* (Understanding): The expression of *Nghota* shows the effectiveness of *Uche*, the level of its essence (*Echiche*) and is the way through which *Ako* is manifested. It defines the personality of man. Its balance and flexibility enhance communal living, accommodation and tolerance.

To give a comparative but brief emphasis on this point, when the physical constituents, such as the eye, ear, etc., behold a phenomenon, *Echiche* occurs and descends on it through the natural phenomenon *Uche*, the faculty of thinking, so as to necessitate *Nghota* which is facilitated qualitatively and quantitatively by *Ako*. This functional link especially between *Ako* and *Uche* makes some Umuokans, Igbo, to say *Ako-na-Uche* to mean one phenomenal composite of the human being. But in a strict though thinly sense, they are different phenomena.

*Onyinyo* (Shadow): *Onyinyo* is one of the components of man that is mysterious even though science may not see it as such. For the Igbo, it portrays the presence of the metaphysical composition of man. It stands as a symbol of the reality of *azu abuo mmadu* (the doubleness of man). It equally depicts the principle of individuality, thereby, portraying the saying '*onweghi onye ga agbanari onyinyo ya n'oso*' ('nobody will run faster than his shadow' – Individuality Principle). It is sometimes seen as a symbol of the presence of man's *Chi* or Guarding Angel or even life of the being. Among the Igbo, it is equally believed that through a being's shadow the being can be hurt.

*Ume* (Breath): *Ume* is a significant sign of the proper functioning of the heart, lungs, and other mechanical composite organs in the body. Ideally, it proves that life is still in the body and by implication, the presence of *mmuo* as the principle of life. It is a product of the invisible but expressed visibly through the activity of *mkpuru-obi* (heart). It can be ceased for some times, yet life which symbolizes the presence of *mmuo* is still inside the person.

*Agwa* (Character/Attitude): *Agwa* is the defining character/exhibition of an individual. It explains the traces of genes from the parents that make up the



attitudinal temperaments of an individual. It is also a principle of individuality and of siblings which defines their diverse personalities that exist even though they are of the same parents. Onunwa places more emphasis on *Agwa* and insists that it is the beauty of an individual, and can mar or grace him.<sup>109</sup>

*Obi-Ikpe* (Conscience): *Obi-Ikpe* literally means ‘the heart that judges or the judging-heart’ where ‘heart’ here refers to ‘that voice of reason, voice of moral consciousness, voice of the heart that judges man as to whether what he has thought, done or said is right or wrong.’ We have, previously, properly elaborated on what *Obi* means both materially and ideally, and though in its ideal leg of meaning it goes tripartite, here we stick to the one that implies ‘conscience.’ It is on this basis that it calls for the necessity to search for a proper way and name for it, as *Obi* can refer only to conscience, and this explains why the affixation *Ikpe* exists. *Ikpe* literally means ‘judgment.’ But we must note that the sense of judgment inheres elements of rationality so as to proffer a right sense of judgment. However, to give a proper or best correspondence to the English meaningful equivalence of the term ‘conscience’ as ‘a person’s moral sense of right and wrong,’ or ‘the part of your mind that tells you whether your actions are right or wrong,’ which connotes the idea/facticity of the sense of moral judgment, the term *Ikpe* becomes imperative to be affixed to the term *Obi*. That combination will detach it from wearing entirely a sympathy/emotion-status which centrally revolves around the functionality of *Obi* and then mediate its rationality-involvement and situate it within a mild range between sympathy and rationality-exercise.

*Obi-Ikpe* (conscience) could also be represented with the term *Mmuo-Ikpe*. *Mmuo* literally means ‘spirit,’ hence *Mmuo-Ikpe* literally means ‘the spirit that judges or the judging spirit’ where ‘spirit’ here implicates ‘that spiritual part of man that judges him as to whether what he has thought, done or said is right or wrong.’ The ontological function of the term *Ikpe* to *mmuo* on this context gears towards sense of morality as to what is right and what is wrong. It therefore points to the metaphysical aspect of man that judges his action even in himself before an outside-self judges the action as to whether morally wrong or right. We have also earlier referred to how the term *Mmuo* which ordinarily in Igbo language stands for ‘spirit’ implies conscience. When the Igbo says ‘*mmuo ya n’apia ya utari*’ (‘his/her conscience is caning (pricking) him/her’), he refers to ‘conscience,’ not ‘spirit’ as a component of a human being. Hence, it is a very poor manner of expression to apply *mmuo* on the context of ‘spirit’ when it concerns conscience discourse. In this regard comes the indispensability of the affixation of the term *Ikpe* to the word *mmuo* so as to represent properly the English equivalence of conscience.

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<sup>109</sup> Onunwa, “Humanistic Basis,” 46.

Thus by this expression, ‘conscience’ becomes interpreted as the deepest, purest and most sincere mind or heart with which one brings out the best in him in approaching his neighbour. It becomes the ‘vibration of the spirit’ in reaction to man’s activity, speeches and thinking. By this expression, ‘conscience’ becomes the seat of sincerity and truthfulness in man. But what then becomes the case when we consciously suppress this conscience to a point of non-functionality just as we see expressed in the daily life of man? However, these terminal expressions about conscience that *mmadu* is attached to, when critically scrutinized from the etymological and ontological meaning, implication and suggestions of the expressions, are discriminatory in nature for they secure/bestow the term ‘conscience’ solely for/on human beings, no other reality possesses it by a strict meaning, implication and analysis of those expressions. But could it be true that only man can the concept ‘conscience’ be discussed about? Conscience could be seen expressed by animals, for instance, when the bigger/more-powerful animal quarrels with the smaller/less-powerful animal and hurts it to a point even when the freedom to continue the hurt is there, it may just decide to stop or even position itself on the usual position where it (the bigger/more-powerful animal) hurts the small/less-powerful one, but willingly declines from continuing doing so and just be looking at the helpless smaller/less-powerful one. What could we say of such attitude even though sometimes this is disregarded because of the exercise of the animalistic nature of animals? Thus, deductible from our analysis so far in this work is that even animals have spirits; it holds no water attributing conscience or even moral consciousness to only a set of reality – say human beings – for all these expressions (conscience, moral consciousness) are the manifests, mode of expressions of the spirit in any reality. Animals have moral consciousness and even conscience following their nature being composed of spirit which is central to their beingness, though, habitually, their animalistic nature outweighs their show/expression of these other metaphysical components, and that explains a lot as to why a child-animal can mate with the mother-animal.

Finally, it is very pertinent to note that somebody’s *obi-ikpe* or *mmuo-ikpe* can be consciously suppressed, bluntly ignored by man, and, when this happens, the negativity-nature and aspect of man now comes up to play, and the inevitable resultant effect is an animalistic, beast-like and inhumane display, all this for the instilling of self-centeredness and self-ego-drives. From our analysis, certain features play out; in the concept as a metaphysical idea and component of man, according to the Igbo, ‘conscience’ inheres (1) that sense of moral judgment, (2) that sense of sympathy emanating from the ends of morality of the judgment, (3) that guarantee of a plausible moral judgment, in which elements of rationality are involved so as to ensure a

balance between sympathy and rationality, hence rationality is equally featured.

*Onatara Chi* (Nature-Given Gifts/Talents): *Onatara Chi* literally means ‘received from Chi (God)’ or ‘God/Nature-given.’ It connotes the idea of ‘inborn’ and, as such, it is equally part of the class of individuality. It is that defining talent found in each sibling which distinctly differentiates him from fellows. It is a personal endowment bestowed on man to help him succeed in life if he can identify and maximize it. But, importantly, *onatara Chi* becomes effective and existentially useful when constantly renewed/regenerated/rejuvenated. This is why I would not like to term it *akara aka* because there is no *akara aka*, but a serious determination towards exploration of human tendencies/capabilities to give essence to life/existence.<sup>110</sup>

*Chi*: *Chi* has variously been translated and interpreted. It is a serious concept employed to explain reality as perceived. *Chi* has its root and basic sense from God as *Chi-ukwu* (Great God), or *Chi-n’eke* (Creating-God). However, it primarily depicts God/god, or god-hood – in this, it could be God, (personal) god, guarding angel, spiritual being/element/entity. That is why it has also been seen as an individual’s Guiding and Guarding god/Angel, associated with individual’s principle of luck, fortune, misfortune, failure and success. Again, it has been superlatively interpreted as the root-word to ‘god’ as in the Supreme Being – *Chi* in *Chi-ukwu*. The adjective *ukwu* (great) is added to differentiate Him from *Chi-ness* or god-hood of other beings, man even included as is expressed thus, ‘*mmadu bu chi ibe ya*’ (‘human being is his fellow’s *chi*’). In this sense, man becomes the material medium through which the Supreme *Chi* manifests His saving-aid to men. For the Igbo, it could equally connote ‘*Akara Aka* concept’ (Predestination).<sup>111</sup> Abanuka makes an extra effort to explore more on the concept and informs us that “it means day or daylight”<sup>112</sup> as in *Chi efoo* and *Chi ejiee* (Day has broken, and night has fallen). I would like to however delve deeper, in order to note that *Chi* could as well be perceived as the *principle of existence*, that is, the beginning or emergence of something that has never been; as in *Chi-ta ya* (bring it – make it emerge here), *Chi-a* (laugh – emerge laughter) *Chi-zie* or *Chi-saa ya* (dress or scatter it – let the dressing or scattering emerge), *Chi-wazie anyi* (now lead us – emerge the leadership for it has never been). In attributing creation to God, we say *Chi-oke*, in as much as *oke* implies several things, we shall pick two implications,

<sup>110</sup> Ugwu, “The African (Igbo) Concept of *Akara Aka*: A Philosophical Reassessment.”

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.; Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, and Leo Chigozie Ozoemena, *African Philosophy, Cultural Conceptions and Experiences: A Collection of Essays* (Mauritius: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2019), 87-102.

<sup>112</sup> Abanuka, *Further Critical Studies*, 40.

*oke* as it relates to ‘creation,’ and *oke*, as it relates to ‘destiny,’ that is, ‘your own *oke* – portion – which has been designed for you *ab nitio*.’ By extension, the ‘creation’ implication could be more simplified as (*Chi-Okike*) – the *Chi* through whom creation emerged – the principle/beginner/bringer of creation, or *Chi* of creation, or God, whose nature is creation, or *Chi-eke* – the *Chi* who owns/ has or carries *eke* (creation) in Himself that wherever he is behold, creation emerges/begins or is given. By this, His nature as the defiler of barrenness of all sorts is portrayed. Hence, *Chi* concept is an essential constituent of man. The ‘destiny’ implication could be more expressed as *Chi-Oke* – the God of/who is incharge of destiny apportioning.

## VI. Conclusion

And who would refute Anyanwu and Ruch, when they contend that for one to get the real knowledge of reality (in this context, the real knowledge of Africa and the African), one has to be well attached, must remain an insider and never an outsider to reality as obtainable in Africa, hence their assertion that “the method through which the African arrives at the trustworthy knowledge of reality (God, man, spirit, society, social facts) is intuitive and personal experience.”<sup>113</sup> Similar view and position is maintained by Achebe,<sup>114</sup> when he recalls that his Western lecturers could only teach him what they have been academically impacted from their own background, but not his African, Nigerian background in order to tell the story of his self. In other words, he is in a better position to define himself, his African environment following his African experiences. Be that as it may, we have been able to critically explore both the physical and metaphysical components of man in the African (Igbo) conception and even narrowed it down to that of Umuokan conceptual scheme. From the analysis in this work, it has been established here that man is a sustained-survived/surviving-spirit whose essential nature is *good/beauty, bad, spirit or the facticity of existence or survival*. Thus, both evil and good are existential/fundamental in the identity of man’s nature, essence and substance, hence it is naturally perceived and sustained as intrinsic in man’s nature. Of course this existential state is also said of God, for if He has nothin to do or have anything in common with evil, or cannot explain evil, then He is not perfect and omnipotent.<sup>115</sup> But man is so complicated, though more vitality is conceptually attached to his metaphysical compositions.

<sup>113</sup> Chukwulozie Kinglsey Anyanwu, and E. A. Ruch, *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa* (Rome: Catholic Books Agency, 1981), 94.

<sup>114</sup> Chinua Albert Achebe, *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 34.

<sup>115</sup> Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, and Leo Chigozie Ozoemena, “Reality Explained.”

Man for the Igbo is essentially a being composed of both physical and metaphysical elements, as well as a being who is characteristically identified as an ontological communitarian and humanist. His existence is essentially meaningful in the attitude of 'being-with' other existents – be that visible or invisible, in a more humane way. His name portrays his mode of living/ existing/surviving, his existential pattern/manner/way depicts its existential nature/mode-of-living and ontological implications of his name. The spiritual sphere is not distant from the physical sphere of existence, and the African experiences ontologically, epistemologically, intuitively and experientially provide a lot of information on these realities. The two worlds interweave and one sphere is as important as the other for any act in one sphere can intrinsically and existentially mar the rudiments or the existence in the other. The rudiments of his existential communality have a lot to explain in regard to the concept, belief and reality of reincarnation among the Igbo Africans. Morality is an integral part and parcel of the African, Igbo, Umuokan worldview, existence and general life endeavours, hence, the consciousness of moral implications in the ontological-life of the African begins his existential wellbeing and safe-journey-process to the here-after even from here-within. Epistemologically, it brings to the fore the knowledge that the spirit is at the centrality of all the ontological components of man, and indeed every reality. Their ontological existential qualities, natural inclinations/demonstrations are solely dependent on, and are the instrumentalities, workings or expressive means, operationalities or functionalities of the spirit.

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