

INTERROGATING THE NOTION OF BIOSOCIAL PERSONHOOD IN UKWUANI WORLDVIEW

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Abstract

This paper identifies the ubiquity and increasing rate of social problems in African societies in spite of the attempts at providing solutions to them. Such problems include insecurity, ethno-religious crises, poor governance/leadership at various levels amongst others. As a result of all these social misdemeanors, human relationships are not only strained but humanity is debased as orientations of personhood are not given attention in human actions, the resultant social problems and even the solutions provided to the problems. The objective of this paper is to show the relevance of personhood, through the Ukwuani biosocial perspective with its attendant ethical values, in solving certain social problems confronting African societies and even the world at large. The methods adopted in this paper are ethnophilosophy and philosophical analysis in order to understand the orientation of personhood among the Ukwuani and also to interpret it with the aim of showing their particular and universal relevance, both in African societies and beyond. The paper concludes that a collaborative approach between indigenous ethical values of the Ukwuani biosocial personhood and the humane aspects of the individualist attitude of western liberalism would avert atomic individualism which is a major source of the social problems. The approach must be critically rooted in the indigenous value system of the Ukwuani biosocial personhood for a more participatory outcome in addressing the problems.

Keywords: Africa, Biosocial personhood, Collectivism, Social problem, Social order, Ukwuani anthropology

Introduction

Biosocial personhood is the ethical interrogation of the combination of the ontological and normative views of personhood with certain ethical principles that can be applied in very significant areas of human existence, especially as they affect social order in Africa. The ontological perspective of the human person deals with the biological aspects as espoused by Sapontzis to contain neurological, muscular and mental elements (608) and Sheffler's description of it as constitutive of the body, soul and the combination of both (32). The social aspects are discussed as the normative view of personhood described with social and moral relationships amongst individuals (Menkiti 171; Gyekye 103-4; Wiredu 17). In each of the different areas that constitute the two perspectives of the biosocial personhood (ontological and normative), there are identified deficiencies that make it inconceivable that each perspective adequately constitutes what should be seen as a comprehensive orientation of personhood. For instance, the biological constituents, whether material or immaterial, are not enough (in isolation) to give an adequate understanding of what a person is. There is therefore the need to examine other aspects that define the human

person in combination with the ontological perspective with a view to addressing the deficiencies of this biological perspective. Conversely, when the person is examined from the normative perspective, it is observed that the human person is strictly studied from the socio-centric perspective at the expense of the ontological aspect (Alumona & Odimegwu 34). This equally comes with certain deficiencies when a person is reduced to a simple social phenomenon. It is important therefore to seek for a combination of the socio-centric and the ontological. The combination of these major areas of personhood is important to understanding biosocial view of personhood. But there must be the ethical interrogations of such combinations in order to emphasize the role of ethical values on the issue of personhood. This is why the biosocial personhood is seen as the ethical discourse on such a combination with extension into the political, social, economic and religious activities of human existence, amongst others.

This paper holds that the solution to problems that confront a people cannot be disconnected with the orientations of personhood held by the people. If a people holds individualist orientation of personhood, addressing the problems confronting them will likely prioritize individualist approaches while a society ontologically defined by human interconnectedness will most likely adopt the collectivist approach in solving the challenges that befall it. It is this position that informed the view that the numerous solutions to the various social problems confronting societies in Africa have not yielded the expected results because of the lack of collaboration with the indigenous people who are at the receiving end of the social crises. These indigenous people have their own world-views, social relations, peculiar ethical values and indigenous humanistic approaches to problems that confront them (Molefe 132); some of which are also relevant in addressing general problems confronting humanity. However, to address the problems more effectively and contribute to the improvement of social order in African societies, some important questions have to be answered in the course of this paper. They include: what are the root causes of social disorderliness in Africa? What kinds of solutions have been offered to mitigate the identified problems? Have Africans been pivotal in the existing solutions to the problems? In fact, what is the orientation of personhood and social relations in Africa, specifically among the Ukwuani people of Southern Nigeria? All these and many other attendant questions when properly answered will shore up the arguments on the position taken above.

The two philosophical methods to adopt in this research are philosophical analysis and ethnophilosophy. Philosophical analysis is rightly characterized as an appropriate method of this research because it enables us to examine the different aspects of the ontological perspective of personhood with its various parts as well as the social aspects, also with its various parts. Having broken down the complexities in those concepts into their respective simple components, it becomes less cumbersome to connect them together, synthesize them and see how they can ethically foster social order in Africa. Given the above, it is imperative to know that “analysis is a method of examining a complex concept or thing by identifying its parts and the relations among those parts. A thorough analysis provides a definition or explanation of its object by showing what it is made of (the parts) and its structure (how the parts fit together)” (Dorbolo 2). On the other hand, ethnophilosophy as a qualitative method concerns itself with the philosophical beliefs, values and practices of a people. The method acknowledges that philosophical beliefs and practices are connected to the cultural context in which they are found and promote sensitivity to indigenous cultural systems. It collects research data through participant-observation and interviews of the local communities, and engages interpretative analysis to interpret and understand the meanings

and significance of the beliefs, values and practices of local cultures. Ethnophilosophy as a research method also employs interpretative phenomenology in order to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of the cultures of the people. While this method is significant in unearthing traditional values, beliefs and practices, it may be handicapped in generalization beyond local communities (Ibanga 127), hence the complementary role of philosophical analysis. The Ukwuani biosocial personhood requires insights from a few selected sages whose responses are interpreted in order to bring out the multiple meanings that necessitated the link between it and social order in Africa. The two methods also are meant to establish the fact that the orientation of human person among the Ukwuani people comes with certain indigenous ethical values that can comprehensively and collaboratively address the social problems confronting Africa and even set frameworks for tackling similar situations across the globe.

Understanding Ukwuani Orientation of Personhood

The Ukwuani culture views the human person as a combination of both the ontological and normative perspectives. In other words, the view among the people is biosocial and this widens the kinds of the values that are considered to be very useful in the development of Africa capturing both African communal values as well as very relevant and humanistic aspects of Western liberal value of individualism. Ukwuani is a minority ethnic nationality in Nigeria whose people are found in the present Delta State of Nigeria and they occupy the region of the Niger-Delta that is geographically regarded as the Western-Delta. The region lies within longitude 6° 6' and 6° 42' East and latitude 6° 3' and 5° 25' North (Okolugbo 1). The three local government areas of Ukwuani, Ndokwa West and Ndokwa East in Delta State are inhabited by the Ukwuani people (Ojeh 475). The Ukwuani people are made up of two groups of people, namely the Ndosumili modified from Ndeosumili, meaning those of the riverside. Ndosumili occupies Ndokwa East while Ukwuani occupy Ndokwa West and Ukwuani local government areas. The language of the nationality is also called Ukwuani which in most cases is corrupted to Kwale by non- Ukwuani speaking people.

What appears to be a significant distinction on the biosocial orientation of the person among the Ukwuani people is the claim that the normative concept of the human person is inevitably connected to the cooperation that exists in the ontological constituents of the human person which are found in some expressions like: *Obi n' ishi nnwenę n'elo* (the mind always consults with the head, which is its brother), *ęnya akwá ekwa bų imi amalį* (the eyes cannot be shedding tears while the nose is comfortable) and *iwe eze ewe ile k'eze ata'yaęlų n'eze natagbu ife ile n'enuo* (the tongue cannot be angry with the teeth even if the teeth bite it because the teeth must grind for the tongue to swallow). These expressions for the Ukwuani cultures are indications that social relations take place even among the ontological constituents that define the human person (Maraganedzha 88; Uchegbue 91). In what follows, the two aspects of personhood that explain the Ukwuani biosocial orientation of personhood shall be discussed.

The Ontological Aspect of Personhood among the Ukwuani

Ontologically, the Ukwuani view the human person as constitutive of various features, material and immaterial. Among these constituent elements are: *ęsų* (the physical body) which is also called *anų ęsų*. The physical body is the material aspect of the human person. It is seen as the 'cloth' that covers the 'spirit' as can be seen in the expression: *ęsų bų ukọ kpuchini mmọ mmalų ele ukọ kpuchini anų ęsų*. The literal meaning of this expression is 'the

body is likened to a cloth that covers the human spirit just like it (clothe) covers the body. Although it perishes at death but it houses the spirit (*mmọ*) which is immaterial and imperishable. The interpretation of that expression in order to understand the role of the body further as it relates to personhood is that in it are other components like *obi* (the heart) which is further called *nkpuru obi* (the seed of the heart in literal terms). Again, also covered by the body are *okpukpu* (bone) and *obala/edeke* (blood). All these are the physical or material components of the human person which Kaphagawani describes as fundamental constituents of the human person (334). Interrogating some respondents in order to know the position of the heart yielded the outcome that it is located in the chest, an indication that it is a material stuff of the human person. The chest therefore is like the gadget that houses the heart. According to Chief Achiagba, “the heart is the blood-pumping machine of the body. This machine is functional at all times, otherwise, human life is lost, and personhood also is ultimately lost in the final analysis”. Ancillary to *obi* is the *nkpuru obi* in which the soul or mind is said to be located. It is believed to be the seat of life (*ndu*). The force from which we have life, even if it cannot be seen physically, is found in the *nkpuru obi*. Unah emphasizes the potency of the role of force in this respect in his avowal that “...African metaphysical concept of being is force” (108). Another component that is also seen as very essential to the understanding of the person among the Ukwuani is *obala/edeke* (blood). The place of the blood can be found in the expression: *obala bu mmili mmọ deme ni ndu mmalu* which means that ‘the blood is like the spiritual water which keeps humans alive’. Implied in this understanding is the fact that blood has so much sacredness in its definition of the human person (Machingura & Museka 51; Watts 10). Again, the presence of blood constitutes one of the elements of sentience and sentience in turns contributes to defining an individual as a person. *Onye ife nityulu abụ mmalu* meaning an individual who does not feel pains is not a person. This claim among the Ukwuani does not mean that such an individual is no longer a human being but it does appear that one of the key components that makes personhood of the individual is probably corrupted. Finally but not exhaustively among the material component of the person among the Ukwuani is the *Umi-ishi* (brain) which gives meaning to the head; a constituent that is simply an ‘empty box’ without the brain. The brain is a whitish substance where wisdom, thought or reason and intelligence emanate from. It (the brain) is seen to be in segments but how many it can be segmented into for us to know the exact number is never mentioned among the Ukwuani. We see expressions like *Umi-ishi kenę ezune onu* meaning this one’s brain is incomplete segmentally. When asked whether the segment of the brain can be counted like the ten fingers are counted, High Chief (Dr.) Iwegbue retorted by saying that “it depends on what the user of the expression means. This is because the expression connotatively has two different meanings. One of the meanings signifies that the brain is segmented into different parts but how many of such parts we do not know. The second refers to the malfunctioning of an individual’s brain, thus resulting to a situation in which personhood is perceived to be in degrees”.

So far, only the material components of personhood have been described but there are also the immaterial components, showing that to describe an individual as a person would mean that he/she must have both the material and spiritual components (Kpanake 199). Ontologically, therefore, the person is defined by material, quasi-material and spiritual elements, all cooperating together to define the person. Some of the components discussed above can be in dual capacity in that they could also in different contexts be seen as non-material or invisible components. For example, *obi* which is the heart can also be used to

refer to the mind, soul or spirit in some contexts. When interpreted as the soul or spirit, it is referred to as *mmọ*, an unseen underlying force beneath the physical structure called the heart where life (*ndụ*) is said to be situated. The soul is the spirit that brings life to the individual. The loss of the soul begins the process of the loss of personhood whose initial point is the loss of human life. The soul in this sense is equated with breath (*umele*). When someone is dying but still has breath, it is said that his soul is still alive and such an individual is capable of coming back to life. His soul is said to have wandered far away and could be recalled to his physical body. At other times, it is seen as one's conscience. When for instance we say *obim ebugbunę* which literally means 'my heart cannot carry it', we only mean that my conscience would not allow me to be involved in something that I perceive to be wrong. *Obi* as conscience is a necessary requirement of personhood among the Ukwuani. When an individual is perceived not to be guided by his conscience in any act, he is regarded as not being a person.

The brain as a material component of the person is the seat of wisdom, intelligence and rationality which are all nuances of *akọnuche*, the lack of which puts a great question mark on the personhood of such an individual. Very often, an individual is derided as having requisite bodily features but being an incomplete person as a result of the lack of *akọnuche*. All the ontological constituents are considered as having a social relationship among one another. Such a relationship is encapsulated in the expression: *obi nị ishi bụ ẹsụ bụ ẹsụ bụ ụnọ obi nị ishi* which means that "the heart and the head give life to the body and in reciprocity; the body also houses the heart and the head". High Chief Iwegbue in his response to how an individual can be described ontologically says: *ọsa ẹsụ bụ ofu. Otelì ụkụ otelì ishi nị ẹka ekpe kwọ ẹka nli onwu unwu bụ ẹka nli kwọashị ẹka ekpe onwu ẹshi*. This parable about the social activities of the ontological perspective literally means that "all the body constituents are one". That is indicative of the fact that the biological components of the human person should not be considered in isolation of his social aspects.

Highlighting the Social Aspect of the Person among the Ukwuani

The general word for all human beings among the Ukwuani is *mmalụ*, whether ontologically or socially. But socially, there is a dual connotation of the word referring to both person and non-person, meaning that *mmalụ* as an individual can both be P and not-P where P stands for person. It would appear here that *mmalụ* violates the logical principle of non-contradiction, but a clear understanding of the two senses of usage shows that there is no such violation of the rule. In both senses, *mmalụ* has to do with how humans relate with their community and how much one observes the community rules and regulations. In the first sense, an individual is a person when he observes the community ethos while he ceases to be a person when he does otherwise. This is the sense in which an individual is a non-person, either for the reason that he does not relate with others or has discontinued such relations with other persons; a demonstration of the importance of intersubjective relations among individuals. This is why "...African personhood brings the advantage of providing a secure basis for social duties to others and the community, since being a person hinges on fulfilling these duties..." (Jecker and Atuire 4). This social perspective of personhood among the Ukwuani is explained in Michael Uboko's collection of stories *The Human Palm Tree Analogy*. According to him:

Two children (twins) born of the same parents were separated from each other right from the day of birth. One was kept in an isolated hut in a forest while the other was left to live among his other siblings. The one kept in

solitariness is named *Onyenobie* while the other one is called *Ofuonyebi*. When they were grown into adults, *Onyenobie* was brought to live with his other siblings but it was observed that he was able to do everything alone without needing assistance from anyone, even tackling challenges facing the community on his own. On the contrary, *Ofuonyebi* depended on his peers when necessary to get things done and realize his potentials. When it was time to initiate the two into the community age-grade, *Ofuonyebi* was chosen while *Onyenobie* was told to go for initiation into in the community of the proverbial palm trees where self-sufficiency is accepted (34).

The transliteration of *Onyenobie* is “everyone with his independent mind or opinion” and could be interpreted to mean “the lone self”. This emphasizes the individualism of the person such that he does not need the idea of others in anything he does; a mark of extreme individualism. On the other hand, the transliteration of *Ofuonyebi* is “one person does not live alone”. This is emphatic on togetherness and cooperation among persons. No one therefore is self-sufficient even if one possesses such capability for the benefit of the community. Although the human-palm tree analogical situation by Uboko is seen as a fairytale but it is a comparable situation in the Akan maxim: “a person is not a palm tree that he should be self-complete” (Gyekye 37). The advice that the self-sufficient individual should go to the world of palms trees for his incorporation does not in any way imply the holistic loss of personhood. Ontologically, he is still a person but socially, his personhood is questionable. Therefore, an individual should learn and acknowledge that his personhood is not only ontological but also dependent on being with others.

From the foregoing, it could be deciphered that the ontological perspective of the person shows the independence of an individual in any social relationship with other individuals who also on their own are independent. This is what is referred to here as a person’s ontological completeness. On the other hand, it is also seen that socially, there is so much interdependence among individuals; no individual qualifies for personhood in a solitary situation. The social meaning of an individual as a person is therefore largely dependent on the community and this is referred to as the communitarian origin of personhood in its social relations. However, the Ukwuani culture in its orientation of personhood does not treat each of these two perspectives in isolation; rather a person is biosocial and carries with him different ethical principles that are necessary for the advancement of both himself as an individual and the society at large.

Biosocial Personhood as the Fusion of the Ontological Completeness and Social Relations of the Human Person

The communitarian concept of the person in traditional African culture as espoused by most scholars propounds an almost completely communalistic African social order. This is because brotherhood and familyhood became the hallmarks for not only assessing but also for defining the individual as a person. This emphasis on the social aspect of the person therefore mars the claim that the individual’s ontological components make him independent of the community and social relations. The social aspect of personhood makes the idea of individuality unacceptable in the thoughts and practices of the Ukwuani people, as evident in most African cultures. This communitarian and non-individualist view is also emphasized by Menkiti in his exposition that:

On looking at the African conceptualization of the person, one acknowledges, of course, that it is a given fact that every individual has a body apart from the body of every other individual within his or her own community. That sort of given is a brute biological fact. But it need not be read as conveying a message that each stands alone (324).

It does appear that what Menkiti is saying here is that African culture is communitarian and does not permit individualism in whatever guise. This may not be unconnected to the claim that the ontological completeness of the person promotes a severed link between him and his community where social relations between him and others are inevitable. However, the Ukwuani biosocial view of the human person establishes that although one is an ontologically complete and autonomous individual, he also needs to have the attributes of cooperation, solidarity and dependence if he has to attain a more holistic perspective of personhood. This perspective recognizes the fact that humans are no longer confined to their limited cultural cocoons in a world where varieties of human existence are influenced by globalization, especially in the areas of politics, information, religion, economy, culture (Odimegwu 311-14) and so on. It is unimaginable for God to create an ontologically complete individual independent of relating with others just as it is unthinkable for a social individual who has no dealings with his ontological components to exist. An individual appreciates his relational nature with others and also realizes the relevance of his ontological constituents to his social nature (Aghamelu 72). The Ukwuani biosocial view of personhood in its combination of biological components and social relations is further explained by Ashebeta, a respondent, thus:

There was once a handicapped hen with only one leg in the family of so many others that are healthy. One day, the owner decided to get rid of the handicapped hen and sent her into the bush for her assumed worthlessness. Few weeks after, an epidemic broke out and all the hens in the poultry died. When the one-legged hen visited her owner with the whole of her healthy children, the owner wanted her to come back home but she refused and went back to the bush with all her healthy children.

This story explains the indispensability of the individual person with his inalienable dignity as a human being who is a person (ontologically) at all times, whether there is any deformity or not. As long as the human persons combine their biological components with their relational attributes, then a more holistic personhood is attained. There are many practical instances of mentally deranged or physiologically deformed persons giving birth to children who turn out to be notable persons in the community. The Ukwuani view of the person here is that the ontological elements which give worth and dignity to individuals as persons are always present, even if the full expressions of their potentials have not taken place. The expression *omegbame di ni uwa bidoni shini mmegbame dini ime`su* means that the social relationships in human lives have their ontological roots in the social and cooperative activities of the biological components of the human person. For instance, there is cooperation, tolerance and harmony between the teeth and the tongue, blood and other body fluids, the eyes and the nose, and indeed all components of the body. In spite of the individual primary purposes for each biological component, when one undergoes certain kinds of stress, other ones are equally affected. That explains the expression *enya ba kwa ekwa odi nacho imi nnwanne*. This is translated to literally mean that “when the eyes cry, they look out for the nose which

is their sibling to join them". This is why often times, as someone is crying, the face turns red or the nostrils discharge fluids. The import of all these expressions on the biosocial view of personhood among the Ukwuani is that despite one's individuality which emanates from one's biological status, there is an unavoidable need for social relations with other individuals. From this combination of ontology and society in the understanding of the human person, certain ethical principles are extrapolated for the purpose of advancing the collaboration between indigenous knowledge system of the Ukwuani culture and relevant Western liberal values in providing solutions to social problems confronting African societies and by extension, the world at large.

Ethical Principles of Biosocial Personhood and the Promotion of Social Order in Africa

The broad biosocial view of personhood in Ukwuani anthropology is a re-examination of the orientations of personhood from an African cultural perspective in order restore into Africans the consciousness that they are not characteristically violent and irrational to be experiencing the degree of social disorder prevalent in the society today. Such problems include but not limited to: insecurity (terrorism, kidnapping and banditry), ethnic and religious conflicts, poverty, corruption, poor leadership and civil rights abuse among others. The expressions below from the Ukwuani biosocial view of a person highlight certain valuable principles that could aid the entrenchment of social order in Africa:

S/N	Expression	Meaning/Translation	Principle
1.	<i>qbala mmalu luanj qbanj ife nsq</i> (Once a person's blood touches the ground, something forbidden has taken place)	Anyone that spills the blood of another person commits a taboo	(i) Human Dignity (ii) Sanctity of Human Life
2.	<i>Onye obię dīnj ugb'azu abụ mmalu</i> (Anyone that has his mind at his back is not a human being)	One who lacks conscience is not a person	(i) Self-Appraisal (ii) Individual Responsibility
3.	<i>Onye ęla n'akņnuche'yę</i> (Even an insane man has his sense)	Everyone needs to be rational	(i) Rationality (ii) Intelligence
4.	<i>Ofuonye abụ anyjabia</i> (One person does not mean "we have come")	No single individual can be described as "we"	(i) Cooperation (ii) Social dependence (iii) Togetherness (iv) Co-existence
5.	<i>Achuwę ęsa ęgizhi n'ebeli n'ęsụ</i> (It is not every fly that perches on one's body that is driven)	It is not every vituperation that one should respond to	Tolerance
6.	<i>Onyen'ęfa nnala za</i> (Everyone answers his father's name)	Everyone needs to protect the integrity or morals of his family	(i) Honesty (ii) Respect (iii) Truth

Traditional Expressions of Ukwuani Biosocial Personhood and the Attendant Ethical Principles (Source: Authors)

The virtues of human dignity and sacredness of human life as products of the biosocial orientation of personhood emphasize the sacredness of blood among the Ukwuani people

which ensures the abhorrence of the willful killing of a fellow human being. These virtues are described by Lee and George to mean that:

...all human beings have a special type of *dignity* which is the basis for (1) the obligation all of us have not to kill them, (2) the obligation to take their well-being into account when we act, and (3) even the obligation to treat them as we would have them treat us. Indeed, those who hold that all human beings possess a special type of dignity almost always also hold that human beings are *equal* in fundamental dignity. They maintain that there is no class of human beings to which other human beings should be subordinated when considering their interests or their well-being, and when devising laws and social policies (173).

The essentials of these virtues as described above can be relevant in handling the issues around insecurity in our societies. Terrorism, banditry and kidnapping which result in the devaluation of human life are considered as taboos and have dire consequences on the life of the perpetrators of such heinous crimes. Such acts which involve taking the life of another are termed *igbu ẹkọ oji* translated as harvesting premature palm fruits which is an act of wickedness whose price should be paid by the perpetrator who is forced to consume it. Such a consequence discourages people from engaging in such acts. That is the same way that a murderer pays the price for such act as he is condemned to be punished by the community life forces (*anị obodo*). His sanity is affected leading to even losing his own life. The centrality of the human person here is a clear demonstration of the philosophy of humanism in Ukwuani anthropology which sees “the human person at the centre...not defined according to his colour, nation, religion, creed, political leanings, material contribution or any matter” (Kanu 376). While the Western legal perspectives in handling such crimes are appreciated, this paper emphasizes collaborative efforts with the indigenous philosophy of life where emphasis is laid on the sanctity of life at the different ontological levels of human existence ranging from the home through the family to the community. Attention is also paid to the oneness of humanity and the sacredness of life through the web of the life-forces, as this would play a preventive role in tackling the problems.

Tolerance is another principle that is prominent in Ukwuani biosocial view of the human person, and it is a product of the social/normative relations in the ontological/biological components. The expression *iwe eze ewe ile k’eze ata’yaẹlụ n’eze natagbu ife ile n’enuo* (the tongue cannot be angry with the teeth even if the teeth bite it because the teeth must grind for the tongue to swallow) indicates that individuals must accommodate one another in spite of the real act of conflicts that exists among them. If for instance, the tongue separates itself from the teeth because of the bites it constantly receives from them, then it becomes useless to itself because it cannot perform the double function of chewing and swallowing for itself. This is how Ukwuani anthropology sees the human person which should be seen in our social relationships for the ultimate purpose of engendering harmonious existence. There must be something to even benefit from certain individuals that one perceives to be enemies because the nature of the human person is such that persons could have ambivalent attitudes and in the midst of conflict, individuals can potentially be available to aid others. A tolerant person in Ukwuani culture does not attempt to forcefully make a person renounce what is probably a negative attitude of mind. It is rather an accommodation that over time makes such individuals see and acknowledge the wrongness of his actions and possibly change for not only his own good but also the

good of the society. Feldman identifies with this view by acknowledging that tolerance points at “the wrongfulness of trying to coerce people to give up certain beliefs or conduct to which they are deeply committed” (394). Tolerance therefore is a moral virtue that ensures social order for the purpose of development of the society, as it can also be significant in handling security issues such as terrorism and ethno-religious conflicts. Much of the root causes of these social vices have been attributed to differences in perspectives. Differences have been observed as reasons for the necessity of tolerance; an ethical principle that makes for smooth functioning of the society in the midst of ethnic, religious, social, and political differences (Aghamelu, *et al* 31; Drerup and Kuhler 2). Whether the differences are a matter of pluralism or relativism, the fact is that tolerance makes for a harmonious co-existence (Fiala 30-31).

In the various strata of education, there is need to stress the relevance of tolerance as a universal principle (Marksovna 122) of the human person in handling the apparent differences in the numerous areas of human existence. This being so, much of the social vices associated with differences and attendant intolerance, especially in this age of globalization, can be handled. Any individualism that does not tolerate cultural differences must be abhorred. There are also moral virtues of cooperation, social dependence and togetherness which emanate from the social/normative aspects of the human person in Ukwuani anthropology. These virtues indicate the culture of collectivism as against the culture of individualism (Katz *et al* 12). Oladipupo describes collectivism thus:

The spirit of collectivism permeates African community such that they live an inclusive as against exclusive lifestyle apparent in the western world. Thus Africans are known for their philosophy of corporate existence as against the individualistic philosophy of the western world often displayed in their atomistic lifestyle. The Africans are not just called African neither is the westerner called westerner; there is a cultural delineation that separates them (2).

This same spirit is in abundance among the Ukwuani people and it is displayed in the level of cooperation found among the people when any task is set to be accomplished. The philosophy of oneness is significantly shown in social dependence as every individual acknowledges the fact that everyone needs everyone in order to show togetherness as the meaning of existence. All of these moral virtues clearly show the level of love and care among the people. Even when conflicts arise, the fundamentality of collectivism always becomes the basis for managing, resolving such situations and it is also an important tool for the prevention of potential crisis. Among the Ukwuani, an atomistic individual does not exist; everybody is everybody's keeper. This is not to say that among the Ukwuani people, there is no self-centredness. The fact is that the contraries of the virtues do not override the primacy of the virtues in times of crisis because the community is founded on the basis of these values.

Onyebaghali nwanee n'ogụ which means no one should abandon his/her sibling in times of challenges is one reference expression common among the Ukwuani people indicative of the social relations of individuals in the community. With all individuals being bound by these virtues, social disorders such as corruption, abject poverty, poor leadership, ethnic and religious conflicts and the problems of insecurity would be tackled to a greater extent. Cooperation recognizes differences in orientations, compositions and even goals, yet working together entails exploring common denominators rather than differences. This is

already emphasized by Alumona and Alumona on the relevance of cooperation as an ethic of development (90). Finally, though not exhaustively, the moral virtue of individual responsibility less talked about among Africans is very essential and it is applied in the daily life of the people in Ukwuani culture. This virtue has been erroneously viewed as exclusively Western because it grants individuals autonomy and a kind of independence which breeds atomistic individuals in contradistinction to the spirit of communalism which defines Africans. In fact, Machan expressly holds the view on individualism to be:

that human beings are identifiable as a distinct species in the natural world and have as at least one of their central attributes the capacity to be rational individuals. Whatever else, then, is central about being a human being, it includes that each one... has the capacity to govern his or her life by means of the individually initiated process of thought, of conceptual consciousness. Furthermore, excelling as such an individual human being is the primary purpose in each person's life. A just political community, in turn, is one that renders it possible for this purpose to be pursued by all... (xi).

It is this presentation of individualism that Africans abhor as being a part of their ontological and social existence. The ethics of individuality here does not mean the promotion of individual ideals over and above the interest of the community; it is not the assertion of rights over duties and obligations which individual ought to fulfill for the growth of the society. It is rather more of the ethical principle of responsibility for the individual such that he develops himself to the point where he acts rationally for the common good of others and the community in general (Alumona 71; Molefe 11). This is the reason Allik and Realo are supportive of individualist ethics as they avow that "... individualism does not necessarily jeopardize organic unity and solidarity. On the contrary, the growth of individuality, autonomy, and self-sufficiency may be perceived as necessary conditions for the development of interpersonal cooperation, mutual dependence and social solidarity" (31).

The individualist ethics, therefore, which the Ukwuani culture promotes is the type that explains man's capacities and capabilities to make decisions and act in certain circumstances of life in spite of the fact that he places more values in the interest of the community. This is indicative of the fact that while the Ukwuani culture shows the importance and necessity of conforming to the norms and values of the community, one's individual responsibility, personal initiative and creativity is not undermined. There are several fragments among the Ukwuani that explain this presence of the individualist ethical principle. Two of them would suffice here: (i) *Uwa bu ele mmalu demenę* (life is what an individual makes of it); and (ii) *We bu ibu onyeozọ nị nkwoęka* (another person's burden is carried on the shoulder). The capabilities of individuals to freely pursue their goal within the social matrices of the community are built around expressions such as the two above.

Conclusion

Philosophical anthropology has been pre-occupied with the examination of the ontological and social aspects of the human person at the simplistic level without really discussing the attendant practical and consequential applications of such perspectives. This paper has shown that the biosocial orientation of personhood which constitutes the biological and the social aspects of the human person can contribute to addressing the problem of social order bedevilling Africa and even the world at large in man's daily life. This is possible through the engagements of certain attendant ethical principles of the biosocial personhood as

discussed above. To avoid ethnocentrism in approaching the social problems, the biosocial view of personhood promotes a collaborative action between its ethical values and the individualist attitude of the Western liberal approach. This is to avoid what Parsons refers to as the exclusive relationship between collective orientation and self orientation. The former is said to manifest loyalty to the community at the expense of the individual while the latter orients the individual towards personal development for the purpose of creativity, innovation and improving economic situations; all of which would address societal problems (40).

This paper holds that collectivism and individualism are not mutually exclusive. There is always something one can benefit from the other but since the social problems confronting African societies have been on the increase in spite of the numerous Western approaches adopted to confront them, it is important to critically and systematically engage African indigenous value systems in a collaborative manner in addressing the problems. The contention of this paper is that the biosocial orientation of personhood adopts a collaborative approach that is rooted in certain indigenous ethical principles so as to avoid the atomistic individualism in Western liberalism. This orientation is emphasized because it is an important way of addressing issues from a certain worldview, especially as it influences the psyche of the people in their response to conditions that they are faced with. This way efforts towards providing solutions to the social problems faced by African Societies specifically and even the world at large would become participatory and yield more pragmatic outcomes by giving attention and opportunities to African value systems in problem solving.

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