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Grounding African Political Theory on Afro-communitarianism: Arguments and Implications

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DECLARATION

I declare that the research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. This thesis does not contain other persons' writing, data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons or researchers.

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To Maami

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ABSTRACT

This thesis critically analyses Afro-communitarianism as a philosophical foundation for modern African political theories and practices. The thesis links the reception of Afro-communitarian political philosophy in modern African political philosophy with its long-standing tension between community and individual as well as the conflict between rights and duty in modern African political philosophy. The attempt to resolve this tension in literature has mainly focused on the ideas of personhood. The thesis shows how development of the personhood approach to resolving this tension was manifested in three senses, i.e. duty-based, rights-based, and Afro-communitarian rejectionism. These three senses are both interrelated and independent discourses in African political philosophy. The duty-based personhood approach holds that personhood is defined solely by the structure of the community and not the self. It contends a notion of the self whose definition of meaningful life is generated outside the reference to community dependency. According to this approach, an ideal individual is a communal conformist, one that prioritises the duty to the community over the self. As a result, this approach defends a political society where concerns of rights, especially individual rights, do not matter.

Following this approach is the rights-based personhood response. The rights-based approach responds to the lacunae in the duty-based personhood approach. Rights-based personhood approach is also an independent position at resolving the tension in Afro-communitarian political thought. This approach seeks to defend the compatibility of rights with Afro-communitarianism and its equal status with communal obligation. It argues for certain features of humans that suggest the partial dependency of the self on the community in the definition of human personhood. Grounding on these features, the approach established the place of rights, autonomy, and freedom in the Afro-communitarian discourse. However, what stands clear in this account of personhood is the persistence of the community and its overwhelming nature in framing the functions of the political virtues of rights, autonomy, and freedom believed to be individual properties. Rights only matter to the extent of their coherence with communal values. It becomes apparent that the idea of individual rights remains vague, especially in the face of specific human expression in communitarian African societies.

The conflicts between individual and community and rights and duty in the idea of personhood in Afro-communitarian thought stirred up the third response and the third sense of the personhood approach, which I refer to as Afro-communitarian rejectionism. Scholars in this camp suggest the need to have a conversation on modern African politics without Afro-communitarian ideas. This position rests on the claim that modern African philosophy will be influenced by diverse orientations, which are sometimes incompatible with the ideas of Afro-communitarianism. However, the challenge with this conception of personhood is that it ruled out the possibility of a developed modern Africa profiting from the merits of Afro-communitarianism.

While the tension between the individual and community persists, the thesis argues that attention should be given to the analysis of the community. In analysing the idea of community, the thesis identified the various forms of community that undergird the various ideas of personhood in Afro-communitarianism, namely cultural community and community as self-interested individuals. The first form of community is the Afro-communitarian notion of community. I show how the idea of humiliation is inherent in the ideal notion of community in Afro-communitarianism and the conception of self it informs. The question of humiliation is omitted in the various conceptions of personhood. For Afro-communitarianism to ground modern African political ideas and practices, its notion of the community must be non-humiliating. Achieving a non-humiliating community involves a review of the norms of the cultural community. I attempt this review with what I call the doctrine of cultural permissibility.

This thesis redirects Afro-communitarian debates by arguing for a shift to the community. The thesis concludes that postcolonial African politics can only benefit from Afro-communitarianism preoccupied with the desire for a 'non-humiliating' community that accommodates plural conceptions of personhood. This thesis would provide nuanced views on the ongoing conversation among Afro-communitarian theorists.

Keywords: African political philosophy, Afro-communitarianism, community, individual rights, personhood, humiliation, the idea of cultural permissibility.

ISIFINYEZO

Le tisisi ihlaziya i-Afro-communitarianism kabanzi njengesisekelo sefilosofi yesimanjemanje yokwenza kanye nama-theories epolitiki yase-Africa. Le tisisi ixhumanisa ukwamukelwa kwefilosofi yezobupolitiki obu-Afro-communitarian kwezesimanjemanje kwezobu politiki befilosofi base-Africa kanye nokugqubuzana obusuka kude phakathi komuphakathi kanye nomuntu kanjalo nje nokuphikisana phakathi kwamalungelo kanye nokubophezela esikhathini samanje sefilosofi yepolitiki yase-Africa. Ukuzama ukuxazulula lokugqubuzana kugxile kakhulu emaswini obuntu. Le tisisi ikhombisa ukuthuthuka kwendlela yobuntu ekuxazululeni lokugqubuzana kuvela ngezindlela ezintathu, okuyindlela yokubophezela, eyamalungelo, kanye nephika ubu-Afro-communitarian. Lezindlela ezintathu zihambe zibe nokufana kanye nokuzimela ezifundweni zefilosofi yezepolitiki yase-Africa. Indlela yokubophezela yobuntu ithi ubuntu buchazwa kuphela uhlaka lomuphakathi hhayi isiqu somuntu ngqo. Ilwela ukwakhiwa kokukhuluma ngesiqu somuntu ochaza impilo enenhloso njengaleyo eqhamuka ngaphandle ebhekiswe ekuxhomekeni nomuphakathi. Ngokwalendlela, umuntu ilo ovumelana nomuphakathi, lo obeka ukubaluleka kwesibophezelo somuphakathi ngaphezu kwesomuntu. Ngokomuphumela, lendlela imela umuphakathi wezepolitiki lapho amalungelo, isikakhulukazi abantu, engabalulekile.

Okulandela lendlela ukuphendula kwendlela ngokwamalungelo obuntu. Indlela yamalungelo iphendula isikhala esikhona kwindlela yokubophezela. Indlela yamalungelo yobuntu izimele ekuxazululeni ukugqubuzana kwamasu ezepolitiki a-Afro-communitarian. Lendlela ibheka ukumela kokuhambisana kwamalungelo kanye ne-Afro-communitarianism kanye nokulingana kokubophezela komuphkathi. Ibeka inkulumo emela izingxenye zezici zabantu eziphakamisa ukuncika okungaphelele komuntu emuphakathini kwincazelo yobuntu. Ukusekelwa kulezici, lendlela isungule indawo yamalungelo, yokuzimela, kanye nenkululeko kwisifundo se-Afro communitarianism. Kepha, okucacile kulendlela yobuntu ukuphokophela komuphakathi kanye nomvelo yawo eyeqile ekwakheni ukusebenza kobuhle bepolitiki yamalungelo, yokuzimela, kanye nenkululeko okukholelwa ukuthi ihambiselana nokwenza komuntu eyedwa. Amalungelo abaluleke kuphela uma ezohambiselana nokwenza komuphakathi. Kuye kucace bha ukuthi amasu

amalungelo omuntu ngayedwa awaqondile kahle, isikakhulukazi ezingxenyeni zobuso ezithize ezishiwo abantu emiphakathini yase-Africa e-Afro-communitarian.

Ukuphikisana phakathi komuntu nomuphakathi kanye namalungelo kanye nokubophezela kwisu lobuntu emaswini a-Afro-communitarian kugovuze impendulo yesithathu kanti futhi lendlela yesithathu yobuntu, engizoyibiza ngokuthi ukuphikwa kwe-Afro-communitarianism. Abafundile baleqembu bahlongoza ukuthi kudingeka ingxoxo mayelana nezesimanje zepolitiki yase-Africa ngaphandle kwamasu a-Afro-communitarian. Lombono ululele ekuthenini ifilosofi yase-Africa yesimanje izothelelwa imibono ehlukile, ebuye ngesinye isikhathi ingahambiselani namasu e-Afro-communitarianism.

Ngisho ukugqubuzana phakathi komuntu nomuphakathi kuqhubeka, le tisisi imela ukuthi kumele kunakwe ukuhlaziywa komuphakathi. Ekuhlaziyeni isu lomuphakathi, le tisisi iveze izinhlobo zomuphakathi ezahlukene eziqinisa amasu ahlukene omuntu kwi-Afro-communitarianism, kungabalwa umuphakathi wesiko kanye nomuphakathi njengabantu abazibhekela bona. Ngiyakhombiza ukuthi isu lokuhlambalaza lisuka ekucabangeni ngomuphakathi kwi-Afro-communitarianism kanye nokwakhiwa kwesiqu somuntu okufundisayo. Umubuzo wehlazo uyakhishwa kwizingxenye ezihlukile zobuntu. Ukuthi i-Afro-communitarianism izinze kwezesimanje zamasu nokwenza kwezepolitiki yase-Africa, ukuveza kwayo umuphakathi kumele ungahlambalazi. Ukuzuza umuphakathi ongahlambalazi kufaka ukubuyiswa kwemikhuba nokwenza emuphakathini ogcina amasiko. Ngizama ukwenza lokubuyiswa ngengikubiza nge-doctrine of cultural permissibility.

Le tisisi ishintsha inkulumo mpikiswano e-Afro-communitarian ngokulwela uguquko emuphakathini. Le tisisi iphetha ngokuthi ipolitiki yase-Africa e-postcolonial ingazuza kuphela kwi-Afro-communitarianism ematasa ngokuhalela umuphakathi 'ongahlambalazi' lo owamukela amasu ahlukene omuntu. Le tisisi izohlinzeka ngemibono ecashile kulenkulumo eqhubekayo phakathi kwezazi zemibono e-Afro-communitarian.

Keywords: Injululwazi yepolitiki yase-Africa, i-Afro-communitarianism, umphakathi, amalungelo amuntu ngamunye, uqonda umuntu, inhlambalazo, isu lokuvunyelwa kwamasiko.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis identifies the required conditions to ground modern African political theory and practice in the ideas of Afro-communitarianism. Afro-communitarianism is an African moral and political philosophy that prioritizes the ideal of the community in social relations (Gyekye, 1997). It is a socio-political system of ordering that has its roots in the African culture and has been discussed widely in African philosophy, especially African political philosophy. Afro-communitarianism is the hallmark of African social thought that transcends cultural identity to define African moral and political ideas (Menkiti, 1984; 2004; Gyekye, 1997; Masolo, 2004; Metz, 2017; 2020a; Molefe, 2017a). As a political philosophy, it can be construed to amount to a claim about social arrangements in relationships with others to be essential. It asserts a social organization where people do not think of themselves as individuals but as a group, sharing an overriding set of moral, social, and political values (Howard, 1984; Ikuenobe, 2006:2). Whatever we make of such a conception of social arrangements and relations is an approach to the idea of a good society (Wiredu 2008; Molefe 2017b:10).

Afro-communitarian political philosophy played a role in the formation of political ideas deployed to interpret and influence the forms of political and economic structure that are geared towards the development of postcolonial Africa. This influence is apparent in the development of both the ideas of African socialism (Nkrumah, 1967; 1970; Nyerere, 1968) and of consensual democracy (Wiredu, 1997), to name but a few. The motivation for developing political theories with an Afro-communitarian undertone is to advance political ideas and practices that agree with African communal norms and values, thereby promoting the idea of an African identity. This dissertation is about Afro-communitarianism as the foundation for African political theories and practices. It is not about examining or evaluating the political theories influenced by it, nor about developing a new political theory. However, this study's interrogation of the idea is primarily within a socio-political framework. It argues that a new model of community is required in the reception of Afro-communitarianism in modern political thought. For that to be possible, attention needs to be paid to the notion of community in Afro-communitarian literature.

The idea of community is central to the concept of Afro-communitarianism. Part of the significance of community in the Afro-communitarian sense is cooperation (Mbiti, 1970). The

survival of the community and its advancement rests on the degree of cooperation and the joint action of its members. This principle abhors focusing on the survival of the self and the consequent competition that comes with an individual pursuant of personal survival. Instead, it emphasizes collective survival and the role of members of the community towards that actualization. This form of living gives a sense of how the economic life of traditional African societies is organized. It is a socio-economic philosophy substantiated in Mbiti's principle of existence in African thought, "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1970:35).

Social and political order in traditional African societies is largely informed by communitarian thinking. These societies are characterized by communal ethos. However, this system of ordering has been affected by a series of historical existential conditions, such as colonialism. Social and political structure and arrangements in traditional African societies informed by the communal philosophy have either been side-stepped or denigrated for colonial administrative convenience (see Wiredu, 2008). However, Afro-communitarianism, as will be shown in this dissertation, transcends traditional African societies to inform ideas of living in modern African societies. These modern societies have also been influenced by the development of competing ideals of individualism, autonomy, and rights which, it could be argued, have their origins in, and have been imported from the West. As a result, looking for an appropriate system of ordering that best defines the people's existential experience in modern African societies becomes a huge task.

The concern is whether to look to traditional thought and practices for a system of social arrangement, or to look forward to an alternative. Bearing in mind the question of rights in the traditional African thought and the increase in the consciousness of and demand for rights among present African populations, the call for a forward-looking alternative system of ordering that is unequivocal about the idea of individual rights in modern Africa is essential. A close alternative system of social and political ordering in that regard is individualism.

Individualism is arguably gaining momentum as a mode of social ordering and living among modern Africans (see Táiwò, 2016). However, the suspicion with its full reception, as a system of political ordering, is that it is believed to be alien.[1] Also, it is believed to have accompanied and

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[1] Labelling certain demands for individual rights in Africa as exportation of western values is commonplace among political elites. Some of them cloud such demand with the argument that certain human rights expression are the results of western influence that is gradually eroding African moral system.

remained as a leftover of the imperial system of colonialism, which is arguably a factor in the creation of the problem of the communitarian apathy in modern Africa. Given this suspicion, modern African societies deem it necessary to revamp a known idea in African thought to guide the experience of moral, social and political ordering. This intention has been demonstrated in how Afro-communitarianism has become a major ideological preference in African philosophical literature, as well as dominating practical attempts to ground postcolonial African politics.

However, the reception of Afro-communitarianism in modern Africa is owed to its inherent challenges. To make sense of these challenges requires an understanding of the positions of the two components of Afro-communitarianism – individual and community. Afro-communitarianism is about the relation between these components. This relation that is troubled with the notion of primacy – the question of which is weightier and to be taken seriously, raises the political question of autonomy, freedom, dignity, duties, rights and humiliation.

Traditional African thought arguably subscribed to the primacy and dominance of community over the individual. Gyekye (1997:41) corroborates this view when he describes Afro-communitarianism as that which "immediately sees the individual as an inherently communal being, embedded in a context of social relationships and interdependence, never as an isolated individual". This description of the individual thus suggests a disappearance of the self into the system of the collective others. Individuals owe their existence and meaning in life to the normative standing of the community. This understanding of the self gives rise to a conflict between community and individual and consequently the tension between duties and rights in Afro-communitarian political philosophy. Reconciling the tension between community and individual in African political philosophy has been the major concern of thinkers, what relationship should exist between the two, and the political consequence it holds. This research contributes to that debate. It starts by analysing and problematizing the direction the attempts at fixing the tension have taken.

Attempts at fixing the tension between individual and community have been dominated by the focus on the ideas of personhood, indicating an attention on one side of the Afro-communitarian spectrum – the individual. Wiredu (1995), Matolino (2008; 2014; 2018a), Oyowe (2015), Chimakonam and Awugosi (2020) are references to the claim on massive attention on the nature of the 'self' in understanding the relation between the individual and community. This is captured

in how they conceive the vision of Afro-communitarianism. Chimakonam and Awugosi (2020:41-42) define Afro-communitarianism as "roughly a socio-political and normative theory of personhood that also attempts to give account of the relationship between the individual and his community from an African epistemic perspective". For Molefe (2018a:217-18), "personhood is at the heart of Afro-communitarian moral axiological system … and to make moral-theoretical progress in articulating Afro-communitarianism, we need to be clear about different notions of personhood". In the same vein, Oelofsen (2018:306) sees Afro-communitarianism simply as a concept that provides the theoretical account of the idea of persons. These various definitions justify what theorists have taken Afro-communitarianism to be, and the scope of its discourse. The disagreement between these scholars is simply on how personhood should be conceptualised. Clearly put, the contention on personhood in African thought is simply about whether human personhood be seen as an individual property or whether the community should hold the right of its ownership.

The idea of personhood is to understand how the biological-cum-metaphysical self comes to attain the status of social self-hood. Some scholars like Menkiti (1984; 2004), Ikuenobe (2018a; 2018b, 2018c), and Molefe (2018a; 2018b), to name but a few, subscribe to a direct interpretation of traditional African thought in examining the degree of this influence and the prioritizing of the sociality of the individual. Menkiti is concerned about individual loyalty and reference of life fortune to the community; hence, promoting a conception of the individual that primes duty ahead of rights. This conception raises the question of an idea of the self that lets the individual disappear into deep communal space.

A group of other scholars like Gyekye[2] (1997), Matolino (2008; 2014; 2018a), and Eze (2008), to name but a few, point out the lacuna in the traditional conception, arguing that certain aspects of the biological/metaphysical self are neglected in the definition of the social self-hood of the

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[2]   Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984; 2004) defends a version of Afro-communitarianism labelled as radical by his chief critic, Kwame Gyekye. While Menkiti was accused of circumscribing individual rights for communal obligations, through a strict primacy of community over the individual, Gyekye offers an intervention he refers to as a moderate version of Afro-communitarianism that escaped the errors of radical communitarianism. I consider subsequent debates on personhood in African thought as either belonging to the radical or the moderate. Most duty-based Afro-communitarians are sympathetic to the thick influence of community over the individual. The moderate, under which I have classified Gyekye as well as Matolino and Eze are rights based. Their works purport to take the question of rights seriously in the Afro-communitarian discourse.

individual. This neglect accounts for the secondary status given to rights in Afro-communitarian thought. Gyekye and Matolino try to rescue the individual/self from that shackle by proclaiming their endowment and capacity for self-determination and autonomy. Eze's (2008) move is also motivated by this intention, insisting that the individual cannot remain or solely be understood as a sole product of the community, because the individual's subjectivity is not inferior to that of the community. Eze defends his claim by showing the ontological complementarity of the agreed unique subjectivities of the two.

The development of the idea of personhood in African philosophical literature as a reaction to the community/individual debate in Afro-communitarian political philosophy has been grouped in this dissertation as manifesting three distinct claims, namely the conservatives, echoing African culture and the primacy of duties; the rights-compatibilism, defending the location of rights in, and its compatibility with Afro-communitarianism, as well as the equal status of rights and duties. The third claim is Afro-communitarian rejectionism, which holds the primacy of rights with less concern for the disappearance of Afro-communitarianism. Afro-communitarian rejectionism suggests the need to put an end to the tension between individual and community by rejecting the ideas of Afro-communitarianism on both theoretical and practical grounds in African political thought.

In this thesis, I engage these various personhood approaches and claims. I do this to illustrate, without undermining the contributions of personhood to Afro-communitarianism, how the focus on personhood in Afro-communitarian political thought provides a narrow view of the nature of Afro-communitarianism. Rather than paying attention to one component of the Afro-communitarian spectrum, the thesis argues that theorists should also focus on interpreting the community in Afro-communitarianism. This claim is grounded in the weight of the issues in Afro-communitarianism linked to community and its norms. I show how the focus on community exposes other dimensions of the problem between the individual and community inherent in the system of the community. Attention to the community would offer a robust view and strengthen the discourse of Afro-communitarianism. This thesis identifies the problem of humiliation associated with the Afro-communitarian idea of community and its notion of personhood and how it constitutes part of the challenges in the relationship between the individual and community in Afro-communitarian thought. This thesis is committed to reviewing the claims of community in

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Afro-communitarianism to allow for multiple conceptions of personhood. It believes that accommodating plural conceptions of personhood within the community system would aid individuals' self-respect and resolve the tensions between the individual and the community in Afro-communitarian thought.

I have divided this dissertation into five chapters, separate from the general introduction and conclusion. In the first chapter, I focus on the contributions of the conservative, duty-based Afro-communitarians in resolving the conflict between individual and community. I examine their defence for the primacy of duties ahead of rights. The major interrogation here is with the works of Ifeanyi Menkiti. While I examine the influences on him, I connect his ideas to his adherents. I illustrate how the Menkitian account can help ground commitments to future generation. Also, I demonstrate how the neglect of rights constitutes a danger for a modern inclusive political theory in Modern Africa.

In the second chapter, I evaluate the attempt of some Afro-communitarians to show how Afro-communitarianism is compatible with the notion of individual rights. I examine this commitment and show its strengths and weaknesses. I start with Gyekye's work as a critical response to the duty-based ethics of Menkiti and assess the strength of the equal-worth thesis in Gyekye. I examine the commitment to locating individual rights in Afro-communitarian thought by other compatibilists. I also illustrate the expression of certain group rights in African thought.

In chapter three, I move to the conversation on Afro-communitarian rejectionism – the view that Afro-communitarian norms are incompatible with complex, multicultural societies. I evaluate the claim that Afro-communitarianism has outlived its purpose and should be done with in modern African theorizing. The major focus will be on Matolino (2008; 2011a; 2014; 2015; 2018a). I illustrate how Matolino uses the strategy of rejection to account for individual rights in African political philosophy.

In the fourth chapter, I show how the personhood discourse ushers the idea of community for discussion in African political philosophy. I do this by systemizing the various ideas of community that informs the various ideas of personhood in the Afro-communitarianism literature. The first is the cultural community, while the second is community as self-interested individuals. The chapter posits to establishing the form of community at the centre of the tension in Afro-

communitarianism. This analysis aims to take advantage of the recurrent nature of community in the discussion of personhood to reimagine Afro-communitarianism.

In the fifth chapter, I show some of the worries associated with the Afro-communitarian notion of community and its notion of personhood. I show that the ideas of cultural community and the conceptions of individuals, which it, in turn, gives, create the problem of humiliation. Therefore, for Afro-communitarianism to ground modern African political ideas and practices, its notion of community must be non-humiliating. It is the view of this thesis that a non-humiliating Afro-communitarian view of community would reconcile community and individuals in Afro-communitarian thought. However, achieving a non-humiliating community involves a review of the norms of the cultural community. I attempt this review with what I call the doctrine of cultural permissibility. This has important implications for thinking about an inclusive political theory for modern African political practice.

The dissertation concludes with an overview of the discussions in this research. It will further point out specific areas that could generate further intellectual conversation in modern African political philosophy, especially thinking through the discourse of community.

This research is a conceptual iterative critique and does not require empirical findings. As a contribution to African political philosophy, the dissertation employs literature such as journals, articles, and books, in the areas of African philosophy and political philosophy, for arguments on the ideas of Afro-communitarianism. To refashion the interpretation of Afro-communitarianism, I appeal to some of the techniques of analytic philosophy, which include the construction, evaluation, and logical clarification of the characteristic elements of Afro-communitarianism such as personhood, community, and the concepts of humiliation and self-respect (see Metz, 2011). The analytical philosophical approach attempts to unravel deep thoughts about them. The analytic method is needed in this research to transcend the perennial debate in African philosophy to offer fresh perspectives and insights. The goal is to present an Afro-communitarianism that can ground modern African political ideas and practices.

CHAPTER ONE:

IN DEFENCE OF TRADITION: A DUTY-BASED POLITICAL THEORY OF AFRO-COMMUNITARIANISM

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine one of the attempts at analysing and resolving the tension between community and individual in Afro-communitarian political philosophy. This is known as the duty-based personhood approach. This approach defends the primacy of community over the individual, as well as duty over rights. It is both the dominant and most contentious approach to the tension because it echoes the traditional understanding of the idea of Afro-communitarianism. I do this by discussing the contributions of two key thinkers in the debate, John Mbiti and Ifeanyi Menkiti. Here, Mbiti and Menkiti, the forerunners of this debate, argue for a strict influence of the community on individuals. By implication, their political philosophy defends the primacy of individual duties to community over the demand of rights.

Mbiti and Menkiti, as well as other duty-based theorists, house their political philosophy in the conception of personhood. I examine these ideas of persons; how the normative understanding of persons affirms the importance of duties to community. I argue that despite the conflict between community and the individual getting further complicated in the duty-based Afro-communitarian political philosophy, we can annex some importance from the understanding of duties to the community in the approach, especially in the obligations the individual owes to the society; its current and future inhabitants.

The chapter is divided into five sections. In the first section, I examine the contributions of Mbiti to the argument in defence of community and obligations over individual and rights. In the first subsection, I discuss Mbiti's philosophy of existence and how the essence of the individual cannot be understood outside the essence of the community. This subsection illustrates the emphasis placed on the community in the conception of persons in Mbiti's account. The second subsection shows Mbiti's use of religion in the analysis of community to demonstrate how the individual's choice must necessarily cohere with the choices of others to be meaningful and acceptable. The overemphasis on the community makes the individual existence and identity disappear into the

will of the others. As a result, Mbiti's idea of persons and duty suggests a political philosophy wholly informed by the interest, norms and beliefs of the community. Despite the overbearing nature of community in Mbiti, I note that we can make sense of some of the ideals of community in his account relevant to modern African politics.

In the second section, I proceed to the position of Ifeanyi Menkiti regarding the notion of duty and personhood in African philosophy. In the first subsection, I attempt to elucidate Menkiti's theory of persons. I discuss the roles of the community in the various stages of human personhood. These roles affirm the importance of the community in African thought. In the second subsection, I discuss Menkiti's notion of duty encapsulated in his ideas of personhood. It is a notion of duty that defines a good society or viable political order as one whose citizens prioritize the norms and interest of the community.

In the third section, I take account of the objections to Menkiti's notion of persons and duty. This objection revolves around the trivializing and disregarding of individual rights in Menkiti's political philosophy.

In the fourth, fifth and sixth sections, I examine responses to those objections, especially those put forward to strengthen the morality of duty by some adherents of Menkiti. They offer some clarifications to Menkiti's ideas. Their claims notwithstanding, is difficult to embrace without a proper account of the expression of individual rights in modern African societies.

However, in the seventh section, I return to the idea of duty as it relates to understanding human existence in African thought. I discuss how we can make Menkiti's project more relevant to contemporary socio-political questions. In doing this, I attempt a critical evaluation of Menkiti's idea of pre-personalisation and depersonalisation in the personhood discourse as a movement from an 'it' to an 'it'. I show how the notion of 'it' in Menkiti's philosophy of existence is deployed to support the significance of duty in African moral and political philosophy. I demonstrate how this significance can be appropriated by repairing some of Menkiti's claims on existence in African thought. I argue that the current usage of the notion of 'it' does not suggest the enduring span of duty as Menkiti envisages.

1.1. John Mbiti and the collectivist moral and political philosophy

The task of the conversative, especially the classicals among them like Mbiti is simply to offer a defence of African heritage. They are not bothered with the search for new values in African thought. Hence, their analysis is rooted in the historical facts of traditional African societies. They engage largely with a description and exposition of thoughts in African culture and practices. These scholars present a philosophy that has not be adulterated by external philosophies and ideas. They consider and defend the idea of community and duty which they believe best sustain modern African societies that are troubled by both economic and social issues capable of bringing down the pillar of community.

In this section, I discuss the conservative, duty-based political theory of John Mbiti. Mbiti is arguably the precursor of modern African philosophy. Reactions to his writings continue to form debates in African philosophy. Mbiti's (1970) work sets the stage for the major philosophical problems in African thought, in which the relation between community and individual is one. I discuss Mbiti's notion of community and the role of its component – individuals/beings – in particular how his notion of community shows the distinction and gap between the collective and individual. I discuss how Mbiti's notion of community lays the foundation for what has become a dominant account of persons and duty in Afro-communitarian political philosophy. Additionally, I discuss Mbiti's notion of religion and its relation to society. In Mbiti, religion is conceived as both the property and utilities of the community.

1.1.1. The Mbitian philosophy of existence: The community and the individual

Placide Tempels' (1959) description of the thought and practices of the Bantu informs Mbiti's thought process and pattern of description and defence of the community primacy in African thought. Tempels describes the individual as a being, ontologically related to the community in which she belongs. "The living 'muntu' is in a relation of being to being with God, with his clan brethren, with his family and with his descendants. He is in a similar ontological relationship with his patrimony, his land with all that it contains or produces, with all that grows or lives on it." (Tempels 1959:66, cited in Matolino, 2009:161)

This description gives a sense that the individual owes its existence, meaning in life, and identity to the different forces and beings in the community. The individual maintains a sustained

relationship with these beings and forces. The being/forces in which the individual intrinsically shares communion are members of the community, some of which exist as spirits. Mbiti acknowledges the significance of the principle of interdependency in African thought as he pursues the same line of thought in his account.

Mbiti's philosophy is captured in his dictum of communal orientation: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti 1970:35). This dictum gives a sense of the Afro-communitarian thought that guides social and political engagements in traditional African societies. It is the overarching principle of morality that sees the acknowledgment of the group/community before the 'self', where the interests and norms that bind the collective are supreme to the identity and the expression of its individual components. This is because the community is the sole determinant of the choice of identity of individuals dependent on it. Also, the Mbitian dictum is a philosophy that emphasizes individual members of society as being involved in an unbroken web of obligatory relationships.

This philosophy is parallel to Rene Descartes' '*cogito ergo sum*'. While Descartes' dictum is a defence for the existence and the uniqueness of the self – the 'I', Mbiti's dictum is about the conception of the community and its significance in the normative conception of persons and the formation of individual identity in African thought. This philosophy of existence of Mbiti captures a sense of meaningful and dignified life that is granted or embedded in the community. Consequently, social and political ideas in the Mbitian sense must be characterized by prioritizing the goal and benefits of community ahead of its individual members.

Two differing words – 'I' and 'We' in the Mbitian dictum represent two important ideas – individuality and collectivity. However, my intention here is not the clarification of the concepts of individuality and collectivity, but to elucidate the relationship between opposing words. This elucidation is meant to demonstrate a socio-political relationship between individuals and the collective imbued in Mbiti's dictum. Between the two words 'I' and 'we' is a web of relationships. The 'I', which symbolizes an independent individual requires the 'collective' for its existence – a meaningful existence. I will engage with a brief analysis of both ideas, by starting with the idea of the 'we'.

In Mbiti's view, the 'we' is the community. However, membership of this community transcends the living. The community is a whole web that includes the collective immortals, the living and

the generation unborn. The community is both sociocultural and metaphysical. This is the idea of a community informed by culture, which is referred to in this dissertation as a cultural community. It best captures an Afro-communitarian understanding of community. This conception of community transcends the conception of community as "ways human beings organize themselves to make sense of their existence and interests" (Molefe, 2017b:18). The community, in the Mbitian sense, is responsible for the creation of the individual, who only exists by living corporately with others. The individual's existence is made possible through the web of social and ontological connections with these collective others.

A conception of social arrangement that arises out of the Mbitian notion of community appears that it is only the individual that benefits from the relation between the individual and the community. It suggests that the individual good is implied in the common good, and it is in the fulfilment of the latter that the former can be actualized. It also seemingly suggests that the community is wholly responsible for the life flourishing of individuals. As a result, one may submit that the individual is at the centre of concern in the Mbitian conception of social structure. On the contrary, another may point that a conception of social arrangement that arises from Mbiti's theory of community may be to produce individuals who are more concerned about the common good than their own (individual) good. Mbiti sees the community as a common good that should be nurtured and promoted by its members. The prioritization of the common good is arguably a dominant feature of duty-based political theory that emphasizes the importance of community ahead of the individual. The overemphasis on the common good is suspected to be engendering individuals' autonomy. However, this contradiction is reconcilable if one agrees that it is when an individual has developed and followed up on his[3] own idea of the good that he can begin to appreciate and think about how to contribute to the common good.

I now move to the second idea of emphasis in the Mbitian dictum – the 'I'. To understand the 'I' in Mbitian political theory is to dig into African normative account of person. The 'I' is not a symbol of individuality, it describes the 'self' of the unborn, infants seeking to become persons. It describes persons, captured as morally grown individuals, ancestors and collective immortals. In African ontology, the being of the unborn and the departed ancestors is as real as that of the living.

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[3]   For the sake of brevity, an individual is throughout referred to as "his" and "him", although it refers throughout to male and female persons.

Being in African ontology constantly engages in the process of 'becoming'. While the unborn are in the stage of becoming to actualize their full human membership of the community, the living are in the same process of becoming to attain personhood in order to be a participatory member of the community. This affirms why personhood is not just a normative conception, but ontological. The process of the becoming continues with the living dead taking up their rights of a disembodiment through their 'being of personhood', not a mere human being while still in the living world.

It is important to consider that the 'I', which appears to be the opposite of the 'we' is ontologically included in the schemes of the 'we'. The 'I' is enmeshed in the 'we'. If it is not, the Mbitian dictum – "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am", would have been meaningless. What we would have would be 'I am because they are', a more problematic and corrupt form of social relation and existence. The 'we' can be likened to a universal set that houses the numerous subsets of beings. The form of relationship identified here is a mutual relationship insofar as whatever happens to the whole affects the individual and vice versa (see Watadza, 2016). Also, we may interpret what exists between the 'I' and 'we' as a form of complementary relationship that makes the point of opposites between them unnoticed. This affirms a social ordering that is guided by the 'I' and 'we' in a complementary relationship for self-actualization, and not 'I' and 'them' in constant conflict of opposites.

However, the idea of what happens to the 'we' happens to individual needs further elaboration. Two ideas are suggestive. One, it suggests that a necessary good or evil that comes to the community/groups naturally affects every individual. This is a form of a naturally ordered explanation, which can only be true if members of groups share the same ontological status that connotes a shared fate. The other dimension to this idea means individuals have a moral demand to share in the benefits and burden or the joy and sorrow of any member(s) of the community. This is a form of an ethical standpoint that defines community life. Therefore, a commitment to the wellness of any members of the community fulfils the obligation the individual has to the belonging community. It is adherence to this and other identified kinds of duties that singles out the individual as a person and not just a mere being whose existence is worthless; that is, having no effect on others/community. Duty to the community, in Mbitian political philosophy, is not just a political or moral. It is ontological, insofar as it defines the individual's existentiality.

One may argue that the Mbiti's account takes it for granted that individual members of societies think the same way and conform to the demands of communal duties. It could be asked that what force binds the compulsory obligations individual ought to have to the community. It could be better couched as what expected penalties deter individuals from boycotting duties to others in African societies. It is arguable that prioritizing human personhood is one of the motivating factors to stick to communal obligations. It is also arguable that average Africans see themselves in the lens of what people think about them, and how others judge them as a morally ideal human. This latter claim is owed to the desire to always remain with the community and the knowledge of the nature of the community, as it relates to value judgement. Menkiti, one of Mbiti's disciples, maintains a hardcore defence of the fact that personhood granted an individual earlier can be withdrawn if the person fails to conform or live up to the demands of the status.

Dominant reactions to Mbiti and his adherents such as Menkiti, revolves around deconstructing their idea of persons. Menkiti's analysis that the community wholly defines a person has been characterized to have been influenced the most by Mbiti's dictum (Tshivhase, 2011). Meanwhile, what Mbiti's dictum stands for or what can be annexed from it goes beyond a theory of persons and identity discourse. It is, on the one hand, a theory of community; more importantly, a theory of community that emphasizes mutual and complementary relationship. It is, on the other hand, a theory of personhood. While the community discourse in Mbiti's philosophy is meant to serve the purpose of setting the standard for the conception of individuals; that is, to study the nature of the self, its limitation and place in society, it is important to engage in more detail the significance of the notion of community in the Mbitian philosophy.

Nonetheless, there are challenges associated with the Mbitian theory of community. One such is that the generation unborn, included as members of the community, have their identity formed by the living community prior to their union with the living members. They are born into a framework that sets the boundaries for their choices in different existential situations. This may appear as withdrawing the capacity for self-actualization if the world they intend to inhabit has already designed the pattern of their life journey.

However problematic this may appear, if the living has an idea of the good of the unborn, a morally better world may be handed over to the unborn through their commitment to a better life. We can see also that the existence of the living is also influenced by the living dead who before their

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departure was the custodian of the values and norms of the community. The living-dead continues to hold certain levels of influence on the living. This influence is captured in the ways the living consults the ancestors on issues that appear complex. This gives an understanding of how beings and individuals in Afro-communitarian thought have a sense of duty towards other beings. This indicates a form of social harmony and sense of collective responsibility.

From the above analysis, we can affirm that duties are compulsory in the Mbitian account of Afro-communitarian socio-political life. The community expects certain obligations from individuals; an obligation that extends beyond our contemporaries to both ancestors and generations unborn. However, it is important to consider that our most important obligation is to the narrow conception of the 'we' that are physical beings – the living individuals in the community. It is in this light that we make sense of our current existence. Socio-political questions on governance and politics can be unravelled from our understanding of the significance of the 'we' in the Mbitian political thought.

1.1.2. Religion in traditional African thought and the defence of community primacy

In this subsection, I discuss how Mbiti strengthens his defence of the primacy of community in his conception of religion in African thought. He argues that in African societies religion serves the purpose of communal utility. Religion is useful and functional in the conception of the individual and in understanding the bond between community and its members. Religion permeates all the activities of both the individual and the community. It encapsulates the whole system of being of an African. An average African is bound up in religious life and it is difficult to discuss their history without their religious experience (Mbiti, 1970).

In Mbiti's analysis, religion is seen as the outlook of African culture. Lowery and Tarus (2017) aver by noting that ethnicity instead of religion appears to be what defines African identity. Ethnic affiliation transcends religious affiliation. One can still retain ethnic loyalty even if the kins and co-ethnics belong to other religion. However, this objection does not address the premises of Mbiti's claim on religiosity as African fibre. Mbiti argues that religion is not self-generated; it belongs to the community. It is the religion of the community where the individual belongs, in which the individual participates, and is defined. Mbiti argues that each community and perhaps ethnic group has its own religion. Individuals are bound to belong to this religion, as separation

from it is separating from the source of their existence and kins. Denying the community's religion is simply denying the existence of the self. This gives the sense that the proof of one's belonging to a community/ethnic group is the demonstration of the tenets of its affiliated religion. If religion and community are parallel in this sense, it therefore easy to argue that ethnic affinity is the same as religious affinity.

Since Africans in the Mbitian account take religious participation seriously, beginning from birth to death (Physical death), we can conclude therefore that personhood in Mbitian conception is beyond strict moral obligations; it entails a reference to religiosity. Religion would form part of the indexes for the creation of the individual identity. To be human is to be part of the community through active participation in community life, such as its religion, festivals and ritual ceremonies. However, religion and ethics in African thought can be seen as Siamese twins. The relationship and influences on each other in African thought continue to generate debates in African philosophy. For instance, debates in African ethics have been influenced by the religious view of African worldview. While scholars such as Makinde (1988) hold the view of the religious foundation of morality in Africa, others such as Sophie Oluwole (1985) and Kwame Gyekye (1981) argue to the contrary. Humanism, understood as a focus on human wellbeing, is the foundation of African ethics, argues the critics (see Okeja, 2016).

Nonetheless, collapsing morality into religion may deny African societies of the cultural voices in their moral ideas. It withdraws the possibility of appreciating African cultural influence on moral principles and social relations.

Furthermore, the person of Mbiti as a theologian may influence the exaggeration of the community as possessing religion. This may influence why he sees religion as a dominant feature of community life. Why this may be considered a cheap criticism, we can argue that Mbiti's use of religion as a necessity suggests that members of the African societies are by nature religious and cannot be otherwise. While evidence shows that not all Africans are religious, Mbiti's position on community ownership of religion further poses the danger that strangers cannot bring their religion to their land of sojourning, as the membership of the community and recognition suggest acceptance of the host religion. While this might pose serious threats to the acceptance of Mbiti's description of traditional African societies, Mbiti's view may be relevant in managing specific contemporary multicultural issues if the idea of acceptance is replaced with a recognition of the

religion of the host community. Furthermore, as people often migrate with their religion and community - communal-cultural values, we can argue that religion and community can be seen as a Siamese, suggesting that religion is indeed a property of the community, as Mbiti described.

Mbiti uses religion, philosophy and politics in African culture to demonstrate the nature of African community as overwhelming its members. His description of African worldview and the relation between the community and individual can be said to emphasize only the community. This conception results in the disappearance of the self in the polity. Mbiti's project suggests an account of a close society where there are limited choices and expression of freedom. His analysis is conservative, in that it is sceptical of external influences, such as western education, urbanisation and industrialisation that impede on the tradition arrangement of African culture.

Nonetheless, Mbiti's conception of community in African culture continues to influence debates in African philosophy. His conservative interpretation of African philosophies and cultures generated a lot of scholarship meant to either counter his views or support them. Menkiti's project, however, has been influenced the most in the history of African philosophy by the Mbitian defence of community. I shall now move to his contributions.

1.2. Menkiti's notion of personhood and the primacy of duty in the Afro-communitarian political philosophy

Following Mbiti is Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984; 2004), another conversative, duty-based political theorist. Menkiti's idea of the community is drawn from Mbiti's (1970) classical view of the community in African thought. My aim is to make a case for Menkiti's normative conception of a person and duty. I discuss the emphasis placed on duty in determining the being of individual and what individual life ought to look like. I link this in my latter analysis on Menkiti to the ontological progression from what I call pre-personalization[4] of the individual, which begins the journey of

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[4] Menkiti and his critics refer to the ontological progression of the individual from infants to the stage of entering collective immortality as a movement from depersonalisation to depersonalisation. I think it is better to capture the first stage; that is, the infant stage, as pre-personalisation rather than depersonalisation. This is because babies are simply, at the stage of infancy, personhood designate, possessing only potentiality. However, members of collective immortality have attained personhood; that is, the stage of actuality, and have been ridden off that status; hence, their ascription as the depersonalised beings. However, the argument in this chapter contests the validity of depersonalisation of beings in Menkiti.

personhood to the depersonalization of the individual. I show how the benefit of duty sustains the community that houses these different stages of existence and different groups of beings.

1.2.1. Explicating the Menkitian notion of persons in African thought

Menkiti observes that one fundamental distinction between the African conception of persons and that of the West is that the community defines the person as a person in the African perspective, not some isolated quality of rationality. Personhood in African thought is beyond individuals' capacity to reason and make decisions; it involves conformity with norms and values laid down by the community. While Menkiti refers to the western conception as a minimal definition of man, the African conception holds a maximal definition, in that it offers a more exacting approach to the notion of personhood than the West. In African thought, the goal of personhood is to transform the biological self into a moral being or bearer of community norms.

To corroborate Menkiti's claim, Teffo and Roux (1998) expatiate that "while Western metaphysics bases its argument of the concept of the human person on epistemology and psychology, African thinking bases its arguments on social relations" (Teffo and Roux, 1998:145) Teffo and Roux call the African conception a theory of person relational. However, they contend that despite the community's role in an individual's attainment of personhood, individuals cannot be reduced to a product of the community. To my mind, Teffo and Roux aim to make the argument that the conception of individual personhood as communal affirmation may leave us with the perception of the individual as objects, a finished product of a community constituted by certain group of people that share a cultural belief. This finished product is expected to bear the badge of the community wherever they go – a cultural export. It further signifies an individual whose moral choices cannot be independent of the community that created them.

Menkiti continues that personhood is not intrinsic to individuals. Despite being human qualifies an individual for personhood; it however, ought to be worked out. Firstly, for personhood to be achieved, individuals must be incorporated into the community through a system of inculturation and rituals. Ritual of incorporation is necessary for individuals to be taken through the community's social rules and communal values in order to be effective as a personhood

designated[5] for the attainment of the status of personhood. It is this process that sets the standard for identities, functions, and expectations of the individual. Implied in the above claim is sexuality as a design of a cultural process.

Gyekye (1997) stresses the importance of Menkiti's moral conception of personhood; yet, worried about the role of ritual as part of what qualifies for personhood. Matolino (2009:163) explains this further. He notes that Gyekye's worry is that "that there is a difference between morality as a lived-out determinant of whether one is a person or not and the mere process of going through rituals … an individual's capacity does not arise as a result of certain rituals being performed on her". Eze (2018) defends Menkiti on the inculturation through rituals as the space of education where the personhood designate learns the norms and virtues of the community, as well as the metaphysical aspect and configurations of the community, in terms of its gods, ancestors, spirits, rituals, among others. I do not think the initiation periods offer such space and time for such pedagogical activities to take place. Personhood designates would have commenced a life-long learning process that will shape their conduct, character and ethics of community before the rites of incorporation. The idea of long-life learning here resonates with Menkiti's claim that personhood is continuous until the cup is full. Hence, learning the skill for it is continuous.

What we may make of the initiation thesis is that it is a process of ritual ceremony that an individual does after seen to have possessed the moral character that confers the status of community personhood. I defend this using the analogy of the graduation ceremony that accompanies the completion of an academic degree. The absence of the graduation ceremony notwithstanding does not mean the graduand has not acquired the requisite skills that qualify for expertise in a particular subject area. In the same vein, the graduation ceremony does not mean an end to skills and knowledge acquisition for the graduand. It is just a necessary symbolisation of conferment. This is why I see personhood in Menkiti's analysis as conferment; a bestowal of a status of a kind on an individual believed to have demonstrated excellence in moral thought and behaviours. The above, however, is not a defence of the truism of the rituals of incorporation put forward by Menkiti, but a defence of the non-contradiction of it with the nature of moral characters of the personhood designate.

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[5]   I use this word to describe an individual who is not yet regarded as a person, but on the line of human personhood.

Personhood, continues Menkiti, (1984:176) "is attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of the various obligations defined by one' s stations". This is the second dimension to personhood outside initiation rites. It is this second phase of personhood that lay the foundation for duty in African political philosophy. This dimension holds the norms and obligations available to the individual for the pursuit and sustenance of his personhood in the society. It is what sets the role of the individual person and his place in the society. To act contrary to the norms of the community and the terms of the obligations is to have one's personhood denied. Kwasi Wiredu adds that becoming a person entails an individual manifesting some specific obvious virtues. This includes being an adult, adhering to certain normative demands such as being married, having the potential for progeny, and nurturing them with the intent of attaining the status of a person, career success, contributions to the community, among others (Wiredu, 2004; 2008). These social expectations must be sustained for one's personhood to be validated by the community.

From the above analysis, we can argue that personhood in African thought suggests extra demands on individuals beyond what they might commonly desire or live by. I conceived this extra as what the community does not expect every individual to possess or have the capacity for. Thaddeus Metz's analysis of personhood captures this thought. Metz (2010) notes, "the ultimate goal of a person, self, or human in the biological sense should be to become a full person, a real self, or a genuine human being, i.e., to exhibit virtue in a way that not everyone ends up doing" (Metz, 2010:83, cited in Molefe, 2017b:13). This suggests that being a person is a function of capacity, the capacity to deliver on the extra. The sameness of this capacity for individuals is contentious and could be drawn based on gender or social affluence. This shows that all adults may not possess what it takes to become a person. Also, to contribute meaningfully to the well-being of the community requires more than being honest, trustworthy or defenders of cultural rites, but economic strength.

On the other hand, one may argue that the community does not expect that only certain individuals should be called persons. All qualified adults capable of moral functions are required to be seen as persons or seek towards being a person rather than ordinary individuals. Therefore, Menkiti's conception of personhood portrays a status an individual attains as a community member. It is a necessary status that determines the respect an individual gets in the community. The accompanied

respect of personhood guarantees the individual a place in the world beyond – the ancestral community.

However, it is imperative to note that since the community prescribes the norms and naturally sets the standard for the conferment of personhood, and personhood is necessary for a meaningful existence in both the physical and spiritual world, individual members must be, without choice, communal conformists; conformists that, without question, adhere to the community norms, values and practices. I do not think that a non-conformist would in any way be less of a recalcitrant and a non-person, given the fixation of these communal norms. By implication, a conformist moral stance informs the meta-ethical analysis of African thought as presented by Menkiti (1984). Menkiti corroborates this view when he submits that in African culture and thought, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over that of the individual.

1.2.2. Personhood and duty in the Menkitian political philosophy

Here, I discuss Menkiti's notion of duty and its relation to understanding the notion of the ideal human in African societies. Menkiti (1984) argues that values and norms of community are fundamental to the community and individual. He notes that an ideal individual understood as someone who has attained the status of personhood defends the norms and seeks the interests of the community rather than individual interests and rights. For him, "in the African understanding, priority is given to the duties which individuals owe to the collectivity, and their rights, whatever these may be, are secondary to their exercise of their duties" (Menkiti 1984:180). By implication, individual rights and their expressions do not supersede the community norms and standards. What is important is the obligation an individual has to the community.

In connection, Ake (1987) notes that the demand for human rights presupposes a society where people are conscious of their separateness and seek legal means to uphold their interests. According to Ake, the values inherent in human rights demand presuppose an atomistic and individualistic society alien to traditional African realities. Ake (1987), following the same tradition as Menkiti (1984), draws attention to the fact that traditional African societies do not stress rights, especially human rights. Instead, they emphasize collective rights. Some rights are owned and exercised by the community/group. Consequently, group consciousness as seen in Ake's defence of collective rights in African culture makes it arguably impossible for anyone,

especially the marginalized and oppressed, to make the demand for fair treatment based on human rights.

There are more implications to be drawn from Ake's position. The first is that the public, which Ake refers to as the collective, could be rendered socially redundant if the rights of individuals are not recognized, or ranked below collective rights. The second implication derived from Ake's (1987) position is that traditional African culture does not appreciate human rights such as freedom of speech and expression. Consequently, the continued demand for rights, as we have seen in many African nations today, where youths and women persistently air their voices on issues that affect their wellbeing and that of the public, must have been predicated on the collapse of the African culture of collectiveness which Ake and other duty-based theorists allude to.

We may not express complete disapproval of Menkiti and other classical conservatives, such as Mbiti, for their radical defence of communal obligation or thick conception of community, as an absolute force in African thought. Their assessment of African thought might have been generated from the first-hand experience of how it was difficult or impossible to question the community in the bid to exercise one's right. A study of 'silence' in African societies, which entails the silence of women and children's voices to speak on public issues in most African societies confidently, affirms the belief that community norms and practices ascribed to the community are binding without question. It abhors dissent.

However, one thing that is not clear, and perhaps not stated in both Mbiti and Menkiti, is the position of the law in African societies on individuals not considered as persons or yet to attain the status of personhood. It is not enough to be denied certain benefits in the physical and spiritual worlds as individual non-persons. Does the law in traditional African societies consider non-persons as amoral, given their incapability to conform to the norms and rights of the society? One may object that issues of jurisprudence differ from ethical issues. Personhood is a pursuit of normativity; hence within the domain of ethics and political morality. One may also react to that objection, arguing that personhood in traditional African culture as presented by Mbiti and other conservatives informs the totality of African systems of thought and practices, religion, law, politics and family inclusively. It may be argued that individuals that must qualify as political leaders, priests, public arbitrators and mediators, trainers and diviners must have attained the

personhood status to be so recognised and respected by the society; hence, demonstrating the force of personhood.

1.3. Assessing objections to Menkitian notion of personhood

In this section, I examine the concerns identified in Menkiti's defence of the morality of duty in the conception of persons. Objections to Menkiti's political philosophy by critics have taken the direction of assessing his view on rights and personhood in African thought. Chimakonam and Nweke (2018) accuse Menkiti of trivializing the question of rights in his conceptions of Afro-communitarianism and personhood. Chimakonam and Nweke (2018) note that Menkiti's conception of persons suggests the existence of two kinds of rights. The first is known as participatory rights and the other as entitlement rights. Both rights are granted by the community to be used by individuals. The first rights guide the individual – who is by nature a personhood designate – on his journey to becoming a person. Individuals exercise this right by participating in community life, which will, in turn, enhance the attainment of their personhood. The second right can be expressed as the right to lay claim to something in the community, for instance, rights to properties. This right is only available, argue Chimakonam and Nweke, to individuals known to have attained personhood in the community.

This conception of rights in the community extracted in Menkiti (1984; 2004) agrees with a conception of personhood in the African thought system Chimakonam and Nweke subscribe to. A conception, they argue, is not devoid of the idea of individual rights. Chimakonam and Nweke's (2018) conception of personhood retains the community and its contribution. They argue that being a person, in the Afro-communitarian interpretation, begins with being an offspring of the community that confers the personhood status, an idea traceable to Mbiti and other conservatives. This would be followed by the community's nurturing of the individual through participation in community life. This participation demonstrates the individual's attitude of belonging to the community that would later pronounce his personhood.

One challenge with this conception of personhood is that since personhood is granted by the community to which one belongs, there is a possibility that an individual's personhood may only be respected in the community that confers the status. Unlike traditional African thought with a definition of monolithic community, the question of respect of persons may be raised in a modern

multicultural community arrangement following such personhood scheme. For instance, migrants may not have the right to redress if their personhood is humiliated outside of the community they belong to, mainly if the normative principles of the personhood of such migrant differ from those of their host community. This is one of the problems of multicultural societies, in which it is about the system of social relations that ought to exist between groups/cultural communities with different belief systems and cultural attitudes. One may react that most African communities guided by the principles of Ubuntu, amongst other communal ethics, have sophisticated principles of hospitality towards visitors and hence would not humiliate their identities or personhood. A reply that may be levelled against the above objection is that the ethical systems that guide visitors and strangers' reception operate differently from how we conceive their personhood. One may reply that while welcoming visitors may rest on pity and not care, our hospitality to those we acknowledge their personhood may be born out of respect. Giving aid to developing nations, for example, can either be informed by pity or respect.

In connection, if right of entitlement is linked to a personhood granted by the community where an individual belongs, it affirms the suspicion that such community would aid the flourishing of non-members living in it. Chimakonam and Nweke (2018) do not see anything wrong in this conception of rights and its notion of personhood. Their concern is that Menkiti's zealousness to discount the ownership of rights of individuals and support the existence of community rights trivializes and consequently defaces the notion of human rights and passes African thought as incompatible with the idea of rights. They believe that Afro-communitarianism truly has an account of rights, which is implicit in both the accounts of Menkiti and Gyekye.

However, the kinds of rights ascribed to Menkiti in Chimakonam and Nweke (2018) are not some that could be referred to as an individual property, which may be tensioned in the community's obligation to define the personhood of the individual in Afro-communitarianism. Their conception purports a community right, acquired and exercised by the individual's fulfilment of duties. No tension is envisaged in the account where the community defines personhood and provides rights for participation in community life. Both the individual and its rights are the property and product of the community. Nonetheless, the derivation of rights in Menkiti's conception of personhood in African thought is what Nyirenda (2019) refers to as a misreading of Menkiti. Nyirenda (2019) notes that the only reference to rights in Menkiti is to rights attained outside of the community and

not as conferred by the community. He admits that in Menkiti, there is an implicit reference to rights rooted in personhood as moral status and not personhood as a moral virtue or as an achievement. The latter speaks to the whole idea of community conferment of the personhood status once personhood requirements are fulfilled.

In what follows, I discuss how contemporary African scholars, influenced by the idea of Menkiti responded to the question of duty and rights in the communitarian idea of personhood.

1.4. Ikuenobe and the condition for rights and autonomy in the communitarian personhood

The prioritisation of duty over rights in Menkiti's analysis of personhood has been interpreted by some Afro-communitarian right-based thinkers to mean an undermining of the individual, his autonomy and rights (Gyekye, 1997; Matolino, 2011a). As against the worry of the right-based reactionaries, Ikuenobe, an adherent of Menkiti, responds that the structure of duty-based ethics and personhood rests on human agency. This is because the individual obligation to the community affirms the place of free exercise of rationality, autonomy, and rights (Ikuenobe, 2017a, 2108a, 2018b, 2021). Ikuenobe also believes Menkiti's account of the African communitarian-moral conception of personhood can serve as a foundation for an African conception of dignity, autonomy, and human rights. He contrasts this view with the Western notion of moral dignity inherent in human nature as a basis of human rights and autonomy. Unlike the western view, Ikuenobe believes the African view emphasises the place of a corresponding duty or responsibilities.[6]

Ikuenobe notes, dignity and personhood in which rights and autonomy inhere are thick concepts with both evaluative and descriptive aspects (Ikuenobe, 2017a: 214, 2017b:556; 2018a: 591, 2018c:192). In agreement with Menkiti, he argues that personhood in an African perspective combines individuals' biological and psychological parts with the normative part. While the former is about the descriptive physical and cognitive abilities of the individual, the latter entails certain duties and obligations to the community and the exhibition of communal values that authenticate

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[6] Ikuenobe notes that in Menkiti, the use of morality in the conception of persons is presented as a pure normative conception; that is, what 'ought' and not a description of the fact of personhood in African culture and societies. However true of some cultures, it does not represent a monolithic view of African societies. Put succinctly, as against the indictment that Menkiti gives the account of traditional African socio-political arrangement, Ikuenobe is of the view that Menkiti's idea is suggestive of how political theories and practices ought to look in African societies (Ikuenobe 2018a).

personhood. Ikuenobe did not deny the importance of the metaphysical capacities inhere in the individual. He refers to them as the material condition for moral personhood. The metaphysical capacities give one the ability to perform moral functions, that is, one's duties to the community that enables the actualisation of one's personhood. In Ikuenobe's account, possessing metaphysical capacities only makes sense to personhood when they serve an essential purpose in contributing to the wellbeing of others. It is in promoting communal harmony and adhering to communal values that personhood, as well as dignity, is attained as an earned social-moral status (Ikuenobe, 2018a: 591, Ikuenobe 2017a).

To understand Ikuenobe's idea of personhood, rights and autonomy in the African tradition with reference to Menkiti, we must know how Ikuenobe classifies the idea of autonomy and rights. Ikuenobe distinguishes between two forms of autonomy and rights. They are metaphysical autonomy and entitlement rights and relation autonomy and substantial rights. Individual manifestation of these forms of rights and autonomy captures the distinction between human persons and human non-persons. The social metamorphosis that takes place in the individual that turns him from the state of human non-persons to human persons is the same as the one that changes the values of autonomy and rights. While persons are individuals recognised as ideal members of the community that have contributed to the community, that is, instrumental to communal wellbeing, relational autonomy and substantial rights are the autonomy and rights recognised by the community as valuable and 'instrumental', not the metaphysical.

Personhood, to Ikuenobe, is beyond an individual possessing the abstract autonomy and rights associated with being human. It is when rights and autonomy are used within the context of the community in relation to others. It is when the community recognises them as contributing to its moral good. An individual becomes a person when he exercises his autonomy and makes the right choices among the options the community provides, relevant for sustaining its (community) harmony and flourishing. Following this, one can argue that autonomy and rights precede personhood. One way to know that an individual has autonomy and rights is that they have personhood. Rights and autonomy are meaningfully exercised through the responsibility that affirms one's personhood.

Ikuenobe argues that relational autonomy, which empowers the individual to use his free will within the community, exemplifies the ability to put rationality and autonomy to meaningful use within the context of the values of a community (Ikuenobe 2017a, 2018a, 2018b). The community

argues Ikuenobe moulds individuals' choices and actions through the influence of its norms and values. It provides options for one to choose for a life plan. It also provides valuable knowledge about the options for an informed choice and the conditions to achieve the life goal. In this sense, as Ikuenobe argues, the value of autonomy is not known intrinsically but instrumentally, in relation to the community, in consultation with the values and norms of the community, which the individual has internalised using metaphysical capacities. It is of no value to one's autonomy to choose a bad life plan that does not contribute to their wellbeing, hence, the need for the community context. Ikuenobe illustrated this through the example of suicide. While African moral values do not allow suicide, an informed choice must consider the community's stand on taking one's life. Here suicide, whatever the reason, will deny the individual his contribution to the family and community, diminishing his personhood. This is because the suicidal actions are selfish, non-relational and inconducive to the harmonious communal relationship (Ikuenobe 2017a:217).

There are challenges with Ikuenobe's conception of autonomy. The possibility of having only one goal in the pursuit of autonomy, which relational autonomy suggests, already betrays the nature of autonomy. Taking autonomy as an exercise that must always promote communal harmony is inherently not autonomous. One is expected not to do otherwise, no matter the consequences. As Mpho Tshivhase (2011:134) rightly adds, "the capacity to choose for oneself is what is limited by abiding to expectations". The question of moral autonomy is said to be implicated in following expectations sets by the community. This expectation is not only about what should be done in and to the community but also, more importantly, what should not be done in the community.

The challenge for relational autonomy is that Ikuenobe sees the pursuit of communal harmony as the ticket to personhood. He, at the same time, wants to make moral personhood to be naturally or inherently entailing autonomy, rights, and all forms of agency in order for him to wade off criticism. To achieve both, he argues, a moral agent only acts autonomously when he pursues communal harmony that engenders his personhood. Therefore he takes autonomy as mainly valuable when they act following principles that promote community values. This is a highly problematic task. It undermines the worth of such essential political benefit.

Oyowe (2022:53-54) objects to Ikuenobe's description of autonomy and argues that it obscures agency. Like the example of the suicidal fellow, Oyowe notes that denying a suicidal fellow autonomy for his anti-community choice withdraws his role as a moral agent. Oyowe warns that the idea of moral autonomy as conformity to the communal norms of personhood by Ikuenobe is

a misreading of Menkiti. To Oyowe, Menkiti would distinguish between a moral agent acting autonomously from the requirement for personhood, such that a suicidal fellow would not be seen as failing in autonomy and practical reasoning but in personhood. To Menkiti, Oyowe explains that there is a difference between moral agency and personhood. A moral agent only becomes a person's when he acts in accordance with the communal norms. This does not show that acting otherwise that qualifies for non-persons is a lack of moral autonomy, as Ikuenobe explains. To act autonomously is to make a thought-out plan and decide on a plan amidst available options. Whether the decision is in favour of the community does not negate the fact of acting autonomously, as Ikuenobe would have us believe. A collapse of individual autonomy - the ability to decide what to do and not to do with the idea of personhood, argues Oyowe (2022:55) is a narrow conception of autonomy.

Oyowe's intervention in Ikuenobe's position implies that classifying autonomy – metaphysical and moral- does not contribute profoundly to the debate. This is because the condition of rationality, practical reasoning and autonomy is a natural elements of the individual that would be exercised in the community. It has nothing to do with whether one is a person or has the intention to be. As such, there is no metaphysical autonomy for human non-persons and relational autonomy for persons. Prioritising moral autonomy over metaphysical autonomy does not give an accurate picture of the individuality of humans. I posit that the prioritisation demonstrates Ikuenobe's lack of trust in the worth of the metaphysical properties of the individual. Ikuenobe's lack of trust in the internal capacity of free will to be used alone shows that instinct will necessarily be destructive for moral choices, and one cannot act on natural impulse in making good decisions. Here, I refer to decisions that may cohere logically and practically with acceptable norms and values of communities.

However, Oyowe would agree with Ikuenobe that the suicidal fellow non-compliance with communal norms would amount to his non-person status. The challenge with such submission and Ikuenobe's relational autonomy as a requirement for personhood is that they take moral actions as always, resulting in the same outcome. Taking one's life can be, at times, a moral good for the individual, their family and community. In the case of an individual in a vegetative situation, such an individual may request mercy killing to reduce the burden (suffering) placed on his family and the community because of his failing health condition. Reducing burden in this instance through a deliberate and informed decision to cease a life looks to me as communal flourishing and not an

upsetting of communal harmony required to retaining one's personhood. Should we consider such an instance as against the community's moral norms since taking one's life is against the moral options available to exercise one's autonomy or anti-community?

Like autonomy, Ikuenobe demonstrates how Menkiti's normative conception of personhood in African traditions serves as a basis for rights. According to this African view, individual rights are social entitlements. In this sense, rights are an entitlement resulting from human nature and dignity built on communal duties and obligations. A conception of rights, argues Ikuenobe (2018a), that lacks duties to others and responsibility to the community, purports an individual that does not interact with others; a lone being. Rights as duties and responsibility, according to Ikuenobe, are the African conception of rights.

Ikuenobe argues that having a clear understanding of the operations and systems of community is essential to understanding the substantive nature of rights in relation to others (Ikuenobe, 2018b:96). According to Ikuenobe, rights are not just natural abstract phenomenon but practical. They are not realisable outside of the community. It is only in a community context, through interactions with others, that rights become substantive. The community makes the rights practicable and protects them from violation. Ikuenobe believes that individuals' rights and dignity are protected in communal harmony and the priority accrued to duty. Individuals' exercise of rights and their sustenance is in the discharge of specific duties approved by the community. It then implies that they could be withdrawn by the community when it no longer serves as a duty to the collective. Given this understanding of the role of the community, the individual duty to the community or the collective in nurturing it and promoting its harmony is prime to making entitlement rights claims (Ikuenobe, 2018a:601). It is in this sense that duty is primary, and rights are secondary, mainly for the practical exercise of duties (Ikuenobe 2021;422). In Menkiti's analysis of African societies, explains Ikuenobe, the primacy of duty is grounded on practical reasoning reflecting the daily interactions among the people. It is evident in the African communal structure based on the principles of needs and reciprocity of duties (Ikuenobe 2018a, 2021).

I agree with Ikuenobe that rights claim only makes meaning in a community. And it is only in relation to others that tension arises with the demand for rights and not in some isolated, lonely state. Ikuenobe uses this to dislodge the claim that rights are not inherent and cannot be said to exist without the community. The challenge for Ikuenobe is that he does not see dignity as an inherent worth as something abstract. He thinks an individual can only believe or feels he has

dignity or not only through others' treatment of them. Even if they have dignity, such dignity is redundant and does not inform any mode of transaction in the community. This affirms the scepticism that rights granted on inherent worth are abstract and not substantial.

It is important to note that human physical and metaphysical features do not require others' affirmation of their worth or usefulness before they operate. Without others' affirmation, the individual already knows he possesses the same physical features as others. Even in the case of disability, there is a possibility that the individual with a disability, dispersing others' views, sees his impairment as an ability. Since not all human components require affirmation from others for their recognition, the war against self-recognition of one's worth should be minimal.

The illustration of disability, especially the inability for obligatory relations in the community, makes one think about whether people with disability can earn personhood and bear rights with Ikuenobe's defence of moral dignity on moral personhood. The lack of personhood in the Menkitian account is a product of the lack of duty. Therefore, there is practically no way that a non-person, whether personhood designate or an adult falling out of personhood or people without capacity, such as the disabled, can be said to have rights – at least the type of rights recognised and protected by the community. This is because being a person symbolises that one recognises the community as a platform to realise one's rights and protect them by contributing to the community's wellbeing. An individual non-person is taken to be out of such a scheme. I think Ikuenobe is stuck on the implications of the conditions of the disabled and children for lack of the requisite capacities for personhood by ascribing to them unconditional basic human rights and dignity, duties of respect, care and protection (Ikuenobe 2018a: 603, 2021:430). Suppose moral personhood as performance is that important to the African communities. In that case, it is essential to say that ascribing its benefits - respect, human rights, and protection to the disabled is not ascribing personhood to them. Even if we consider that the enjoyment of respect and human rights suggests personhood, we can argue that such personhood is not earned through responsibilities. I do not think that the realisation that one cannot earn the most important communal value – personhood, is good for one's self-respect. At this point, it became evident that denying the worth of natural dignity, autonomy, and rights is dangerous. In addition, Ikuenobe's ascription of unconditional privileges of personhood to the disabled underscores the importance of rights without any performance of duties, that is, rights inherent in human nature and dignity.

Not seeing an individual possessing human rights as a natural entitlement deserving inalienability without corresponding history or experience with the community has further implications. The implication is not that the community is prime to the individual but that human rights are at the mercy of the community, whose mode and ethics of engagement affirm dignity and rights. As such, different communities and their different rules define human rights. The emphasis on the communal context of rights shows that the community can interpret human rights and its operations in the way they consider suitable to them. That being the case, we should not still refer to the idea in question as human rights in so far as the norms and practices of various communities determine them. The universality of human nature that warrants the labels of the political benefits as human rights is already betrayed by the possibilities of varieties of the idea due to the varieties of different moral and cultural principles in different communities. Rather than referring to them as human rights, they are better-called community rights. Ikuenobe's defence of human rights passes it as community rights.

Ikuenobe did not realise that even if it is the community that determines the nature of human rights, human rights are not assigned to the non-human. Furthermore, that ascription is subject to the availability of some inherent human nature that indicates an individual capacity for community. It is the possession and the proper functioning of the descriptive metaphysical properties that are responsible for the adequacy of human social-moral features and properties. Given attention to this universal human nature (metaphysics) should be the basis of our conception of human rights and/or personhood (see Matolino, 2014, 2018; Oyowe, 2013). The call for recognising the universality of human nature in the talk of human rights is to guide against discrepancies in the perception of human rights in the world. This claim, notwithstanding, does not rule out the place of others in how individuals recognise that they have certain inviolable rights and how they exercise those rights for social exchange.

Not seeing human rights as a natural entitlement deserving inalienability could, in the face of intense abuse of rights, weaken the demand for rights by people who think they must only conform to the community norms to earn dignity and respect from others.

Furthermore, there is a suspicion that Ikuenobe conflates two forms of duty in his analysis of Menkiti. There is a form of duty which appeals to cultural community that grounds membership of community as persons in the communitarian African thought. In this case, the duty to community involves obligations to transcendent social norms and values and cultural traditions

that define gender roles and sexuality associated with traditional communitarian accounts of community and persons espoused and implicated in Menkiti's account of persons and communalism. Sometimes Ikuenobe alludes to this form of duty and its reference to cultural norms, like in the example of a suicidal action as anti-communal life. Some of these actions or behaviour and the value-ideas and meanings attached to them are manifestations of the metaphysical explanations of reality in the African traditions.

There is another form of duty which human holds that is necessary to safeguard their rights, whatever they are. This duty does not require communitarian relations; it can hold in any form of group or community where people co-exist for self-preservation. Community members owe themselves the duty and obligation to keep to the terms of their social contract. Rights are entitlements whether granted through the descriptive nature of humans or gotten after the approval of one social standing. The individual does not only own such rights; he demands the duty of respect for it from corresponding others and seeks redress in the instance of violation. Ikuenobe's analysis of moral-communal personhood through rights as social entitlement and relational autonomy often follows the line of this form of duty in avoidance of the implication of the first idea of duty on individual rights and autonomy. A clear example is his constant use of punishment and imprisonment to restrict or withdraw people's rights whenever they fail in their duty to the community (Ikuenobe, 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018c). Ikuenobe grounds his analysis on the priority of duties in African thought, the context of the use of rights on this identified form of duty.

However, this duty to societal norms and laws exists in communitarian and non-communitarian societies to curb the excesses of freedom and violation. However, those responsibilities attached to exercising one's rights are not informed by reference to the specificity of cultures and their norms. Humans are, by nature, social beings, implying the presence of community. As such, some rules should guide such coexistence. These rules do not necessarily make for evaluations of 'being' in deciding who becomes a person. For instance, one does need to be a conformist or culture compliant to know that it is wrong to claim what does not belong to one.

Whereas expectations of duties that ground personhood in the Menkitian-African thought is much more complex, with norms, values and obligations in the community weaved around culture, beliefs and traditions than the duty that sustained relations in any group, which Ikuenobe is aware (see Ikuenobe 2018c:190). The nature of duty and its rewards in Menkiti has social and metaphysical characteristics in that it transcends our current living to the world beyond. Our

obligation to the community and our personhood standing not only qualifies us for membership in the living community but of the ancestral community, where the performance of duties is expected to continue. Here, duty has taken a holistic nature. And, actions and choices necessary for becoming a person - a carrier of rights and autonomy must take cognisance of both the social and metaphysical nature of communal obligations. This is an integral part of Menkiti's analysis of duty, in connection with his idea of community as involving physical and spiritual realities that have been ignore by Ikuenobe's defence of personhood, dignity, autonomy and human rights. Understanding this complex nature of duty is vital to understanding Menkiti's submission that the community takes precedence over the individual and why prioritising rights over communal obligations is a utopia. Part of the challenge is how transcendence norms and beliefs and individual obligations to them affect human classification as persons and the political benefits that follow such description. Ikuenobe's intervention does not seek to capture how we may understand what Menkiti or traditional African societies refers to as duty that makes the community authoritarian in dealing with restrictions of free will and accounts for the obscurity of agency.

1.5. Molefe and the commitment to the defence of duty in the Menkitian political philosophy

In this section, I examine the contribution of Motsamai Molefe, one of Menkiti's enthusiast, in strengthening the morality of duty as the adequate response to the tension between individual and community in African thought. Molefe (2017b; 2018a; 2018b) is among those that share Menkiti's vision and stance in understanding the relations between the individual and the community.

Molefe (2018a; 2018b) identifies three senses of personhood in Menkiti's analysis. The first is the value of relationships in the formation of personal identities. This sense of personhood is the dominant conception of identity in African philosophy. The second is personhood as a claim about moral status. This sense of personhood connotes the qualities or properties an individual possesses that qualify them for certain benefits. This does not involve an assessment of their contribution to the community. The third is personhood understood in respect of an individual exhibition of moral rectitude. It demonstrates the moral qualities approved by the community, often demonstrated by

contributing to the community's growth. These contributions qualify the individual for praise from the community; consequently, affirming his status as an ideal human being, known as a person.[7]

Molefe (2017; 2018a; 2018b) strengthens the morality of duty as the adequate response to the tension between individual and community in the Afro-communitarian discourse when he argues that Menkiti's argument for the morality of duties is a means of securing the wellbeing of every member of the community. Molefe claims that defending the primacy of duties and the secondary status of rights in African moral and political philosophy is the best way to interpret Afro-communitarianism. He argues that our personhood is captured in our relationship and our communing with other community members. This relationship demands certain duties from us. We can interpret this to mean that the flourishing of our relationship with others rests on the priority we will place on duties (see also Oelofsen, 2018). Molefe continues that these duties, on which individual personhood is anchored, are for the wellbeing of every member and the promotion of the common good. Attaining personhood is essential in the communitarian African life, it is what guarantees a meaningful life.

Personhood, argues Molefe (2020) is synonymous with having a meaningful life; that is, living a meaningful life is necessarily a derivative of personhood. Molefe (2020) considers the notion of personhood, which is the idea of living a moral flourishing life as constitutive of an African account of a meaningful life. He notes that human beings have the capacity to seek moral excellence and perfection. It is this moral perfection that guarantees the achievement of personhood, consequent on which a meaningful existence is assured. The goal of pursuing moral excellence and fulfilling social expectations that are a requisite for personhood is to benefit the lives of individuals and not only the community. Having a meaningful life is linked to the experience of having a dignified human existence, which is what being a person in African thought entails. This claim is meaningful insofar as the duties that symbolize personhood are the duties

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[7] The personhood debate in Afro-communitarianism has played out in the following way: Personhood as identity formation of the individual (Menkiti, 1984; 2004; Oelofsen, 2018; Molefi, 2018a; 2018b). Personhood as demonstration of moral rectitude. Personhood as an acknowledgement of moral excellence. Personhood as relationality: valuing our communing with others; an essential part of personhood (Gyekye, 1997; Metz, 2010, Chimakonam and Nweke, 2018; Molefe, 2018). Personhood as an African humanism (Dauda, 2017). Though intertwined, it could be separated to give a fuller understanding of the idea of personhood and the significance of the discussion we may want to have on it.

that benefit others. It is otherwise not so if we are not sure how much of the individual's interest is included in the demand of duties to others. How much of the interest for self-realization is received and accommodated in the duties I owe to others? Also, the limit and degree of the duties an individual have to others is not clearly defined (see Famakinwa, 2010b). However, it is assumed in Molefe's analysis that the interests of the individual and 'others' are entrenched in the degree of duties accrue to an individual.

Following Molefe, Metz (2020b:117) adds that "a human person's life is more meaningful, the more that she cares for others' quality of life and shares a way of life with them". This conception gives us a sense of a meaningful life ascribed to giving care. However, it failed to capture how meaningfulness is attained in the life of the care beneficiaries. If an individual attains a meaningful life through caring for others, what then defines a meaningful existence for the recipients of care? One may argue that parts of what define communal relationships are reciprocal obligations. As a result, caring for others is a circle of obligation that when received must be given out. Horsthemke (2018) raises the challenge with reciprocal obligation as constituting personhood. He notes that there are individuals that cannot give back to the community. These sets of people cannot even take care of themselves, let alone care for others. Examples of this may include people with acute disabilities, severe autism or Down syndrome, who may be excluded from the scheme of personhood. Horsthemke's alarm reminds us of the dangers associated with personhood in the Afro-communitarian thought. However, one may point out that sharing one's anguish with the community and attracting sympathy and care from others, as in the case with recipient of care, including those that cannot return obligation, is a rational ground for one's life to be meaningful (Azeez and Adeate, 2020).

Molefe's (2018a:227) scepticism on rights is expressed when he notes that "If rights would take [a] central place in African thought, this would threaten the very possibility of individuals attaining a status of personhood that entirely depends on them prioritizing the social goal of securing the wellbeing of all." However, these rights doubt would have been unnecessary if Molefe (2018a) understood that the goal of rights in political philosophy secures the ground for human wellbeing and flourishing that characterizes a good and just society. Nonetheless, it is also convincing from an assessment of Afro-communitarianism that what we owe ourselves as community members in Afro-communitarian ethics are duties, not rights. The care we owe others and the priority we give

to reducing the pain of others and promoting wellbeing could not have been a demand of rights by us, nor a right expected to be exercised by the agent. It is more of an ethical obligation resting on the ideological stance of the community. While that is true, the recognition of rights is to have a scheme in place to monitor the abuse of individuals in social relations.

The question of community primacy over the individual in the duty-based political theory is the major hurdle faced with the popularity and reception of Afro-communitarianism as the basis of modern African political experience. This is because of the way this conception constitutes the grounds for the relegation of individual and her rights to a secondary position in a political structure. Nonetheless, one may reply that the significance of the individual is not lost in the classical Afro-communitarian accounts (Matolino, 2018a). The individual forms the central focus of analysis. This can be seen in how the political theory of both Gyekye and Menkiti begins with the conception of persons in African thought, the reason being that understanding the nature of self is important in driving home the details and imperative of a duty-based political theory. It is the individual per individual, who is the carrier of social responsibility approved to him/her by the community to the collective 'others'. In what follows, I discuss Oyowe's critical interpretation of Menkiti's idea of persons and how the interpretation provides insight to Menkiti's analysis.

1.6. Oyowe on Menkiti's maximal persons

Oyowe shares similar commitments with other adherents of Menkiti in offering clarity to the thought of Menkiti. He attempts to interpret Menkiti's maximal view of persons, showing that persons are social entities and not merely physical-biological entities. For a better engagement with Menkiti's idea, Oyowe identifies five foundational ideas that ground Menkiti's maximal notion of persons. These include "existence, community, ontological progression, social incorporation, and moral function" (Oyowe, 2022:14). According to Oyowe, personhood, in Menkiti, begins from being a human being existing in geographical location, sharing a space with others and not existence in nowhere. The understanding that being a person involves sharing a space with others leads to another foundation idea in Menkiti's analysis: the community. He regarded community as the social architecture of personhood, one in which, without personhood is impossible. According to Oyowe, Menkiti references community as organic, unchosen biological ties with others (Oyowe 2022:7-8). Following that, Oyowe identifies ontological

progression as the third foundational idea to Menkiti's maximal view of the person. The ontological progression is the movement from existing as just a human being to a person. Personhood is processual; one starts merely as a biological organism, from infant to adolescence, and an adult with the capacity for moral choices and responsibility to acquire personhood. Closely related to ontological progression is social progression, which begins with social incorporation. Social incorporation as a fourth foundational idea identified in Menkiti's notion of persons involves being enculturated as an individual through the ritual rites for full membership of the community. Thereafter, it is expected that as individual experiences physical changes, he is also progressing in learning the ethos, values and social rules of the community and acquiring the capacity to perform his assigned roles in the community. Personhood is only attained with the individual putting to use the moral values acquired through the community through participating in community life. It is the stage of performance where roles and positions assigned by the community are being carried out. The discharge of these duties qualifies for social recognition – a recognition from others or the community affirming one's personhood and degree. Recurrent in the stage of social participation and recognition is the moral function, which Oyowe refer to as the fifth foundational idea that informs personhood in Menkiti. As a defence of Menkiti, Oyowe submits that personhood is mainly possible in the community, that is, in a relationship with other persons or informed by the social structure.

Oyowe's analysis of Menkiti's idea of a person is commendable. It is a concise account of the intellectual commitment of Menkiti that will guide a reading of him, especially on the ideas of personhood. In connection, it is essential to point out that what Oyowe intends to achieve with this analysis is preparing robust responses to some of the criticism against Menkiti, some of which he earlier contributed to before his rereading of Menkiti. The criticism revolves around Menkiti's maximal view of persons, which holds that persons are constituted by human attitudes, behaviours and practices and not merely intrinsic properties (Oyowe, 2021:4). It is, however, important to test Oyowe's commitment in the light of the adequacy of his response to Menkiti's critics.

I start with Oyowe's earlier review of the communitarian notion of personhood, the umbrella idea of Menkiti's idea of maximal persons. Earlier, Oyowe (2018) joined the disagreement on the ideas of radical communitarianism on the notion of personhood. He refers to the idea as the strong normative conception of personhood because it sees being a person as what transcends the physical and psychological aspect of humans to the normative criteria that acknowledge the individual's

capacity to engage with public morality and behaviour generally approved and recognised by the community. Oyowe notes, "the normative view is that persons are psychologically competent human beings who have demonstrated in behaviour, compliance to appropriate moral and social norms" (Oyowe 2018: 783).

He refers to this as strongly normative because the difference between compliance to the norms and non-compliance results in the characterisation of individuals as either persons and non-persons or a person to a lesser degree. He, however, flaws the strong normative conception on the ground that compliance with norms can be manipulated to get social recognition for personhood. He draws an example of programmed compliance to the cultural norms and practices of the community as different from genuine compliance. Oyowe's conclusion punctured the strong normative view of the inability to differentiate between fake, deceptive, understood as programmed compliance from genuine compliance in the quest for personhood.

Oyowe contests the use of moral excellence as the only indicator of personhood expressed in the strongly normative concept. He argues that such a position ignores the moral disagreement in thinking about the moral ideal that constitutes moral success or excellence. Oyowe notes that unlike in small-scale, pre-industrialised societies, the controversy regarding what constitutes the right moral idea in large-scale, industrialised and significantly culturally and morally heterogeneous communities is difficult (Oyowe, 2018:792). Oyowe is worried that the difference in the way of doing things that accompanies heterogenous societies needs to be factored into consideration in determining what constitutes the guiding norms of personhood, especially when the thought of personhood plays a role in the allocation of rights and privileges in the societies.

Oyowe proposes a weakly normative conception of personhood as an alternative to the strong normative version. He notes that personhood should also entail "the development of higher-order functioning, including rational and moral deliberative capacities, which crucially underlies the achievement of moral excellence, but is not equivalent to it (Oyowe, 2018:788). This is a form of personhood that emphasises the conditions for an individual to be regarded as morally respectful when treated by others and has a holder of dignity rather than the performance of duties. This basic condition references the individual intrinsic nature of the self with a recognition of the social qualities of humans. This version of personhood, Oyowe believes, offers the space for more people to be regarded as persons and be accorded the necessary privileges that follow it.

Oyowe's weakly version implies an agreement with Matolino's identification and the prioritisation of intrinsic features of humans for personhood but in a different or sophisticated dimension. He notes that possessing this intrinsic nature does not necessarily suggest personhood but the development of those features which distinguish the infant from an adult. However, in a latter Oyowe, the development of cognition is not enough to be called a person. Oyowe agrees with Menkiti that humans are social entities and that personhood depends on social conventions, attitudes, and practices (Oyowe, 2021:13). The linguistic and cultural community are essential aspects of becoming a person.

Oyowe (2022) considered the social environment a vital reference to Menkiti's notion of persons. In agreement with Menkiti, personhood is what the community offers its member. The community helps its members to develop personhood and approves it when it is seen to have been attained.

The problem with personhood in Menkiti is not so much with how the community criteria or involvement is both necessary and sufficient for personhood but how what offers social benefits to the individual does not see the individual aspect of the self – being physical and psychological, which Oyowe refers to capture the weakly version, as constitutive of personhood. In that, the individual is what the thought of personhood is about, and not community, the community aspect of what guaranteed personhood ought not to be dominant. Otherwise, it will, without doubt, generate tension between the individual and the community.[8]

The apparent neglect of the physical and psychological criteria makes Matolino (2014) charge Menkiti with a categorical mistake for not distinguishing what a person is from what a person does. Matolino notes that the real question is what a person is, not what he does. According to Oyowe, Matolino's preference for intrinsic human properties suggest that behaviours and social interaction are not indicators of personhood, as Menkiti argues. On the contrary, what a person is, is the same as what a person does. Oyowe, drawing an analogy from biology, notes that what makes an organism is not what it internally possessed – biological and chemical, but its interaction with its environment. He notes: "Matolino's position is analogous to saying that the evolutionary history of an organism, including its behavioural adaptation to its environment, has no implication

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[8] (Note that since personhood is about the individual – ideal individual - what should be dominant for such normativity should emanate from the individual. This does not necessarily imply, as Matolino captures, features common to all individuals, such *as okra*, the *sunsum* and the *nipadua,* among others. Although these features could form part of it, it is not restricted to them. See chapter five on self-respect and the possibility of a plural conception of personhood).

whatsoever for what it is. It is a matter of debate, however, whether inner biological and chemical processes alone exhaust what it means to be an organism. It is an important part of being a dolphin to conserve body heat in cold water" (Oyowe, 2021:7).

Oyowe's analogy could be a better one. First, it is arguable that the case of idealness exists in terms of an ideal dolphin and a non-ideal dolphin. Second, dolphins' interaction with the water could be part of their biological nature. A dolphin dwells in the water, its natural habitation, for existence, not for social interaction alone. What would distinguish an ideal dolphin from a non-ideal, as in the case of persons and non-persons if that exists, would not be the lack of interaction with the water. All dolphins do that to be alive. Matolino would not argue that humans do not need social coexistence; it is part of human biological and social nature. The issue for Matolino is how the moral evaluation of such interaction constitutes a primary mode of evaluating personhood – how that leads to the distinction between human persons and human non-persons.

Oyowe continues to draw evidence for community-based personhood by drawing on Searle's principle of 'status functions' to support Menkiti's notion of the maximal person. The principle "concerns the ways we confer functions on objects, thus endowing them with a new status in the social world" (Searle, 2006: 17-18, Oyowe 2021: 11). Oyowe uses this reference to support the claim that personhood in Menkiti is captured in performance and not just intrinsic properties as provided in Matolino's alternative notion. Oyowe maintains that social objects, such as money, are known and classified by the functions they perform and not by their intrinsic properties. These functions are facts collectively accepted. Oyowe believes Menkiti's maximal persons can be understood as a status conferred because of an obligation or duty performed and enjoys collective acceptance. It is, however, not a rejection of intrinsic properties of humans that are considered general or universal but the fact of conferral of status by the community that distinguishes human persons from human non-persons.

The above reference is only convincing in understanding that Menkiti is not unaware of the properties that make a human being human; he is simply not bothered about the metaphysical classification. However, if we take personhood as simply the status the community confer individual, as a 'fact' from others, and not merely a recognition of the internal properties, as Oyowe (2021, 10) agrees with Menkiti drawing on Searle's argument of assigned social functions, people's treatment of the other will be based simply on the status of personhood conferred on them by the community. As such, persons' treatment of non-persons will be nothing less than how they treat

an ordinary object lacking value. The only moment they treat such humans (non-person) with respect, as with the objects around them, is when value is conferred on them.

One may object that everyone has to become a person and aspire towards being valued by the community. This objection sharply withdraws the blame of disrespect from the community but at the same time endorses the disrespect melted on non-persons. That is not the issue. The issue here is that in Menkiti, personhood is what one can acquire piecemeal and what one can lose and consequently regain. If this is the case, human beings, whether in and out of personhood, deserve that honour of being human and a community member, more so that they have the capacity for moral engagement and disagreement. Every human possesses an intrinsic worth in themselves that should be collectively accepted as so. In addition, since conventions, according to Oyowe, can change based on collective agreement, the yardstick and standard for personhood can also change, especially in recognition of multiculturality, difference and plurality of morals in modern African societies, unlike in traditional African societies.

Despite my disagreement with Oyowe's response to the criticism of Menkiti's idea, I agree with interpreting Menkiti's commitment to reimagining it. This will help unlock some hidden ideas and meanings for fair engagement. Some of the ideas Menkiti did not give flesh to are pregnant with concepts that could avail us in addressing some complex social issues. Core among these ideas is Menkiti's reference to the importance of duty in African political thought, which I explore in the next section.

1.7. The notion of 'it' in Menkiti and the circle of obligations

In my earlier assessment on Menkiti, I alluded to the fact that his notion of community and personhood drawn from Mbiti gives us a sense of a prioritisation of unborn generation in the Afro-communitarian thought. In this section, I attempt a deeper exploration of Menkiti's notion of personhood through the investigation of the use of the word 'it' to represent the significance of duty in African political philosophy. To do this, I provide rehabilitation of the use of 'it' concerning the different stages of human existence in African thought. This reparation provides the ground for the continuous flow of obligations between community members for the sustenance of the community. It also provides the ground for the continuity of duty as individuals progress through the different stages of existence in African thought.

The word 'it' in Menkiti is beyond a label; it is an ontological status that illustrates the absence of individuals' social performance. Menkiti argues that both the unborn and infant, and the nameless dead are best described with the pronoun 'it'. This is because they both lack the capacity to perform moral functions; the requisite for personhood. While the unborn and infants have never become persons, the personhood of the nameless dead has expired. Therefore, a non-person is not only an individual who fails in the moral examination of personhood; it includes infants and departed ancestors journeying out of personal immortality to collective immortality; that is, the state of forgetfulness. I agree with the ascription of the 'it' of the former but contends the veracity of the latter. My interpretation of the 'it' of the unborn and infants is that it places them as the greatest recipient of our moral choices and actions. While the nameless dead ascribing 'it' withdraws their capacity for continued obligations to the living world, the nameless dead owes continuous obligation to human world.

Menkiti's ascription of 'it' to the unborn results from his analysis of personhood. He argues that personhood is not affixed upon birth; hence, a new-born baby is not a person. Personhood is an acquisition that as to be worked out through adhering to some communal and procedural norms. However, he admits to the fact that being human, unlike animals, qualifies an individual for personhood; an indication that the 'it' of humans differs from the 'it' of animals. The human 'it' is not static, but changes when the individual identity has been created properly through a transformation from ordinary individual to persons through a system of inculturation. In Menkiti's view, while the term "individual merely refers to the different forms of agency in the world, individual person represents a movement from the raw appetite level to one that is marked by the dignity of the person" (Menkiti, 1984, cited in Matolino, 2011b:26). Menkiti seems not be alone on this, as Gyekye alludes to same fact, noting that, "while children are actual human beings and are members of the community, they are persons only potentially and will achieve the status of personhood in the fullness of time when they are able to exercise their moral capacity" (Gyekye, 1997:50). Gyekye's reference to potentiality justifies why I consider the 'it' of babies in Menkiti as representing pre-personalisation rather than depersonalisation. This is because, at infancy, babies are merely personhood designates.

Matolino (2011b) worries about Menkiti' s use of the word 'it' in the classifications of person, a term Menkiti references to deny the ontological status of babies. Matolino is of the view that the

use of the word 'it' with reference to babies does not carry any moral or ontological significance. The word is merely a pronoun that replaces the name of babies or whoever is the point of reference. In so far as names do not carry any moral weight, 'it' should not. It could therefore not have been justified, while babies would be referred to as non-persons by the word 'it'. However, I note that Menkiti's description of the infants holds moral significance, because the description places them at the centre of moral obligation, that is, as a necessary recipient of duties and our moral choices (see also Molefe & Maraganedzha, 2017).

Furthermore, since personhood is an acquisition, infants are yet to possess the requisite intellectual capacity and moral maturity that affirms personhood that can be expended through obligation. This may be why infants are not given elaborate burials when they die. They are believed not to be joining the ancestral world, as only persons continue their existence as ancestors. However, one may contend with this position by saying the death of an infant is a complete loss compared to an adult who has spent a good number of years and perhaps has excellent achievements. Hence, the agony ascribed to the loss of an infant considered to lack self-actualisation and social impact might be the reason for not giving a befitting burial and not for the reason of personhood. One may reply that when personhood is considered as the measure of good an individual has towards others and the measure of their responsibility to sustain the community as well as the requisite for living a meaningful life (Molefe 2020), we may tend to conclude that our understanding of the death of infants revolves around the non-acquisition of a personhood status – a fundamental to keeping the web of the community sustained. However, while we may describe the infants as non-persons, symbolizing non-carrier of duties, we may not be able to ascribe the same word with the nameless dead, as Menkiti (1984, 2004) suggests.

Menkiti (1984,174-5), following Mbiti, notes that the ancestor; that is, the living dead, who are occupiers of the ancestral community, will sometimes lose their personal identity. This is possible at the point where their names and history are not discussed in the living world by people. This usually occurs when the people who witness their physical existence are no longer in the physical world to share and sustain their memory, through various acts of libation and veneration. The end of personal identity is the terminal stage of individual personhood and its accompanied obligation to the community. These ancestors are now in the stage of personal non-existence and hence are described with the label 'it'. This shows the existence of an ontological progression defined by

moral progression from an 'it' to an 'it', in Menkitian African conception of existence. While Mbiti calls this stage 'collective immortality', Menkiti is of the view that its members would have to be referred to as collective immortals. Faulting the logic of Mbiti's label, Menkiti notes that the ancestors who have left the stage of living dead are better referred to as nameless dead with the ascription 'it'. While the living dead still provides help to the existential conditions of the living, the nameless dead does not.

In Menkiti, therefore, two sides of the extreme of the web of human components carry the identity of 'it': the unborn cum infants, which makes the beginning of the chain, and the nameless dead, which makes the end of the chain. Between these two extremes is a stage of personhood. The journey in and out of personhood is marked by a process of incorporation and dis-incorporation, a journey through pre-personalization to depersonalization. It is what Menkiti calls "a movement from an it to an it" (2004,327). Put succinctly, in Menkiti, two worlds of 'it' can be identified. This concept of 'it', though, not uniquely an African ascription to certain individuals, conveys an understanding of the state of meaningfulness and meaninglessness of human existence, in particular, as it relates to how one exits the world "the same way the journey first began" (Menkiti, 2004, cited in Etieyibo, 2018), through the journey back to the 'it' – an identity and ontological status that began the individual's existence.

Menkiti's classification of the ancestral members of African community as 'it' has been under intense interrogation. Like the infants, Matolino (2011b) worries about Menkiti's use of the word 'it' in depersonalising the being of the nameless dead. He adds that the 'it' ascription of the unborn and that of the ancestor does not have the same features as Menkiti would want us to believe. While the infants' depersonalisation is because they are yet to taste personhood, the nameless dead has. He concludes that Menkiti makes the mistake of not differentiating between the 'it' of babies and that of the nameless dead in that both do not have similar experiences or statuses of depersonalisation.

Following Matolino (2011b), Etieyibo (2018) contests Menkiti's classification of the 'it'. He observes that the 'it' of the unborn carries a lesser moral weight compared to that of the nameless dead. He argues that the category of the nameless dead should be addressed as an 'it-it,' rather than a mere 'it', in that the nameless dead has participated in two forms of depersonalization; the first, before they ever became a person, the second, when they are disincorporated from the community

that affirms their personhood. Etieyibo grounds the difference between the 'it' of the infant and the nameless dead on the idea of moral force. By moral force, Etieyibo (2018,54) means the idea of morally contributing to the community, through individual behaviours and actions. He uses this to symbolize the difference between the two 'its', arguing that the nameless dead, unlike the infants, has contributed to the growth of the community, leaving the footprints. Contra Menkiti, the footprints of the nameless dead enable them to remain in people's memory, even if their names are forgotten. However, Etieyibo seems to agree with Menkiti on the distinction between living dead and nameless dead. He argues that both the living dead and nameless dead do not have the same moral force in that the former still holds the idea of personhood while the latter has been depersonalized.

Beyond the lack of distinction in Menkiti's use of 'it', Matolino is still worried about Menkiti's defence of the depersonalisation of the nameless dead, which Etieyibo sees not to be problematic. Matolino argues that there is no valid claim to refer to the depersonalised nameless dead as 'it' because people no longer call their names. He adds that Menkiti's denial of the moral status of the members of collective immortality contradicts African thinking that sees members of collective immortality as retaining their interest in human affairs (Matolino 2011b).

It suffices to say from the above that validating ancestors' involvement in human affairs rests on proving their personhood. Seeing the nameless dead as lacking personhood questions the notion of the cycle of obligations that exist in the web of beings in African thought. If the logic of ancestor obligation to community is true, it should affirm that of the 'nameless dead', hence, the continued exertion of their personhood and obligations. It suffices to say that the nameless dead are either not nameless or should not be tagged as 'it', a signpost for disincorporation that further suggests a withdrawal of their role as ancestors. They should instead be known as attaining a fuller personhood similar to that of the gods. The use of the 'it' therefore gives them a form of redundancy. A conception that does not ascribe the 'it' will enhance the demand for greater obligations from them. The promotion of duty and the sustenance of the community should be the key objective of restoring the personhood of the nameless dead to Menkiti's conception.

I am concerned here with the sustenance of the web of obligations by arguing for the personhood of the nameless dead, and how the 'it' of the infants and generations unborn sets them as recipient of obligations, more particularly on how African emphasis of the duty ethics makes sense of the

existence of the unborn; specifically, how the obligations the living ancestors and the nameless dead have to the living can be annexed to understand the duty the living has to the future generation. If the living, the beneficiaries of the obligations and labour of the ancestors know that what forms part of their personhood is the obligation they have to the future generation, their perception to managing present existential and social challenges will be improved. The benefit of properly managing the earth and its social space is to bequeath a better one to the coming generation.

However, ascribing the identity of 'it' to the nameless dead punctures the cord of duty that exists and sustains the orientation of community in African thought. Personhood as a moral concept questions the veracity of the depersonalization of the nameless dead. The idea of personhood as acquisition in Menkiti supports the claim that personhood can be withdrawn if the individual person fails in her ethical roles. Eze (2018,4) defends Menkiti on this, using the idea of a transactional subject. Eze argues that the act of seeing personhood as an achievement in Menkiti passes the account as one that sees everyone as potential persons. Given that individuals get into an ethical transaction by working through some moral space and confronted with some moral norms and issues makes it possible for individuals to err and fail in the personhood journey. Eze (2018) notes that the fluidity of the moral subject can make an individual lose the achievement of personhood. However, he notes, failing at a particular time does not mean an end to further transactions or ethical purchases. As far as all humans are potential persons in the continuous journey to perfection, non-persons are not discarded or denied rights, as Gyekye interprets (Eze 2018).

Both Menkiti's claim and Eze's defence are true, because personhood in Menkiti is a moral idea and does not connote permanency. However, the reliability of this truth would be subject to answering certain questions that come to mind. Is the loss of the personhood of the nameless dead a product of moral degeneration while still living dead? If not, what then informs the loss of such personhood acquired through moral ideal? The disincorporation that begins the journey of the nameless dead questions the truth of Menkiti' idea of personhood as a moral concept and Eze's defence of the same. Consequently, personhood in Menkiti transcends a moral concept.

However, I agree with Menkiti on the description of the unborn as 'it', because of their lack of moral functions. It is the discharge of one's obligation to community in the traditional

communitarian sense that affirms one's personhood. Infants and the unborn are not duty required in that they lack moral function; they are beneficiaries of the duty other categories of beings owe to the world. However, we cannot say that the nameless ancestors whom Mbiti and Menkiti claim have exhausted their personhood life span are not duty required. In my assessment, they hold moral function like the living dead and should not be refer to with the label of 'it'. The truth of their moral function cannot be less of how we conceive the truth of the function of the living dead. Both are outside the realm of the physical. If collective immortality or nameless dead is anything to go by, it cannot be conceived and defended outside the confine of the spirit world that houses the living dead, except that we want to see Menkiti and Mbiti's description as theoretically incorrect and practically falsifiable.

Unknown to Menkiti, contained in his analysis is the defence for the claim that the nameless dead does not deserves the 'it'. Menkiti holds the view that in African thought an individual becomes more of a person, as he or she grows; that is, individuals attain full personhood as they age. If the community is truly a web, and hierarchy exists there, we can confirm that as one journeys into a higher hierarchy of an older person to become a full person, the journey into the world of the spirit should qualify the living-dead for a fuller personhood. A journey into a fuller realm of existence should describe the strength of one's personhood, thereby connoting greater obligations to the living and the unborn. Therefore, the cup of an individual personhood can only be full in the ancestral world and the unknown world of collective immortality, where the living-dead and nameless dead, respectively, are oblivious of social vices that could affect their full expression of moral virtues and excellence.

Furthermore, describing the state of collective immortality as 'it' constitutes a derogation of the persons of the nameless ancestors. The so-called nameless dead or the completely departed ancestral spirits, unlike the unborn, are former occupants of the world of the living.[9] We are aware of their existence in history and experience. Their persons are related to ours. Sometimes, their history and names are part of the clan praise songs, symbolizing their struggles and how existence constitutes some of the norms of the clans. They are often the founders of clans that make up the

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[9] Molefe (2014) refers to the location of the ancestors as the spiritual community. While that sounds good, a better description could be that the spiritual community is not a separate community from the physical community of human. I would rather argue that the community we inhabit has both physical and spiritual components occupied by different kinds of persons – the ancestors and spirit, and the living.

community. They bequeath the earth to the living dead, which in turn do the same to its current habitants, an indication that the earth's inhabitants owe the next generation an improved and habitable version of the earth. Therefore, our remarks of nameless dead are to be likened to fellows that we sense their existence and as partners in social and existential obligations. From the foregoing, we can affirm why the living persons and unborn can expect the continuity of obligations from the ancestors.

I argue that a true progression of duty exists in the various worlds that exist in the African conception of life as captured by Menkiti. The nameless dead captures a sense of duty to the world. The ancestor, the living dead, holds a portion of duty to the world. At the same time, the current occupant of the living world holds a different sense of duty. All the components of beings except infants have a duty to the world that babies and the unborn will inherit. They, however, have different capacity for obligations. For instance, the ancestors are believed to be in possession of special powers that the living does not have (see Ramose 1999,300).

The growth and the sustenance of the community are owed to the commitment to duty every being with capacity for duty that makes the community have towards utilizing their capacity. The Afro-communitarian version of duty ethics emphasizes the knowing that the sustenance of the society is subject to the non-withdrawal of the capacity and obligation to the community as a collective project. Also, the sustenance of the community reciprocates the good wishes and obligations the living dead have towards the living to the unborn generation. The living owes the unborn the preservation of community and values. This is in addition to the clean energy and environment, economic insurance among others, that the living owes to unborn and infants. It is the position of this chapter that modern African societies may borrow from the notion of seeing society as an entity defined by a web of obligations by its constituting beings.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the contributions of the conservative duty-based political theorists as a response to the tension between individual and community in Afro-communitarian political thought. The duty-based Afro-communitarian theory subscribed to a socio-political arrangement where individual obligation to community supersedes their demand for self. It is characterized by an unending rope of obligations to the community than a demand for rights. I also discuss

objections to the duty-based personhood approach as constituting the claim that African political thought does not appreciate the idea of rights. This objection is mostly responded to by contemporary duty theorists like Ikuenobe and Molefe, who argue in defence of duty and a notion of rights that is accompanied with communal obligation.

I also discussed some of the significance in the duty-based personhood arguments, which I claimed is pregnant with ideas that can instil a sense of responsibility on earth inhabitants. The reception of this significance would be affected by the vagueness of the idea of rights, especially individual rights in the duty-based Afro-communitarian approach. This affirms why reactions to this approach have taken the shape of a review of the community primacy thesis and the defence of rights. One of such attempts is that of rights-compatibilism – the defence for the accommodation of rights, and its equal with duty in Afro-communitarianism. While the methodological approach of the duty-based theory is deductive, through a movement of importance from community to individual, the rights-based compatibilism appears to be the reverse, methodologically.

CHAPTER TWO:
LOCATING RIGHTS IN THE AFRO-COMMUNITARIAN SCHEME: TESTING THE COMPATIBILIST ARGUMENT

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I discussed the conversative argument in defence of the morality of duty ahead of rights in the Afro-communitarian political philosophy. In this chapter, I shift to the argument for the nature of rights and its status in Afro-communitarianism. Afro-communitarianism as both a political and moral philosophy has been described by Menkiti and other conservative duty-based political theorists as lacking in, and incompatible with, a major feature of moral and political philosophy, the notion of individual rights. They argue that, whatever can be called rights in African thought does not hold the same status as duty. This claim is not without reaction by the rights-based political theorists. This group defends the lack of depth of the allegation by duty-based theorists and argues that Afro-communitarianism is compatible with the notion of individual rights. The dominant thinker in this category is Kwame Gyekye. Gyekye (1997) argues that rights do not only exist in Afro-communitarian political scheme, but it also holds equal worth with duty. Some Afro-communitarian thinkers have extended their conviction on the place of rights in the Afro-communitarian scheme, to defending an African theory of human rights, which they claimed is inherent in the communitarian African thought. The compatibilist rights-based thinkers, like their duty-based counterparts, introduce their arguments through the discourse of personhood in African thought, noting that most controversies on individual rights in African political thought arise out of the misinterpretation of the notion of self and personhood in African philosophy.

This dissertation is deeply concerned with the question of rights in modern African societies. Given the relationship of rights and justice, it is difficult, if the argument of incompatibility is correct, to argue that Afro-communitarianism can offer any principle of justice and a theory of a good society, hence, the imperative of the rights-compatibilist intervention. This chapter seeks to test the veracity of the compatibilist defence. In doing this, an assessment of different accounts of rights in African thought is made to see how rights is located in Afro-communitarianism.

Three sections of the chapter are devoted to Gyekye as the progenitor of the rights-based compatibilist argument. In the first section, I examine how Gyekye's moderate communitarianism attempts the resolution of the tension between the individual and the community in Afro-communitarian political thought through an account of personhood informed by a commitment to ground individual rights in certain features of the self. The aim of the defence of individual rights in Gyekye is to establish its compatibility and its equal status with duties in the communitarian African societies.

In the second section, I examine the reactions to Gyekye's compatibilist thesis in Afro-communitarianism. These reactions take different routes. The first is the charge of the uniqueness of Gyekye's moderate communitarianism and its purpose. The second question is the possibility of an Afro-communitarian accommodation of rights; that is, the veracity of the right recognition claims in moderate communitarianism. I demonstrate how Gyekeye's notion of common good and his desire for communitarian ethics betray his rights-based political theory.

Nonetheless, in the third section, I explain how we may read Gyekye's project better. In this section, I offer responses to the objections to Gyekye through a reinterpretation of his compatibilism. I start by noting that Gyekye seems to be under the assumption that the identification of the non-communal aspects of the individual waters down the dominance of community in Afro-communitarianism. Thereafter, I argue that a critical search ought to be made on the interpretations of some of Gyekye's claims and the motive behind those claims. Gyekye's work, I posit, is an account and a recommendation of what ought to, instead of a description of the equal stance of community and individual; rights and duties in African thought. I also argue that Gyekye's 'moderacy' be seen as a 'mean'; that is, the middle point where two extremes meet. I illustrate how Gyekye's task in African political philosophy can be construed as reconciliating two traditions.

The inability to defend the possibility of individual rights not encumbered with the community in the classical compatibilist argument creates the impression that the African thought and culture might not have any idea of rights but duty existing in its political scheme, hence, justifying the disregard it had in the duty-based Afro-communitarianism. Therefore, in the fourth section and its various subsections, I discuss the argument of other rights-compatibilists in defence of (individual) rights grounded in the thought pattern and practices of African culture. In this section, I consider

the principle of complementarity in African philosophy as a ground for individual rights and freedom. I also discuss the identification of economic rights expressed in the economic activities in traditional African thought. One of the ideas I test in this section is the use of age as a principle of rights claims in African culture. This section demonstrates how Afro-communitarianism traditionally construed offers only selective rights, such as group rights, and not individual rights.

In the fifth section and its subsections, I examine the claims that there exists an African theory of rights grounded in the idea of personhood in African thought. I focus on Metz's contribution and discuss his unique notion of personhood. I also examine Oyowe's reaction to Metz's idea. I conclude the section by drawing the similarities between Gyekye's classical compatibilist position and Metz's compatibilist argument.

The aim of the analysis of the various sections is to show that the compatibilist success in Afro-communitarianism can be understood in two ways: It identifies the presence of certain forms and expressions of rights in African political thought. Two, it establishes the co-existence of these rights with communal obligation. However, it does not locate individual rights and expression in an Afro-communitarian thought. As a result, the possible compatibility of individual rights with duty is highly contentious. Considering individual rights as the basis of the conflict of community and the individual in Afro-communitarian political thought, the compatibilist thesis is far from achieving its ultimate goal.

2.1. Gyekye on personhood and the Equal-worth thesis in Afro-communitarian thought

Kwame Gyekye (1997) leads the debate on the alternative response in the understanding of African thought, as it relates to the individual and community, tradition and modernity. He developed an account called moderate communitarianism, which aims to respond to these issues, specifically, to the tension that arises from the relation of individual and community in Afro-communitarian political thought. Moderate communitarianism aims to develop the kind of relation that should exist between the two sides of the Afro-communitarian spectrum and consequently between rights and duties. It is a kind of relation where both the community and individual have partial influence on the constitution of human personhood. Following that, moderate communitarianism is a reaction to the totalitarian influence of community over individual, and duties over rights in both Mbiti and Menkiti's political philosophy.

Gyekye alleges both Mbiti and Menkiti's accounts of self as radical and promoting an unrestricted influence of community on individuals. Menkiti's conception of person, in Gyekye's assessment offers a narrow perception and understanding of self, a perception that only gives credit to the role of community in the creation of individuals' identity and their interest. Gyekye reacted by presenting his unique account of personhood, entrenched in his moderate communitarian thesis. Gyekye's normative account of personhood distinguishes between an individual detached from the community and another individual; known as person, not detached, but partially created by the community. Gyekye's alternative account, which he calls moderate and restricted communitarianism, aims to give a more appropriate account of the self that describes the self as both a communal and autonomous being.

On the one hand, the individual is by nature a social being. It is this sociality that constitutes the identity of the individual as they co-exist with others, and relates with the community normative principles. The fulfilment of the demands of community on the individual is essential in the attainment of personhood in communitarian societies. However, moderate communitarianism does not regard the community as exerting full control in the determination of the outcome of individual existence. It is the partial involvement of community in personhood, that is Gyekye's ultimate distinction from the radical[10] conservatives.

On the other hand, the individual is an autonomous being. He has a capacity for certain features such as rationality, choices and will, which Gyekye sums up as mental features. These mental features, argues Gyekye, are not created by the community. They are part the physio-psychological components of the individual. They are important features in the personhood of the individual, because they play essential roles alongside the community in the individual actualization of the self. Their presence and functions indicate the place of self-expression and individual autonomy, consequently, affirming the place of individual rights and its status.

Therefore, moderate communitarianism is an Afro-communitarian theory of personhood that is considered sensitive to individuals' rights. Gyekye (1997:62) argues, "individual autonomy – which is acknowledged in communitarian conceptual scheme – must involve recognition of the ontology of rights: indeed, individual autonomy and individual rights persistently appear as

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[10] Here, I refer to Mbiti and Menkiti as radical conservatives to distinguish between other conservatives' duty-based theorists.

conceptual allies. A communitarian denial of rights or reduction of rights to a secondary status does not adequately reflect the claims of individuality mandated in the notion of the moral worth of the individual." However, rights understood as the property of individuals find actualisation in a social framework. This links to the nexus between rights and duties.

In furtherance of his defence of rights, Gyekye (1997) argues that the notion of human dignity in the Afro-communitarian theory of personhood presumes the existence of individual rights. Since the community acknowledges the existence of human dignity, it should approve of individual rights. However, this claim does not show if there are rights that accrue to individuals by virtue of being human; that is, what has come to define human rights. This is what Gyekye should be defending here to show the individuality thesis in moderate communitarianism; a notion of dignity that is characterised as a feature of being human. This interpretation of dignity is less problematic and it should be sufficient to facilitate the recognition of rights in any society, be it communalistic or individualistic. What Gyekye argues for here is rights that one enjoys through the acknowledgement of one's dignity by others in the community. As understood in the Afro-communitarian sense, the idea of dignity is guaranteed by individuals' fulfilment of approved obligations to the community. It is an accompaniment of personhood (see Ikuenobe, 2018a).

Gyekye (1997), admitting the obligation of individuals to the community and the primary status of duty, argues that individual rights are as fundamental as the duties to the community. This is the making of Gyekye's equal-worth thesis. He argues that despite the emphasis on communal obligations, the individual who is autonomous and self-assertive has the capacity to evaluate the community norms.

However, in what seems to be a self-contradiction, Gyekye (1997:62) argues that the communal values of reciprocities and mutual sympathies have priority over the demands of individual rights and justice in a communitarian society which he characterises African societies to be. It therefore becomes unclear, in a community where duties supersede rights, as claimed by Gyekye, if an individual can genuinely exercise his rights of expression when doing so threatens the community's normative structure. A clear example is when female children demand their rights to the inheritance of their fathers. In an African culture[11] where the rights to inheritance are only

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[11] There are cultures in Nigeria where the right to inheritance is only enjoyed by male offspring. This is because when a female marries, they now belong to their husband's family. The Igbo ethnic group of

given to male offspring, a female child laying claims to her parent's properties, claiming equal worth with her male siblings, contravenes the existing norms and the standards of the society. Nonetheless, one may ask if inheritance is a right or a privilege of biological connection? The female child's demands may not necessarily be towards getting some property from the late parent, but of asserting the self in such a way that queries the ontological marginalization, necessitating the assumption that being a woman restricts her from sharing from the largesse of inheritance. Therefore, Gyekye might have taken certain instances of individuals' expression as indicating the demand for rights rather than, say, for the purpose of self-actualisation.

Furthermore, a certain inconsistence in Gyekye's moderate communitarianism sells him out as belonging to the camp of the radicals (much like Menkiti), which he criticizes. His analysis signals a return to the conservative duty primacy in Afro-communitarian political thought. Despite the supposed equal standing given to community and individual as well as rights and duties in the Afro-communitarianism of Gyekye, he draws the line on behaviours and acts that could be allowed by the moderate communitarian thesis. He agrees that having an entitlement to rights does not guarantee certain expressions. One of such expressions he identifies is homosexuality (Gyekye, 1997:65). Gyekye argues that homosexuality is among behaviours and actions capable of disrupting the community, or what we can refer to as African community. This is because homosexuality is categorised as an action that may affect the moral sentiment of the collective 'others'. Bearing in mind the concern of others is an important part of our social responsibilities, without which our expression of rights is meaningless. However, actions that are considered private, such as watching photographical contents, may be allowed expression by individuals, irrespective of whoever disagrees with them. We can see from the conclusion that Gyekye's thesis, like the radical communitarians, though implicit, considers the community as that whose interests

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Nigeria favours male offspring over females in the inheritance allocation. However, there has been an instance of litigation to challenge this customary law in court. See Lemmy Ughegbe, *S'Court Upholds Female Child's Right to Inheritance in Igboland*, THE GUARDIAN (Apr. 15, 2014). https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2014-05-06/nigeria-supreme-court-invalidates igbo-customary-law-denying-female-descendants-the-right-to_inherit-property. Accessed 5th November 2022.
Recently, a state in southern Nigeria passed legislation to recognise female offspring in the distribution of the inheritance left behind by their parents.
See https://allafrica.com/stories/202209190450.html#:~:text=The%20Rivers%20state%20law%20makes, being%20threatened%20by%20their%20family. Sept. 19, 2022. Accessed Nov. 5, 2022.

must be prioritised, irrespective of the condition of the individuals. The limit of the self-assertiveness in Gyekye's moderate communitarianism is thus known.

Gyekye's description of homosexuality does not suggest what defines the essence of individuals but behaviour or sexual orientation. This description would affect how we think about other sexualities, such as heterosexuality as either essence or what is reducible to orientations. However, I do not think Gyekye would agree that heterosexuality is considered a sexual orientation that demonstrates individual agency. If he does, it means individuals can choose any form of sexuality. Consequently, homosexuality would not be regarded as an act against the common good in communitarian African thought. Gyekye's description of homosexuality further demonstrates insight into the humiliation of the self of homosexuals.

The rejection of homosexuality as either an essence of a self-conception in African social structures could be termed as promoting a communal determinist sexuality; that is, the absence of expression in human sexuality. To ground such sexual determinism on community-shared good, or on the desire of majority as Gyekye does, is neither adequate nor convincing. The source of what the community wants may go beyond what its current members agree to promote. Also, it is important to note that there is no pursuit of the common good without inclusivity. The common good is not a community entity in its abstract sense; it is what members of the community own collectively, whether in its abstract or concrete form. A feeling of marginalisation informed by a structure of exclusion contradicts what may be referred to as a common or shared good.

The overemphasis on the good of community in Gyekye's moderate communitarianism affirms the position of critics as to the absence of difference between the two classical interpretations of Afro-communitarianism. While it appears that the duty-based claim of Menkiti logically follows from its premises, Gyekye's rights-based conclusion is betrayed by its premises. Nonetheless, the merit of Gyekye's intervention can be ascribed to his mentioning of the availability of rights in the Afro-communitarian thought. However, his defence of the status of rights, a point which he took Menkiti on, is contentious. While Gyekye's moderate communitarianism claims to be safeguarding individual rights, it is silent on the individual choice to pick up identities considered antithetical to communal normativity. Gyekye's theory fails to realise that its defence of rights in Afro-communitarian culture is put to question in the rejection of the individual choice of sexual expression.

2.2. Reactions to Gyekye's classical compatibilist argument

In this section, I test the accuracy of the charge against Gyekye's project by critics. Responses to compatibilist thesis in Afro-communitarianism took different routes. One of which is the charge of uniqueness of Gyekye's moderate version of Afro-communitarianism and what it intends to achieve. This charge questions the argument of moderacy and unrestrictedness in Gyekye's conception of comunity and its relation to the individual. Afro-communitarian thinkers like Matolino (2009) and Famakinwa (2010a) have raised concerns about what appears to be wrong with Gyekye's communitarian version. Their criticism revolves around the lack of difference between radical communitarianism and moderate communitarianism and the veracity of the right recognition claim in moderate communitarianism.

Matolino (2009) contends Gyekye's conviction on the triumph of moderate communitarianism over the supposed radical communitarianism, a conviction grounded, among other claims, on the capacity of moderate communitarianism to recognize and accommodate individual rights. Matolino faults the recognition argument, one of the claims put forward by Gyekye to defend the significance of moderate communitarianism over its radical counterpart. Matolino argues, against Gyekye's conviction, that radical communitarianism – like its moderate counterpart – expresses the need for individual self-expression and implicit recognition of the rights of individuals in its political scheme, both of which are monitored by the structure of the community – a move not alien to the moderate communitarian thesis. In the same vein, Eze (2018) notes the absence of difference in both Gyekye and Menkiti's account of personhood. He argues that each grants autonomy and rights, though in different degrees. Eze posits that Gyekye's bid to success on the distinction between radical and moderate communitarianism evaporates in his appeal to culture.

The indictment of the supremacy thesis in Gyekye has been challenged by Kalumba (2020) as a misinterpretation of Gyekye by Matolino. In his assessment of Matolino's refutation of Gyekye, Kalumba points that Gyekye's worry with Menkiti's conception of personhood is not on whether there is recognition of mental features of the individual, but the overshadowing of the same with communal features that define personhood. As a result, it fails to recognize the individual use of such features for creativity, imagination and other forms of self-expression adequately. Kalumba adds that Gyekye does not implore the notion of recognition to show the point of the supremacy of moderate communitarianism, but rather, to emphasize the prominence of the mental features.

One may be tempted to ask if Kalumba forgot that emphasizing the mental features of individuals is an essential component of moderate communitarianism that distinguishes it from radical communitarianism, which represents an alternative approach to personhood in Afro-communitarian thought. Also, and consequently, moderate communitarianism would be unnecessary if the radical version captures the ideal interpretation of the relation between community and individual in Afro-communitarian political thought. One may object to say that having an alternative account does not mean that there is a fault with the existing. A different account, they may argue, gives different interpretation and understanding of an issue. One may reply to this objection that different interpretations often add to the complexity of issues. Rather than focusing on the issue at hand, we may end in addressing the worthiness of the different interpretations.

Elsewhere, Matolino (2018b) notes that the mention of rights in the works of Gyekye, as well as Menkiti, whether in its expressive form, or in a relegated or secondary status, indicates the place of the idea of rights in Afro-communitarianism. He notes that conflict between rights and communitarianism and the idea of the irreconcilability between the two ideas arises when scholars began to attempt the significance of the two – which is weightier. What should be pursued, argues Matolino, is how the idea of rights can achieve both individual good and a community good. This may only be possible if an equal worth of individual and community is defended. Instead, Matolino (2009) reminds that the structure of moderate communitarianism is unclear on what its priority is, stated simply, what it will be obsessed with. He adds that at the end of Gyekye's analysis we can see he is persuaded more towards a community primacy thesis than he is towards individual rights.

Matolino (2018b) proceeds to an account of the compatibilism of rights and Afro-communitarianism which he champions. He argues that a conception of personhood that strictly emphasizes the constitutive elements without being encumbered with normative details of the communitarian community, is the starting point for the notion of self that easily bears rights. This is because the idea of community the radical communitarians hold as constituting the African view of community renders the notion of rights as a non-concern in African political philosophy. This first move, Matolino (2018b) notes, should be matched with a conception of a non-communalist alternative account of community within the Afro-communitarian set-up that would allow the significance of individual rights. The motivation for this kind of community is how the notion of

Afro-communitarianism has evolved from the settings of traditional African societies to modern African societies; hence, the need to pay attention to emerging forms of community on the continent.

There are two predictable objections in Matolino's (2018b) approach to the compatibilism of rights with Afro-communitarianism. One, there is suspicion that his thesis echoes Gyekye on the need to emphasize the biological and psychological aspect of the individual, a position that limits the influence of community in human personhood. Secondly, the danger of allowing a non-communalist defence of individual rights in the communitarian projects betrays the very essence of the compatibilist thesis, which is reconciling rights and duties, individual and community in the strict sense of Afro-communitarianism.

To make reference to another form of community informed by different social impetus of modern African societies to defend the presence of rights may not be out of place. What is wrong with such a move is that Gyekye's failure to reconcile rights with community in loyalty to African essence still resurfaces in Matolino's alternative. It is an extension of Gyekye's dilemma, hence, the need to suggest a non-communalist version of community does not hold anything to the African essence that captures the Afro-communitarian notion of community. There may truly not be anything called the African view of community, which Afro-communitarian theorists must analyse, as Matolino might object, but an account of community in African thought must appeal to a communitarian philosophy. Otherwise, we might not be making a contribution to Afro-communitarianism.

In furtherance of the rejection of Gyekye's compatibilism and defence of rights-based political philosophy, Famakinwa (2010a) declares Gyekye's attempt at recognizing individual rights and ascribing the same status to both rights and duty in the Afro-communitarianism moral and political philosophy as unsuccessful. Famakinwa's (2010a) claim is evident on the outcome and basic conclusion of Gyekye's position that the community takes precedence at the clash of rights and duty. According to Famakinwa, Gyekye does not see individual rights as primary social value; as a result, he holds the importance of community over the individual. This groups him in the list of unrestricted and classical communitarians, which he rejects.

Furthermore, Famakinwa offers a detailed critique of Gyekye's notion of 'recognition' in his defence of individual rights. He avers that the idea of recognition, as used by Gyekye, does not

logically defend his moderate response to the radical. Famakinwa posits that 'recognition' is a matter of interpretation, one of which is 'recognition as seeing' (Famakinwa, 2010a:70, quoting Hanson, 1972). To recognize an object is not the same as having the full knowledge and usefulness of the object. I think Famakinwa is struggling here to make the point that having rights is different from utilizing it; that is, 'rights-as-being-there' differentiated from 'rights-as-being-exercised'. It is argued that the plausibility that a right would be given expression begins with the knowledge that an individual possesses such rights, and could be expressed unhindered. It is important to note that Famakinwa's (2010a) analysis does not suggest how to conceptualise the tension between the individual and community in Afro-communitarian political philosophy but a reaction to the soundness of Gyekye's evidence.

Elsewhere, Famakinwa (2010b) agrees with Gyekye's submission that at the clash of individual rights and community values, the supremacy of the community stands. These community values, which are set to promote common goods, sometimes need to be defended. He illustrates this through an example of when common good may need to be defended if the expression of an individual's rights jeopardizes the choice of a good candidate in an election. This implies that the benefits of having a good representative is far more important than the rights of expression of an individual. He adds that a community can have the moral obligation to help an individual in need, even if the help is not an exercise of a legal obligation.

Despite Famakinwa's (2010b) agreement with Gyekye, he has concerns with Gyekye's grounding of the supremacy of community duties expected of individuals on the notion of interpersonal bonds with others, generated in part by a shared community membership; that is, the idea of honouring an obligation for the sake of being a natural member of a cultural community. He argues, it is not enough for an individual to give up certain rights for duties because of natural membership. Instead, Famakinwa continues, these duties are, in general, moral bonds on people. It is a standard moral duty to help people in need that are not uniquely set by culture. I argue that Famakinwa might be mistaken in his interpretation of Gyekye's premise. Even if these moral duties are universal, their expectations are set by cultures. While a Yoruba might be considered morally inept for not relieving an elderly person of her luggage, irrespective of whether the person needs the help or not, it may not be morally blameworthy for not doing so in other cultures. This social

functioning sets the framework for how we interpret universal moral obligations. By implication my choice of granting certain obligations to others might be informed by a shared culture.

However, on closer examination, relieving an elderly of certain belongings in an African culture may be grounded on the demand of rights, not duties. If the elder has a reason to demand a younger person to relieve him or her of, say, a piece of heavy luggage, and a rejection from the younger person can lead to redress, it therefore fulfils a characteristic of rights. This shows that traces of certain rights may be found in African communal life beyond the communal obligation. Stated succinctly, in an African culture an individual is expected to greet the elders, demonstrating gestures like taking a bow. Older people, irrespective of age, hold seniority rights, which can be demanded and respected by younger generations. As we may have seen, this right is not a form of human rights; it is received and promoted by the cultural community. Even if an individual is not willing to render help, an awareness of seniority rights will cause such effects to take place. I will come back to this point shortly.

Furthermore, a clear evaluation of African culture and a historical survey of certain African societies might show evidence such as practices that confirm the mutual existence and recognition of rights and communal obligation. This understanding may affirm why Chemhuru (2018), in agreement with Gyekye, notes that duty and rights are compatible in the Afro-communitarian scheme. For him, individual human rights are best guaranteed and safeguarded in Afro-communitarianism. Chemhuru (2018) blames the gap in understanding African communitarian view of existence for the argument on the incompatibility of rights, especially human rights with Afro-communitarianism. He accuses Menkiti's view as giving the presupposition that individual rights are incompatible with Afro-communitarianism. The moderate communitarian structure, according to Chemhuru (2018:49-52) offers a clearer understanding. The account synchronizes with the African Charter on Human and People's Rights' and Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the recognition of communitarian existence; a charter that emphasizes the place of duty, and the guaranteed of human rights in community. Chemhuru argues that the individual is not sufficient and hence still needs the community. As a result, the individual owes the community the duty to preserve and respect its cultural values, hence contributing to the communal rights. At the same time, the community does not exist for the sole purpose of the community. It exists for its

members – individual persons. Therefore, it is by contributing to the communal and peoples' rights that guarantees the rights of the individuals.

However, Kumalo (2019) is indifferent to the compatibilist view expressed by Chemhuru, especially how it would affirm an equal relation between duty and individual rights. He argues that Chemhuru's compatibilist view that sees the existence of collective rights as guaranteeing individual rights connotes that the individual can only claim rights from the community. He argues that Chemhuru's claim does not pass him as a moderate communitarian. Kumalo posits that Chemhuru's compatibilist intention is undermined by his insistence on community primacy over individual. He adds that Chemhuru's framework does not see rights as inherent and it presupposes alienability of rights. Instead, Kumalo argues, liberal constitutionalism – which grounds the South African Constitution – is embracing, accounting for individual access to rights, freedom and liberties. In this framework, individuals enjoy rights insofar as they respect the freedom of others.

While Gyekye's notion of rights continue to be interrogated, Molefe (2017c) draws attention to seeing Gyekye's task as simply heuristic. Stated succinctly, Gyekye's moderate communitarianism can best be interpreted as infusing a liberal culture that prides rights into an African culture that promotes communal values and common good. Molefe draws attention to the fact that there is no account of prioritizing rights in African thought; hence, criticism such as the trivialization of rights in Gyekye, and his replacement to being a radical communitarian are defective. He notes that Gyekye's critics have also failed to discuss what it means to take rights seriously in the African context. In addition, Molefe dislodges the claim that Menkiti is a radical communitarian. He does this to make the point that neither Menkiti nor Gyekye can be categorized under such label. Instead, both can be seen as partialist in that they both acknowledge rights, but not as the primary essence of personhood. While Menkiti is interested in the norms of personhood, Gyekye is preoccupied with its ontological conception.

Following Molefe, Chimakonam and Nweke (2018) identify two possible senses of rights intrinsic in both Menkiti and Gyekye's conception of Afro-communitarian personhood. These include rights as participatory and rights as entitlements. In agreement with Wiredu (1996), the right to participation in community life is available in the Afro-communitarianism. This right is entrenched in the individual journey to personhood. An individual who is an offspring of a given community is nurtured by the community through the individual relationship, participation, and demonstration

of belonginess. During this process, the individual acquires and exercises the rights of participation in the community system. It is these rights that aid the individual's growth to personhood. Following the attainment of personhood, the individual can demand his entitlement rights, such as the right to free speech and of property in the community.

It is essential to note that Chimakonam and Nweke do not see how access to these rights and their full utilisation for individual flourishing and the growth of the society are designed around the contested ideal of personhood. Instead, they allege that Menkiti's zealousness to discount the ownership of individual rights and support the existence of community rights trivializes and consequently defaces the notion of human rights. An evaluation is needed to call to mind that the inclusion of personhood and the loyalty to the same continue to raise the inescapability of Afro-communitarian theorists from properly addressing the tension in Afro-communitarianism and the scope of individual human rights. Chimakonam and Nweke's (2018) description of rights does not set to have achieved the kind of 'rights' that are demanded at the conception of the problem between the individual and community in modern African political philosophy.

On the surface, the two kinds of rights identified by Chimakonam and Nweke appear to be individual rights in that they are exercised by the individual. However, these rights rest on the communal primacy thesis that sets the standard for their expression. Therefore, whatever we make of the nature of these two forms of rights, especially the entitlement rights, connotes a kind of selective rights owned by individual persons and not individual humans. In the same vein, the expression of these rights is limited to the scope of the norms of the community that grants the personhood of the rights-holders. It suffices to say from this analysis that Gyekye's account might not be taken as an adequate introduction to individual rights in African political thought.

However, Chimakonam and Nweke point attention to the fact that the conception of rights in African political thought differs from its Western counterpart. This is because both rest on different philosophical traditions; while African is communal, western is liberal. They add that rights in African thought is grounded in human normative qualities, while western thought grounds the same on intrinsic qualities of humans. I do not see a contradiction in the emphasis in both traditions. Before rights should be understood from the angle of moral qualities, for instance, moral excellence advocated in that African thought, the inherent human qualities that demand the allocation, recognition, and the expression of certain rights should not be negotiated. Stated simply,

African normative conception of rights needs to take care of both qualities of the individual, as Gyekye seems to advise. It may therefore be recommended that western conception of thought considers extending the conception of rights to the qualities of moral excellence. Nonetheless, the demand of moral excellence might pose certain dangers which, given the African interpretation, might lead to the exclusion of some individuals from the scheme of human rights. Whatever counts as individual human rights and its expression should be made open to all individuals and not some selective individuals. Also, irrespective of the tradition that undergirds one's society, the demand for rights is among other things for freedom from oppressive relationship and consequently for self-realization. The latter cannot be devoid from the rights of freedom to choose between alternatives. Rights must be expressive and not constrained by nature.

2.3. Response to Objections: A reinterpretation of Gyekye compatibilism?

In this section, I attempt a reinterpretation of Gyekye's project for a meaningful conversation with it. First, I acknowledge that Gyekye's inability to convince his readers on the equal status of both rights and duties, especially individual rights, in Afro-communitarian political philosophy easily passes him as championing the dominance of duty and community. Gyekye seems to be under the assumption that the identification of the non-communal aspects of the individual suggests an equal status of the same with the role of community in the conception of persons. However, a critical analysis of Gyekye's project and its claims shows the motive behind Gyekye's compatibilist move.

I argue that Gyekye's work may best be classified as a review of Afro-communitarianism. It is an account of what ought to, instead of a description of the equal stance of community and individual, rights and duties in African thought. It can be simply put as a recommendation for 'oughtness' in the relationship between community and individual. To quote Gyekye, "I think the most satisfactory way to recognize the claims of both communality and individuality is to ascribe to them the status of equal moral standing" (Gyekye 1997:41). The use of the word 'ascription' suggests an introduction or recognition of a hitherto neglected part of a component or one that is never part of a scheme. It is the embracing an idea missing earlier. This clarifies the worry as to Gyekye's perception of rights, especially individual rights as part and parcel of the African moral beliefs or values; that is, seeing rights as essential in communitarian moral and political theory and practice.

What Gyekye terms 'moderate' in his Afro-communitarianism could be interpreted as the idea of 'mean' – the middle point where two extremes meet. Gyekye's interest is to retrieve the relevant parts of traditional African values, such as its ethics of care, alongside the relevant parts of foreign values inherently dominant in the evolving modernity in Africa. The thought of the 'mean' must have informed the title of his *magnum opus* - 'Tradition and Modernity'. The logic behind it, I argue, is to attempt an analysis and appreciation of the different social ideas – tradition, characterized by social responsibilities and modernity, characterized by rights that have come to inform current African experience in the journey of creating modernity on the continent; therefore, defending the reception of the equal status these different sides have on modern life in Africa.

In addition, the use of the mean as captured in Gyekye's commitment is to reconcile the community and the individual through the possibility of the morality of duties and individual rights. His attempts might have failed owing to the lack of evidence to push his argument. Gyekye's recommendation as the best attempt at dealing with the tension in the relation between individual and community is through the principle of dual responsibility. The notion of dual responsibility connotes the capacity an individual has to be able to maintain his social responsibility to others. This social responsibility, however, ought to rest on the grounds of the individual responsibility to the self. It is the attention to the self, argues Gyekye, that will produce the needed capacity, such as intellectual and economic, needed to help others. As a result, the attention on self-interest helps to make sense of the notion of individual rights. Here, Gyekye seems to make the point that nothing should be lacking in both the commitment and attention to self, and that of the community. This claim further supports the role of compatibility of rights and duties in Afro-communitarianism as both constituting important aspects of the communal individual. One may object, nevertheless, that Gyekye's thesis here prioritizes the individual self as candidate for individual obligation before the communal obligation to another. This is contrary to the popular position that Gyekye is seen championing the cause of the community ahead of the individual which, of course, provides a closer look on some of his claims justifies.

What Gyekye's account suggests, therefore, is that there are grounds on which the place of rights is located in Afro-communitarianism, and there are logical grounds to demonstrate that both rights and duties occupy primary status in the Afro-communitarian equation. Gyekye is able to argue for the location of rights. Given that rights are the property of individuals, acquired through the

individuals' capacity for self-assertiveness and autonomy, a function of rationality and will, as a result, what makes individual personhood has rights as components. However, Gyekye is unable to show the operation of these rights within the social framework that defines the communitarian societies. The exercise of rights is jeopardised at the clash with the communal and the duty individuals owe to the collective. As a result, he is unable to demonstrate the equality of rights and duties, beyond an appeal to ascribe equal worth to them.

I would think that the strongest objection to Gyekye, which is apparent from his work, would be his sitting on the fence regarding the individual rights and duty debate in Afro-communitarianism, what may euphemistically be referred to as a centrist position on persons and community, rights and duties. However, there are two important points and ideas to take from Gyekye, arguably deserving exploration. One is 'recognition' and the other is 'accommodation'. The notion of recognition has been the major point of criticism of Gyekye's project. As against critics, the notion of recognition is passive in Gyekye's analysis. If we have clarity on the mood of Gyekye's thesis it would be seen that the focus is on the accommodation of rights in Afro-communitarian political theory dominated by a duty-based ethics. Gyekye, acknowledging the danger strict defence of obligation may pose to an individual's life fortune in African societies; seeks to draw attention to the importance of individual rights in African political philosophy. It is the accommodation and allocation of primary importance to rights as duty in African political thought that are the motivation for moderate communitarianism. It is also obvious to see that it is on the accommodation thesis and not on recognition that Gyekye seems to be at loggerheads with Menkiti; consequently, the unsuccessful search for self-assertiveness outside of the communal obligation that grounds his position.

2.4. Afro-communitarianism and the search for rights in African political thought

In the previous sections, I examined Gyekye's rights-based reaction to Menkiti's duty-based ethics. I show that Gyekye's compatibilism can be summed up as a faint appeal for the equal status of rights and duty in Afro-communitarian political philosophy. However, while Gyekye's work tends to give a theoretical foundation for individual rights in African thought and culture, it fails to ground the nature of the expression of individual rights convincingly. This creates the worry as to if the defence of individual rights that are expressive is possible in Afro-communitarian culture

and thought. It further creates the impression that the African thought and culture might not have any idea of rights, but duty existing in its political scheme; hence, justifying the disregard for rights in the duty-based Afro-communitarianism. In this section, I consider the defence of individual rights by some Afro-communitarian theorists and the identification of certain forms of rights grounded in the thought pattern and practices of African culture.

2.4.1. Complementarity and the ground for individual rights and freedom in the Afro-communitarian political thought

Chimakonam (2018b:123) attempts a possibility of the inalienability of rights in Afro-communitarianism against the alienable ones identified in the Afro-communitarianism of Menkiti and Gyekye. This, he argues can be possible in an Afro-communitarianism grounded in African trivalent logic. He accuses Menkiti of deviating from the aim of presenting a traditional African conception of persons to a personal account of personhood that sees the community as the totality of the individual person, subsuming his natural endowments. By implication, we expect a theory of rights in African culture from Chimakonam's account. Chimakonam argues that considering an African inspired logic, known as *Ezumezu*, we can affirm the presence of inalienability of rights. *Ezumezu* is a three-valued logic that holds that "for any two polar truth values, there is an intermediate point at which they may come together to form a complementary truth value" (Chimakonam, 2018b:136). According to Chimakonam, African logic does not get involved in the primacy thesis; instead, it maintains the different identities of individual and community.

Chimakonam (2018b) uses this logic to defend the mutual independence of individuals and their mutual interdependence as they form a community. Their independency affirms the existence of individual autonomy and rights. It also shows that individual autonomy and rights ought not be tampered with, as individuals hold the sustenance of community values in their interdependency. This version of Afro-communitarianism rests on the fact that it is individuals that form communities.

Using the same logic, Chimakonam and Awugosi (2020) ground the existence of individual freedom in Afro-communitarian political thought. They note that the relationship between individual and community is one of binary complementarity. This conception is not preoccupied with when and how personhood is acquired, but what the binaries can bring to the table to help

one another. Given that, it is impossible to conceive of the supremacy of either of the binaries, and consequently the denial of the freedom of individuals. Chimakonam and Awugosi (2020) defend an Afro-communitarianism that conceives the community as a product of individual free will. They argue that the proper functioning of community rests on individual freedom to function; hence justifying the place of individual freedom in Afro-communitarian political philosophy. They caution that individual freedom is defendable to the point at which it does not contravene or contradict public authority, or what we can explicitly term in the Afro-communitarian register as community. To be fair to Chimakonam and Awugosi, in anticipation of criticism, the public authority and community which have a legitimacy of curtailing the individual freedom are what individuals freely agree to.

From Chimakonam (2018b) and Chimakonam and Awugosi's (2020) account one would notice a contradiction in the status of the individual and the need of harmony with community. The individual is a unique binary who by his constitution does not need the community to form its existence and identities. It is easier to see how we can accept their possession of rights and freedom. However, if individuals are independent beings as conceived, the mutual dependence that exists between them and the community would be unnecessary. The desire for community, I believe, rests on the incompleteness of the individuals.

Furthermore, it is easier to account for individual rights and freedom in a logic that sees the community as the creation of the individual. The community in this sense has one duty, which is to service the interests of its creator. Chimakonam and Awugosi note that the norms and values of the community are set by individuals, who can review them when they are affected. This is because individuals are moral agents, capable of making choices, while the community is not. The community is an abstract entity. In this form of Afro-communitarianism, community is conceived solely as a mental condition created by individuals who share similar interests. This form of community would suggest a community of self-interested individuals, holding similar nature as associations, not a community encumbered with some sort of cultural norms, the origin of which transcends its current members. It is therefore not convincing if the notion of community *Ezumezu* logics grounds stands as an African view of community.

Since the community is a function of the individual, a view that supports that the individual proceeds the community, then human personhood is a making of the individual (Chimakonam and

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Awugosi, 2020). Personhood, they argue, is what people make of the values received from the community to benefit themselves and others. Citing Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, note that the two characters – Okonkwo and Ezeudu – are both exposed to the values of the community. It is the choices of each of them that determine their experiences in life, and which later inform their personhood.

The above existential claim can be described as supportive of an individualistic social rather than a communal orientation by giving full ownership of life fortunes and burdens to individual choices and capacity. This conception does not intend to ascribe any roles to the community or society in the individual pursuit to maximise the communal resources available for the actualisation of good life or personhood. Unaware to Chimakonam and Awugosi (2020), the life event of the two characters in Chinua Achebe's work gives credence to the view that the community holds the fort in the conception of individual personhood. One would see here that personhood results from how well an individual contributes and lives a meaningful life approved by the community, as it is the community that will identify and judge who demonstrates the values of a person and otherwise in the Afro-communitarian sense.

In addition, most choices believed to be good and essential for one's wellbeing in African societies have roots in the web of influence of deep relations in the community. As Ikuenobe (2018b) adds, the community and cultural influences mould individuals' choices and actions through the influence of its norms and values. Outside of the fact that the community helps the individual to develop virtues and capacity for choices, the scope of freedom that entails choosing between what is wrong and right, and the limit of the exercises of freedom are within the confines and scope of the community. As a result, one may recognize the freedom in Chimakonam and Awugosi (2020) as demonstrating the type of freedom Robert Birt puts as a communal or social freedom, and not a property that individuals have (Birt 2002:87-88, 94-95, cited in Tshivhase, 2011:134). In the same vein, it may be described as an expression of autonomy that Ikuenobe (2017a) refers to as relational autonomy, which empowers the individual to use her free will within the community. What could be made of this analysis is that individual rights and freedom are not as expressive in Afro-communitarian political thought as Chimakonam (2018b) and Chimakonam and Awugosi (2020) seek argue.

What is further disturbing in their accounts is the claim that the norms and values binding on the individuals are freely chosen by them, a ground on which they demonstrate the hypothesis of individual freedom, rights and autonomy. First, the sources of the norms freely picked are not identified. This is the best way of making sense of the authenticity of the right to free choice. One may argue that community norms are set by its first members, from which few selected ones are agreed upon. One may reply that the first sets of people that agree on norms of cultural community may only have an emotivist's interpretation of rights and wrongs, good or bad. This is not a claim on lack of rationality in the traditional and primordial African societies. A close look at some of these norms shows a link to liturgy, religious beliefs, and post-war resolution, among others. How do we authenticate the degree of objectivity entrenched in the formation of these norms? In connection, it is not clear how an individual born into the web of cultural norms possesses full expression of freedom to review cultural norms designed to guide his choices. The above may account for why Michel Sandel (1982), admitting the capacity of individual to self-interpret and reflect on their historical background as a justification for capacity to either distance themselves or not from such background, worries that the point of reflection is never without the influence of the said history.

In Chimakonam (2018b) and Chimakonam and Awugosi (2020), the principle of complementation is used as the groundwork for an Afro-communitarianism that accounts for rights, especially the inalienability of rights and its auxiliary concepts of freedom. While their analysis is to be understood as an African conception of rights and freedom, an assessment of them shows that they are merely suggestive of how we may think of Afro-communitarianism in modern African thought, especially regarding it benefits. A logic that sees community and individual as separate binaries, not involved in supremacy conflict, does not define what is the case when we conceive of the relationship between the individual and community in Afro-communitarian thought. While we may think of the benefits of conceiving the relationship as complementary, we must not ignore that such merits do not erase the tension envisaged in the relationship, one of which is the degree of advantages each brings to the table. It is in thinking of the degree of advantages and relevance, and consequently influences, that Afro-communitarians think more of the fate of the individual. The thought on the individual revolves around the status of agency in that relationship. This brings us back to the problem and the beginning of the analysis.

2.4.2. Locating economic rights in African political thought

At the beginning of this section, I alluded to the fact that the controversies around the flourishing of individual rights may pose the danger of scepticism on the rights discourse in African thought, especially regarding if any forms of rights exist in African political structure. I moved to the commitment of identifying certain forms of rights in Afro-communitarian culture. Erasmus Masitera (2018) draws attention to the possibility of economic rights inherent in the structure of the communal arrangement in traditional African thought and societies. He argues that African communitarian economic practices are geared towards promoting human well-being. In doing that, some expression would be given to economic rights in the community.

Masitera (2018) does not only support the possibility of rights in the Afro-communitarian discourse, but also argues that rights are prior to duties. Grounding rights on what individuals have to do willingly for their survival and for one another in a community, he notes that the formation of communities was made possible through individuals exercising their rights for survival. This is the justification for economic rights in the Afro-communitarian discourse.

In what seems to be commonplace, Masitera (2018) argues that the community sets the parameters in which individual rights can be exercised. This parameter is set through consensus. This consensus is important in keeping the stability of the community. Masitera adds that, while exercising these economic rights, individual conviction and commitment towards the others through consensus differentiate African thinking from non-African thinking. In the same vein, the terms and conditions of economic activities, such as exchange of good and services are agreed upon by the community. It is, however, unclear if the importance of sustaining these parameters set by the community is part of the individuals exercising their rights, or an obligation to the community. I think it is a call of duty to maintain the values, terms or parameters, as we may want to call it, set by the community.

2.4.3. Age as a principle of rights claim in African political philosophy

Here, I return to the analysis on eldership concept in an African tradition to illustrate a kind of group rights, known as seniority rights in African thought. I start with a conceptual analysis of seniority rights as a testament to the idea of rights in Afro-communitarianism. Seniority rights are rights accrued to individuals on the basis of age, which can be demanded of a younger person. Few individuals enjoy these rights, given the fact that the aged or elders are a microcosm of the larger society. It is a form of community rights; that is, rights individuals enjoy by virtue of community norms and standards. From this conceptual background, we can deduce that this right is selective, thereby not fulfilling the criteria of equitable distribution of justice.

The ranking of persons and the ascription of respects based on chronological age are prevalent among the Yoruba, and one may say that of most African culture. It informs the principles of social organization in traditional Yoruba societies (see Oyewuni, 1997). In this culture, elders who are believed to have advanced in age are seen as the guardians of the community. This practice still finds its place in modern Yoruba households and societies. It is still believed that seniority and experiences that come with the number of years an individual has been in existence are more relevant to resolving life challenges and directing the course of the society than any form of formal education and training. This affirms why eldership in the traditional African structural system is synonymous to wisdom and knowledge. It also symbolizes leadership and authority (see Momoh, 1989).

Outside the capacity to resolve complex issues, age-ship is also linked to moral functions. Menkiti (2004:329) draws attention to the significance of age in African culture when he asserts that "the reason age has tended to count so heavily in African thought is because of its link to the acquisition of moral function". It is assumed that the more an individual ages, the more obligation to the community is expected of them. This idea affirms why eldership is an important phenomenon in African culture. In African traditional culture, elders are distinguished by their moral conduct. If personhood is acquired through moral functions and obligation, we can say that the more one ages, the more moral excellence is expected for the growth of personhood; consequently, attracting the rights of age in the community.

In the previous chapter, I drew attention to why we should consider the nameless dead as attaining full personhood going by Menkiti's notion of personhood as an ontological progression. As a result of the full personhood, more obligations to the living are expected from them. It is therefore

assumed that the nameless dead have fully aged to be part of the realm of collective immortality. This affirms the honour and respect we ascribe to them. The roll of honour flows in that manner to the living ancestors and the elderly in the living community. The conclusion that can be made from the ongoing analysis is that the seniority rights given to elders by a younger generation rest in their manner and conduct, and not the authoritarian imposition of duties to and demand of respect from the people.

Kehinde (2014) points attention to the reality of the obsolete nature and irrelevance of the concept of eldership in contemporary African socio-political structure. Her reasons centre on the absence of the qualities associated with the status of eldership in present-day African elders parading the political space. Also, the ontological basis of traditional African societies, kinship that serves as the basis for the flourishing of the eldership concept, argues Kehinde, has been substituted by apparent multi-ethnicity.

Kehinde (2014) adds, the idea of eldership, which is the basis of seniority rights, comes with power and authority over the younger one, which consequently produces a legitimate foundation for inequality in society. However, it is essential to note that the status or rights of seniority that allow elders to weigh their power on the younger generation are because the elders know their words are law to the younger ones in society. One of the ways this is demonstrated is when elders are sought on an issue. Their verdicts on any issues are binding on all parties. This is because in traditional African societies elders understand the importance of neutrality and impartiality. They do not invest their interest on matters, especially those which require a promotion of peace and stability in the society. Nevertheless, social and political realities in contemporary African societies, as Kehinde references, leave the younger generation to doubt the sense of justices of the elders parading the corridors of power. It becomes worrisome if we can accrue seniority rights granted by an African cultural system to elders in the society on the grounds of being aged, rather than by a demonstration of moral worthiness.

Nonetheless, Kehinde (2014) believes that the eldership concept has merit. She emphasizes the need to reappraise it to suit the current African political system of governance. She suggests that political actors must be those that have the status of elders with the accompanying leadership attributes. Kehinde believes the eldership concept, characterized by strong expectations from the aged in the society, is one of Africa's contributions to the global political system.

In this work, I have used the eldership concept to cement the claim that certain phenomena, human practices and thinking in African thought demonstrate that certain forms of rights exist in traditional African thought. These rights are not just there; they are understood as one, and demanded of individuals. Also, the duty-based African political thought may not be completely anti-rights; hence, the compatibilism of both virtues of political life in Afro-communitarianism. It is the intention of this dissertation that rights are important if Afro-communitarianism can continue grounding African political theories and practices in modern African societies. Nonetheless, the form of rights needed is beyond selective rights. Even if it is communally derived, it must guarantee the individuality of the human person. In what follows, I attempt a conceptual analysis of the idea of human rights to illustrate my point.

2.5.   Understanding the significance of Human rights in African political philosophy

From the assessment of the Afro-communitarian defence of rights, we can see that most of what counts as individual rights are either derivatives of communal life, or rights enjoyed by belonging to a group. Rights, as we have seen in the classical and contemporary discourse of Afro-communitarianism, do not give details and recognition to the individual as a bearer of rights. Therefore, it is essential to examine in the following sections the claims of thinkers who believe African theories of rights contribute to the question of human rights. In what follows, I take hold of a general conception of human rights and follow it up with an assessment of the African contribution to the same. I aim to show the commitment of the African theories of human rights to the inalienable nature of human rights.

2.5.1.   A conceptual account of the idea of human rights

Before I attempt an analysis of the African inflections on human rights, it is important to discuss what the notion of human rights entails, and why it is different from other forms of rights. Human rights are intrinsic elements of human nature, regarded as human properties. They are basic rights that are accrued by an individual for the sake of being human. An example is the right to life. Human rights are basic, because they are foundational to other forms of rights individuals enjoy, whether social or political. Human rights are not only universally equal, but inalienable (Powell, 1999; Donnelly, 1982). In addition, Powell (1999) points attention to the fact that human rights are geographically located in individuals and not in culture or society, and human entitlement to

them is neither limited to a particular culture nor society. As such, human rights should be prioritized over the demands of religion, ethnic culture or race. Powell notes that the function of society is the duty to set up laws and institutions to protect and aid the expression of these inalienable rights.

Different shades of justification of human rights exist outside conceiving it as an intrinsic property of the human being. Habermas (2010:464) adds clarity to the concept of human rights when notes that "human rights developed in response to specific violations of human dignity and can therefore be conceived as specifications of human dignity, their moral source". Human rights are essential utility of humans that are useful to secure dignity. Attempts to withdraw or deny an individual of human rights is a violation and withdrawal of the individual's very humanity. In connection, one way of sustaining peace in the world is to affirm the equal rights of all people across gender, sexuality, race, ideology, and beliefs and protect such rights from being violated.

Bunch (1990) notes that as human rights continue to be reinterpreted, there is a need to capture female experiences, more specifically, in the scheme of human rights. Women's rights, against degradation and violation, should be seen as human rights (Bunch, 1990). According to her, "the concept of human rights, like all vibrant visions, is not static or the property of any one group; rather, its meaning expands as people reconceive of their needs and hopes in relation to it" (Bunch, 1990:487). We can agree with Bunch that in societies where violence against women becomes incessant and poses a danger to life, as well as forceful suppression, their expression of fundamental human rights is doubtable. Hence, the need to continue to recapture the notion of human rights to meet present demands or avert present abuses of the human person. Doing that is fulfilling one of the functions of human rights; the protector of human (female) dignity. Nonetheless, it is also important to consider that without redefining human rights, the fact of seeing it as a reaction to any form of violation of human dignity is enough to capture elements we may want to include in the human rights scheme. This is because any form of violence against women, may be considered as a violation of their human dignity.

To achieve more encompassing human rights, argues Bunch, we must look beyond male-defined human rights norms, including patriarchal sentiments. Similarly, Donnelly (1982) draws attention to the fact that the structure of a society and its institutions should not be arranged in ways that make it impossible to enjoy rights. In this sense, some of the normative ideas that define both the

Afro-communitarian system, especially regarding its conception of an ideal individual may be implicated in the human rights discourse. Norms that define identity – sexuality and gender, women participation in public spaces, and the compulsory duties to 'others' are issues that bother human rights, which a forceful conformism based on communal loyalty and personhood makes a contradiction to human rights. The recognition of individual personhood in the Afro-communitarian thought system is premised on the individual adhering to traditional norms, values, and ways of behaving that are already configured, male, and straight. Therefore, as the demand of human rights tends to increase in modern African societies, we must reappraise this communal normativity. However, some Afro-communitarians insist that a clear look at African perspectives on human rights will convince us that Afro-communitarian system of personhood does not contradict human rights. For the benefit of a holistic conversation on human rights as a global discourse, it is important to see what the African theory of human rights entails. In what follows I examine this contribution.

2.5.2. Metz and the Afro-communitarian view of human rights

In this subsection, I assess the African understanding of human rights and the contribution the discourse of personhood in African philosophy has made to it. I test the African perspective on the question of inalienability and discuss the relevance of the African contribution to the discourse of human rights. I focus on Metz's contribution to the question of rights to discuss his unique notion of personhood. I also examine Oyowe's reaction to Metz's idea. I conclude by drawing the similarities between classical compatibilists and contemporary compatibilists.

It is important that understanding the difference between the notion of rights defended in other non-African traditions from that of African is important in getting the debate on human rights going as a global discourse. This dichotomy helps with the interpretations of the accounts of human rights espoused by African scholars. While the western conception of rights is liberal, inspired by the intrinsic qualities of human beings, African conception of the same is communal or communitarian grounded in normative features of humans. Also, while the western conception purports an inalienability of rights, the African conception does not, in that rights can be withdrawn by the community that gave it to the individual (see Chimakonam and Nweke, 2018; Ramose, 1999).

I begin the discussion on the African theory of rights with Thaddeus Metz's characterisation of personhood and how he uses that to channel the discussion on human rights. Metz (2011, 2013) sees personhood, that is, a genuinely human way of life, as being virtuous. A person is an excellent human, one that manifests ubuntu (humanness) in a way that not everyone ends up doing (see also Metz, 2010:83). As a value-laden concept, Metz notes that one can either be less or more of a person.

Personhood can be acquired through the community. According to Metz (2013:148), a 'community-based' conception of personhood sees personhood as entering into a community with others through identity and solidarity. To seek community with others involves identifying with a community - others by seeing oneself as a member of the community and not as an isolated and alienated individual. In this sense, community members see themselves as a 'we', sharing a way of life and aiming towards shared ends. This identity is exemplified by sharing the glory and the shame of the community and its activities. The failure to identify as a 'we' create a division between the people and leaves them with the orientation of the 'I' and 'others', resulting in people undermining one another's ends. Also, a person seeks community with others by exhibiting solidarity. Solidarity entails engaging in mutual aid, showing interest in each other's concerns, and sympathising with them. Solidarity involves contributing to each other's flourishing and improving others' quality of life. Through these two forms of communal relationship with others and prioritising communal value, personhood/virtue is acquired and nurtured to grow (Metz, 2011: 538, 2013:159). It is in following this sense of communal relationship – identity and solidarity that Metz captured as manifesting a sense of friendship. Being friendly or displaying a friendly relationship is at the heart of morality in African thought. This notion of friendship summed up what Metz refers to as the condition for personhood or the ideal of virtuous agency. In simple terms, in Metz's conception, personhood is respecting the value of friendship, where friendship is a union of identity and solidarity that defines an individual relationship with the community.

Metz uses this notion of friendship or friendliness as a summary of ubuntu ethics. He deployed this to defend the talk of ubuntu and personhood against the view that personhood means conforming to the norms of a group, which has made the thought of ubuntu or African morality unattractive. Instead, personhood or humanness is the ultimate goal of life, that which is objectively-desirable and most valued. Metz takes the virtue that the community helps the

individual to develop as benefiting the individual because it helps the individual realise the self as a moral agent. Seeking a life of moral perfection is the basis of personhood. While the process of acquiring virtue is through community life, the endpoint or why personhood is worth pursuing is self-realisation as a virtuous being.

Metz (2011) ground the notion of human dignity on this idea of personhood that affirms the capacity for community - the conception of human companion rooted in the Ubuntu ethics. According to this conception, typical human beings have dignity by virtue of their capacity for community or friendliness. In connection, human rights, such as rights to liberty, is grounded on the capacity of persons to relate to others in a communal way and the respect for such capacity (Metz, 2011a:544). Following that, human rights violations are egregious failures to respect this capacity (Metz, 2011a:559). In Metz's analysis, capacity for friendliness now becomes the condition every individual can and should fulfil to enjoy what should be known as fundamental rights. We can infer that African tradition does not conceive an idea of human rights as natural rights, grounded in the individual intrinsic possession, instead, on friendly relationships with others. Understanding this distinction helps to clarify the tension in the human rights discourse on the treatment of individual rights in Africa.

We need to understand how the capacity for friendliness that guarantees dignity is to be understood in Metz's analysis. Firstly, is the assumption that everyone must have this capacity and must have it in similar degree with others, and to the extent of guaranteeing one's dignity - a condition to enjoy what should be known as fundamental rights. Secondly, friendliness is suspected as being theorized as another form of obligation to the community, the hallmark of an Afro-communitarian notion of personhood. Simply put, since dignity that guarantees human rights is the same dignity that guarantees individual personhood in Metz's (2011; 2020a) account, friendship may be interpreted as a form of obligation, that one must be committed to becoming a person. By implication, the idea of human rights is a derivation of the community that sets the standard for personhood.

In addition, value judgment is a making of the community. If personhood/virtue is acquired and nurtured by the community, then it means the community determines the degree of an individual's 'identity' and 'solidarity', consequently, their friendliness. This is so because the community values communal relationships and harmony and sees personhood as fulfilling that purpose or promoting

its values. As a result, it is easier to note that pursuing personhood is helping the community to actualize itself. Whether personhood/virtue is for individuals' self-actualization is then questionable.

Elsewhere, Metz (2020a) draws on the above theory of human rights to offer a defence of the compatibility of difference, specifically to sexuality, with the Afro-communitarianism. Metz (2020a) notes that there are varieties of African communitarian norms that appear incompatible with otherness and difference and that these include the Afro-communitarian notion of personhood and the primacy of community interests over those of individuals. Notwithstanding this, he argues that without deviating from the grand ethics of community primacy over the individual, respect for differences and otherness within the Afro-communitarian framework is possible. He notes that Afro-communitarian ethics affirms respect for individual dignity. Individual dignity, according to Metz, is guaranteed by the ability to commune with others. Since being homosexual, for example, does not deny one the ability to relate communally with others, it follows that there could be an accommodation of homosexual identity in the Afro-communitarian moral framework.

Metz's (2020a) analysis fails to recognise that the norms and standards of communal relations are not determined by the individuals involved, but supersede them. Cultural norms are not arrived at like norms of associations or social clubs, which their members create for the purpose of achieving certain objectives. An association can be dissolved if it no longer meets the objectives for which it was created. Also, its members can voluntarily renounce their membership at will if their interests are not being served. Instead, the sources of Afro-communal norms and their legitimacy are rooted in generations of history and viewed as ultimately a derivation from the gods. Therefore, for the appeal to healthy communion and respect for difference to be meaningful, we would first have to address the gap and inconsistencies in the cultural norms and morals that exclude the personhood of an individual whose identity is outside the framework of traditional norms.

In Oyowe (2013), we further deduce the failure of Metz's compatibilist argument and that of his Afro-communitarian theory of human rights. Oyowe queries the degree of Africanness in Metz's Ubuntu theory of human rights. This claim can be substantiated in Oyowe's critique of the root of Metz's idea. Oyowe starts by demonstrating that Metz's version of Ubuntu does not represent an Afro-communitarian ethical theory which Ubuntu mirrors. He posits that Metz's theory seems to hold the notions that the capacity to make choices, that is, to choose freely, precedes the capacity

for community. Recall that Metz grounds his notion of freedom, which is a fundamental human right on individual capacity for communing. Therefore, if the value of communal relationships is in people coming together of their own accord, then communal relationship cannot be a source of dignity on which freedom rests. Capacity for freedom, Oyowe (2013:110) argues, "seems to be doing more work in Metz's account of dignity than he acknowledges". As a result, Metz's theory of rights seems to be sympathetic of the ideas of liberalism than Afro-communitarianism.

In a reaction to Oyowe, Metz (2014a:307) claims not to be pursuing two motives in his work; that is, communal relationships and individual freedom, instead, his goal is on human dignity and human capacity for communal relationship, that deserves respect. He adds that his approach is as communitarian as Gyekye's and others' who try to ground human rights in communitarian scheme. He reiterates his conception of basic goods on capacity for communion, which is different from the western conception that values individual intrinsic properties.

An exciting take home in the above conversation between Metz and Oyowe on the emergence of dignity in Metz's version of Ubuntu and personhood is to first agree with Oyowe that the freedom to pursue community with others is a manifestation of dignity - a dignity which is in itself respected by others. After that, and without contradiction, interpret the dignity gotten through our communal nature, as pointed out by Metz, as a developed or reinforced dignity, assuming that communal relationship only strengthens or promotes dignity. The question for Metz would be which of the two instances ground personhood. Put differently, at what point does personhood begin? Is personhood acquired through the capacity and exercise of communal nature or the capacity to make choices? If we take the implication of the place of freedom seriously in Metz's proposal, then personhood precedes communal relationships. However, suppose personhood is developmental in nature, as many theorists have shown. In that case, Metz's proposal can be taken as a necessity for individuals to nourish their personhood, this time in a communal way.

Outside the veracity of Metz's version of Ubuntu as Afro-communitarianism, Oyowe (2013) seems not to be persuaded with the argument of the compatibilism of Afro-communitarianism with the idea of human rights. From his reaction to Metz, we can deduce that an any theory that grounds human rights cannot be Afro-communitarian imbued like Ubuntu. While Oyowe's scepticism might be genuine, it may be narrowed in his rejection of what Afro-communitarianism might offer the human rights debate. I argue that a coherent account of human rights cannot only be African

inspired. Such conception will amount to an authoritarian notion of communitarianism as the basis for human rights in Africa. Likewise, we cannot fully subscribe to a western liberal understanding of rights. Both the Western liberal and Afro-communitarian theoretical framework may be seen as missing links[12] of realities that need one another for a complementary and comprehensive approach to the human rights question.

To understand the connection between classical and contemporary rights-based compatibilist, one would see that Metz (2011; 2020a) and Gyekye (1997) seem to share some similarities in the Afro-communitarian debate. Beyond the fact that both hold a controversial account of African ethical and political theory, they seem to have sympathy for a particular mode of analysis that appreciates liberal values. Both struggle to make their defence of freedom, rights and autonomy of individual through playing around both liberal and communitarian scheme. Gyekye and Metz both share the same commitment of valuing community; its harmony and shared common good and individual features like freedom and autonomy that are arguably alien or 'silenced' in the Afro-communitarian thought.

Given the difficulty of searching for individual rights in Afro-communitarianism without committing to borrowing from liberalism, we can conclude that the defence for theories of human rights in Afro-communitarianism is a difficult adventure. While we think of the inability of Afro-communitarianism to prioritise human rights, we may count on liberalism for the guarantee and expression of human rights. Liberalism offers a convincing framework for interpreting rights, especially fundamental individual human rights. This is because liberalism emphasizes the individual as the central point of attention in any social structure and arrangements. It further grounds its concerns in the individual through the recognition and prioritising of core elements such as autonomy and freedom.

As argued earlier in this chapter, the only defendable idea of rights in Afro-communitarianism traditionally construed is selective rights which are not universal, but group rights of certain individuals. Therefore, the best way to account for individual rights in Afro-communitarianism is

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[12] Innocent Asouzu (2011; 2013) developed the Ibuanyidanda philosophy, which he calls the philosophy of complementary reflection. Asouzu believes that every being is a missing links of realities. Each being arrives at his/her completeness when he/she integrates with other beings. It is this integration that helps us to have a fuller comprehension of the existential problems we encounter in the world, particularly Africa.

to place individual human rights in Afro-communitarianism. By placing, we acknowledge the absence of the term in Afro-communitarianism and seeks its inclusion in the scheme. The benefits of such agenda would be to enhance the reception of Afro-communitarian political philosophy in modern African societies. It is this placement that entails a shift of the Afro-communitarian normativity that I argue Gyekye and Metz pursue in their work. However, their position would be unclear to critics, if some intellectual honesty and acceptance of the absence of individual rights and the theories of human rights in Afro-communitarian framework are not done. It is with this acceptance, and a radical reconstruction of Afro-communitarianism that would enable the compatibilists seek a readjustment of normative grounding of Afro-communitarianism to the degree of the accommodation of individual rights. It is with this acceptance that their project becomes more explicit.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that the core motivation behind the rights-based Afro-communitarian theory is the duty-based Afro-communitarian theory's lack of attention to the individual in African political philosophy. This neglect accounts for the relegated status individual rights and freedom have in duty-based Afro-communitarian political philosophy. This chapter monitored the theoretical commitment of the rights-based compatibilists to locating and defending individual rights in Afro-communitarianism. In the chapter, I examined the contributions of Kwame Gyekye on the equal worth of rights and duties in Afro-communitarianism. Gyekye's thesis was structured as reactionary in that he responded to what he refers to as an inadequate account of Afro-communitarianism. I show how the community's heavy influence on 'self' dislodges the argument for expressing individual rights in Gyekye's moderate Afro-communitarian political philosophy. I also examined the works of other rights-based compatibilists and the argument for individual rights supported by the structure of the community in African thought. Following that, I discuss other forms of rights sustained by African practices and culture, such as economic rights and seniority rights. They are described as community or group rights.

In my assessment, what rights-based compatibilists stand to achieve is locating the ground for certain forms of rights in African thought, a testament that the rights discourse is compatible with Afro-communitarianism. However, the compatibilists' success is not just in the identification of

any kind of rights in Afro-communitarianism, but of individual rights and the equal worth it has with duty. The rights-based compatibilist fails in defending the ground for the expression of individual rights, the source of the tension in Afro-communitarianism. This inability can be understood in the light of how the community sets the framework for both duty and rights in the Afro-communitarian thought. Therefore, we may conclude that both the duty-based and right-compatibilist approaches share similar ends.

CHAPTER THREE:
INTERROGATING THE MERITS OF AFRO-COMMUNITARIAN REJECTIONISM

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, I showed how rights and duty are defended in Afro-communitarianism through the idea of personhood. A defence troubled with the conception of persons that references community primacy – what can be termed a maximal conception of persons. In this chapter, I focus on a minimal account of persons – a conception that takes individual rights seriously by shunning the primacy of community, in resolving the tension between individual and community in Afro-communitarian political thought. What is known as a minimal account is demonstrated in the doubt and the consequent rejection of Afro-communitarianism from the scheme of personhood and social ordering.

Afro-communitarian rejectionism is about the claim of relevance and compatibility of Afro-communitarianism as well as its outlooks with the complex, multicultural modern African societies, resulting in its exclusion from modern African socio-political theorizing. Afro-communitarian rejectionism is an idea whose conviction rests on the strength of its analysis in showing how the agenda which it seeks – the shift in the conception of the self; de-essentializing African thought; and achieving individual rights in African political thought rides on the evidence of the facts of the urbanization and modernization of African communities. Prominent in this conversation is Bernard Matolino. Matolino's conception of persons couched in the idea of limited communitarianism sets to take rights seriously in modern African thought; hence, he defends the thesis that Afro-communitarianism's inability to contribute to the rights discourse fully renders it irrelevant in rights-driven modern African societies. Matolino is explicit on the rejection of Ubuntu and its continued theorization, a claim he grounds on the scarcity of Ubuntu values in modern African societies.

I begin this chapter with Matolino's charge against Afro-communitarianism and its idea of persons. This is followed by how Matolino grounds his theory of persons on a metaphysical approach. I illustrate how the metaphysical approach aids a kind of communitarianism where community

retains a secondary status in the conception of persons. Thereafter, I discuss Matolino's scepticism regarding the idea of Ubuntu. I tag this as an extension of Afro-communitarian rejectionism. I discuss the significance of the sceptic claim. Also, I examine Olufemi Táiwò's contribution to Afro-communitarian rejectionism. While the rejectionist thesis, to a certain degree, explains the doubt and apathy in traditional African ideals, I raise a few arguments on why we may not take it seriously. I argue that rejecting Afro-communitarianism to resolve the tension between the individual and the community may not result in a viable African political philosophy.

3.1. Assessing Matolino's disagreement with Afro-communitarianism

In this section, I discuss Matolino's argument against Afro-communitarianism. Matolino carried out conscientious assessments of the idea of Afro-communitarianism as a foundation on which social and political ideas in Africa is grounded. His conclusion suggests a rebuff of the idea as the essence of African philosophy. Matolino's rejection of Afro-communitarianism can be located in some of his writings (Matolino, 2008; 2011a; 2014; 2018a), where he expresses doubt on the functions of the idea in the African quest for a viable and inclusive social and political arrangement.

In particular, Matolino's works have been directed to the question of community essence in African philosophy and how traditional norms of Africa define individual identity, occlude difference, and hinder the expression of rights. More especially, his works have been concerned with how earlier Afro-communitarians have reacted to the questions of personhood as a critical subject in African philosophy. He believes that the classical Afro-communitarian account of Menkiti and Gyekye does not differ in its placement of rights and the conception of persons. In both accounts, the weight of community is heavy in the relationship between individual and community and, consequently, trivializes the individual interests and rights.

3.1.1. Essentialising community in Afro-communitarianism

Matolino's (2011b) disagreement with communitarianism is about how it continues to be the ontology of African philosophy, despite its obvious incompatibility with modern African societies. In his words, he is committed, philosophically, to exorcising the communitarian ghost from African philosophy. However, he advises not to be misunderstood as discarding the entire project

of communitarianism, but he points out that the arguments of classical communitarians on the community or communal essence of African thought and experience are false.

Matolino admits that the community dominance in traditional African societies is unavoidable because of the nature of the life of the period. He argues that "facts of human existence in traditional communities necessitated tightly knitted relations that ultimately gave rise to notions of African communalism and subsequently communitarianism with an emphasis on collectivist understandings of life that prioritize communal reality over individual reality" (Matolino, 2018a:115). However, he argues that these understandings of the community were valid insofar as they were relevant in the interpretation of life when they were conceived. Therefore, it is implied in Matolino (2018a) that this understanding is contested in modern African societies that do not have the same facts of human existence as traditional African societies. These contemporary facts may include economic ones that inform the experiences of migrant labourers, ordinary people trying to make a living as vendors, seasonal workers, and those confined to shantytowns (Matolino, 2018a:117).

In connection, the essentialists' claim, argues Matolino (2011a), that sees community as the overall good of the individual, is not compatible with the above-mentioned modern realities. Such conception of the good has become obsolete due to the social and economic changes that have taken place in most African communities. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to conceive of the individual whose notion of good is only derived from the shared communal good and having their conception of the self, defined by the community. Outside the claim of social change, Matolino adds that the notion of community that traditional African societies created has been altered by the outcome of colonialism, which includes the breaking down of communal unity.

Furthering the disagreement with essentializing Afro-communitarianism is the social legislation of who qualifies as an ideal African. This criterion is usually set around the notion of community and its appreciation. One is an African insofar as they embrace community life. Matolino (2011a) argues that though some Africans living in urbanized African cities may have a weaker sense of community than those in less sophisticated communities, we cannot claim that they are less African and, consequently, non-persons. Here, we can smell a suspicion as to how being an African is the same as being a person. The question that arises from this would be as follows: Is the criteria for community life that characterizes personhood the same as being African? Are essentialists; that is,

classical communitarians, of the view that being African is being persons? I think not, insofar as some such as Menkiti argues that an individual (African) can fail personhood, and we can imply from there that a non-African who subscribes to such normativity may count as person in the Afro-communitarian scheme. Therefore, I do not think that the issue classical Afro-communitarians have concerned themselves with, which I think Matolino should be interested in, is about who is an authentic African but, if you may call it, an authentic person.

Ikuenobe (2017b) has reacted to defend Menkiti on the charge of essentializing community in African thought. He argues that Menkiti's notion of personhood is not an exercise in describing the community as the essence of African thought and as constitutive of personhood, but a moral oughtness. Also, Menkiti's project, argues Ikuenobe, is to provide a specific account of personhood and community domiciled in African philosophical tradition and not a defence of a monolithic account of personhood. As a result, Ikuenobe labels Matolino's criticism as a misinterpretation of Menkiti's project.

Part of the worries Matolino has with classical communitarians is their presentation and use of communitarianism as a theory to service and influence a lot of ideas and themes in Africa. Nonetheless, this may not pose as great a danger as Matolino thinks. One may argue that such an effect is necessary for ideas that may be regarded as social philosophies. It is not hard to see communitarianism and communalism as social ideas. Matolino, in fairness to communitarianism, argues that the idea can be limited to a social or ethical theory. Unknown to him, social ideas that inform a way of life can influence other areas of people's lives, vis-à-vis the political, economic, and religious, to mention but a few. Therefore, this effect should not be seen as overstretching the functionality of communitarianism or overuse, as Matolino would argue. Such functionality is not peculiar to the idea of Afro-communitarianism; the focus on the individual dominates political, social and economic theories and discourses in societies where individualism is the guiding mode of social ordering. However, given the influence of communitarianism, one point that may be relevant in that assessment would be the likely hegemonic nature of communitarianism. This, of course, can be curbed through critical interrogation of the idea and not withdrawal from the spheres of ideas in modern African thought and practice.

3.1.2. Matolino and Afro-communitarian personhood: Rejecting the classical accounts

Here, I discuss Matolino's charge against the personhood account of classical Afro-communitarianism. Matolino's assessment of classical Afro-communitarianism on personhood can be summed up in two broad arguments. One is the claim that the community is solely responsible for the personhood and identity of the individual. The second is how the notion of the rights of individuals have been neglected in the Afro-communitarian scheme. He takes a detailed historical analysis of the communitarian view of personhood by reading Tempels to Gyekye. From this reading, Matolino's disagreement with Afro-communitarianism is spotted.

Matolino (2008) queries Menkiti's (1984; 2004) claim on the denial of the personhood of certain individuals by their communities based on moral ineptness. In Matolino's assessment, the significance of such denial by communities is difficult to fathom. He posits that the ideas of moral achievement and rituals of incorporation in determining the personhood of individuals raise serious difficulty in Menkiti's communitarian view. Matolino queries the notion of virtues, which seem to be the key ideal communitarians subscribe to, as the standard for personhood. According to him, ideal moral conduct and virtues are usually heavily contested, and there exists a variance in what counts as virtuous in all societies. Even within the same society, there is the plausibility of contention of what is morally worthy of doing in certain situations.

Despite the incongruencies pointed out in Menkiti's (1984; 2004) notion of personhood by Matolino, one may argue that the hallmark of Menkiti's argument is seen in his commitment to the significance of duty-based political theory in modern African societies. In Menkiti's view, duties and obligations to the community ought to be the essential contribution individuals owe to the community. It is the commitment to duty that defines a person, understood as a real member of a polity, not a rights claim. Nonetheless, Menkiti's claim on the importance of duty and his handling of rights has been contested. Chief among his critics is Kwame Gyekye.

However, Gyekye, argues Matolino, does not fare better than Menkiti in his treatment of rights. Matolino unsuccessfully marks Gyekye's claim that he is advocating a distinct version of communitarianism that takes rights seriously by arguing its equal worth with duty. Like Menkiti, "Gyekye explicitly commits his definition of persons to moral achievement" (Matolino, 2008:114). However, Gyekye has a good mention of individual rights in his moderate communitarian version,

from his reading, an alignment and commitment to the communitarian framework that emphasizes the ethics of responsibility to the wellbeing of all in determining the personhood of the individual is spotted.

One of Gyekye's key arguments is that lacking qualifications for personhood does not inform the lack of rights of the individual. He identifies that to be a person is different from being an individual human. Matolino challenges this position and labels it a shift from Gyekye's main objectives, which is a reaction to Menkiti's assessment of persons and the development of a unique account of persons, not a distinction between persons and individuals. When Gyekye pays attention to the real discussion on persons, it is easy to see how difficult it is for him to deny the dominance of the community in the conception of personhood in African political thought. It is therefore not controversial to conclude the sameness of Menkiti and Gyekye's account of Afro-communitarian personhood with their weak notions of individual rights.

Matolino reacts to this gap created by the classical Afro-communitarians by developing an account he calls limited communitarianism, which he believes best captures the idea of persons and gives the right place for individual rights in modern African political thinking. In what follows, I discuss Matolino's idea of limited communitarianism and the groundwork to his accounts of persons.

3.2. Matolino and the personhood of limited communitarianism: Promoting the constitutive features of self

In this section, I move to Matolino's conception of personhood in African thought. I show how the theory that informs his conception of persons further helps in thinking about the tension in the individual/community relations in African political thought. I also discuss objections to Matolino's project, especially those relating to the logic of limited communitarianism.

Matolino (2008; 2014; 2018a), drawing on the failure of Gyekye (1997) and Menkiti (1984) to provide a convincing argument for the place of individual rights in Afro-communitarian conceptions of person, attempts a restructuring of the conversation on the communitarian arrangement of African life. He argues for a conception of the persons in African thought in which the community's role is limited. While acknowledging the Afro-communitarian conception of the person, he argues that a weightier conception precedes the generally accepted normative communal conception. This conception of persons he labels the 'metaphysical account'.

The metaphysical conception of persons, Matolino argues, stresses the constitutive human features, without which the normative communitarian conception, which he labels the "social identity of a person", is impossible. The metaphysical conception draws some strengths from both Wiredu and Gyekye's Akan account of persons. According to Matolino (2008:80), these scholars, whether partially or fully, ignore "matters such as social relations, community rights and obligations and moral achievement". Instead, they seek to focus on the independence of individuals, in their understanding and conceptions of persons.

Matolino (2008:80-1) draws on Wiredu's (1995:132) Akan account of persons that sees man as composing of *nipadua* (body), *okra* (a life-giving entity), and *sunsum* (that which gives a person's personality its force), as well as the *mogya*, which is the blood that is derived from one's mother, and *ntoro*, which is inherited from one's father. Both *mogya* and *notoro* are necessary requirements for clan identity and membership. Referring to the bloodline of individuals in constituting personhood affirms the metaphysics of persons in African thought, which confirms a link between individual and others, in this case, the clan, without concern on any form of moral demands. The relational nature between the individual and the parenting clans and kins, and what we can take from that understanding in determining individual personhood, is the criterion that every individual cannot fail.

Matolino's metaphysical theory of persons also draws strength from Gbadegesin's (1991) Yoruba account of persons. Persons in the Yoruba thought, according to Gbadegesin, is not only normative but also descriptive. While the descriptive account illustrates the various bodily aspects of the individual, the normative is the communal aspect that gives meaning to the existence of the bodily parts. Gbadegesin points out that the structural components of the person in the Yoruba thought comprise *ara, okan, emi, ori*. These elements have both normative and ordinary meanings. *Ara* (the physical component of the body), *okan* (heart), *emi* (divine breath), *ori* (head) all have their physical meaning and functions and what they represent in the spiritual realm.

Gbadegesin (1991) notes that these elements can be placed into two groups: the physical-material and the mental-spiritual. "Ara belongs to the physico-material, while *emi* belongs to the mental-spiritual. The *ori* and the *okan* retain both features" (Matolino, 2008:86). *Ori* is where the brain is housed. In this sense, we refer to the physical head. In its spiritual connotation, *ori*, that is, *ori inu* (inner head) is the carrier of the individual's destiny that determines their life fortunes.

Outside the spiritual meanings the physicals parts of the body have, the normative communitarian nature of personhood in Yoruba thought is further introduced when Gbadegesin adds that the individual's destiny is linked to the destiny of other members of the community. Though individual destiny holds its own uniqueness, it cannot be fulfilled outside of community relations. The standard for judging the quality of an individual's destiny as either good or bad is by nature communal. These criteria involve communal membership and responsibility (see Flikschuh, 2019:85). Like the Akan account of Wiredu, a link is established with the 'others' in the details of personhood. Gbadegesin adds that the individual is not fully complete without sociality. Also, the individual is not complete without a quality reciprocity gesture to the community that produced him. It therefore shows that the ontology of the self in African thought in both Wiredu and Gbadegesin does not leave out the communally oriented features and the determinate constitutive properties of the individual; however, with the constitutive properties understood beyond their ordinary meanings.

Unlike Matolino's metaphysical approach, Gbadegesin (1991) prioritizes the normative account over the descriptive. The descriptive helps us understand the biological functions of the various human parts and serves as a reference for the non-physical function of the human body. The normative account, which holds the significance of community life in confirming an individual's personhood, is weightier in Gbadegesin's account.

Despite the reference to the normative aspect of persons in Wiredu and Gbadegesin, Matolino finds these scholars' reference to the metaphysical characteristics of persons noteworthy. It confirms that a metaphysics of persons exists in African thought that does not necessarily appeal in totality to the sociality of self, defended by the communitarian view; that is, an approach to personhood exists that is not fully informed by normative criterion. This metaphysical approach must be heard.

Matolino's bid for a non-communitarian definition of self in African thought, despite the acknowledgement of the communal presence, can be defended in what Olufemi Táiwò (2016:82) refers to as ontological communalism.[13] This sense of communalism holds that "being-in-

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[13] See Táiwò (2016:82-86) for an analysis of the three sense of communalism he identified. They include ontological communalism, methodological communalism and axiological communalism. He adds a possible fourth sense, known as epistemological thesis, identified in Polycarp Ikuenobe's (2006) idea of 'epistemic authoritarianism'. However, Táiwò is of the view that these senses should not be lumped

communion is the natural way of being human". Insofar as we can naturally think of humans as ontologically in communion, we can affirm a sense of communalism. Táiwò notes how scholars like Menkiti have used this communal reference as a ground for some prescriptive theses. However, he adds that there exists no need to attach value preference to this description of humans.

In the light of the above, Matolino's metaphysical thesis makes sense as a single defining framework of the self. Though it is different from the communitarian approach, it admits the recognition of community only as a framework within which an individual realizes the relational aspect of their personhood – the relationship between fellow individuals and between individual and collective. Since theories of social relations provide a framework for ethical conduct that guides individuals and their environing community or society, communitarianism qualifies to be involved in personhood. Matolino (2018a:113) would agree that this qualification is valid insofar as what constitutes a person; that is, the characteristic features are not derivatives of communal reality.

Matolino must have been perturbed by the bodily aspects of the self, not having been given the credits it deserves in the criteria that make a person in African thought. I think extending this relevance in literature is his aim, especially how doing that, philosophically resolves the questions of individual rights in African political philosophy. One may object that the Yoruba and Akan allusion to this part of the human self, captured by Gbadegesin, Wiredu and Gyekye should be sufficient (see Oyowe, 2015).[14] Two reactions may be presented against this objection. One is that Wiredu and Gyekye do not emphasize the role of the blood and semen of both mother and father respectively in creating the individual, and how that physical component holds a normative principle that is not tied to morality. They stop at the roles of what the biological and psychological components of the individual hold, and in the case of Gbadegesin, what spiritual meaning the body

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together in literature to make it clear on how one can embrace the theory of communalism. One can either subscribe to one or a combination of two, without subscribing to all of them. Current literature on the subject is lacking in creating this awareness.

[14] Oyowe (2015:505) admits that what sets metaphysical and communitarian theories apart is the further requirement that personhood is achieved in a social and cultural space, with its accompanying high moral premium assigned to the community. However, this does not apply in reverse for Matolino's metaphysical account. The metaphysical theory of persons can stand alone as a theory of persons without recognizing any form of normativity. However, the defence of Matolino here is simply a rection to the novelty charge, it is not a defence of the communitarianism of Matolino's theory of persons or an acceptance of the same.

parts hold. This may be because of the desire to emphasize what they consider the important parts of the account, which is the normative communal.

Two, their commitment to the primacy of the sociality of the self clouds any form of relevance the metaphysical aspect may offer. The metaphysical features identified in Akan and Yoruba philosophical traditions are, unlike in Matolino's account, engulfed in the normative claim. As a result, even if every human possesses the constitutive features of personhood, those lacking in the normative communal criteria would not qualify as persons. Non-persons then become disadvantaged in societies where members that have attained personhood are prioritized in the allocation of rights and benefits. This seems to be one of the foundations for Matolino's insistence on the constitutive features of personhood. The metaphysical sense guarantees access to rights. It is in the attempt to avoid this clouding that Matolino feels safe to avoid any form of communal relevance over the metaphysical component. Unlike Gbadegesin, Gyekye and Menkiti that could not defend the place of individual rights, Matolino's account sets to offer such defence.

The implication neglecting the community in the scheme of personhood would have on limited communitarianism would be the test of its qualification as a theory of persons in African thought. In reacting to this, Matolino points out that the metaphysical account has its conception of community, which is authentically an African notion of community, insofar as it speaks to current realities of the African experience. He argues that the metaphysical account of personhood on which limited communitarianism rests conceives community as "a result of the histories of contingencies of human interaction" (Matolino, 2018a:115). Matolino points out that traditional thought on community existed for his own time, and modern thought should also, just like we have had such a shift in western traditions. By implication, western thought has its history of communalism, which was jettisoned as western culture evolved.

Even if Matolino does not count as an African account of persons, given that Matolino fails with his notion of community, his account does qualify as an account of persons, one that seeks to claim personhood for more people, compared to Afro-communitarian accounts that have polarized ideas of individuals, where some are seen as persons and some non-persons – a class structure that has its roots in moral perfectionism. In connection, Matolino's limited communitarian personhood can be captured as an idea of human or individual rights, one that places human rights on the dignity

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of human nature, and one that places rights on individual possession of the physio-psychological aspects of being human.

In agreement with the claims of limited communitarianism, Tshivhase (2011:127) argues for a shift in the focus of personhood from the community to the individual. She argues for a model of personhood that emphasizes individuals' interest with personal and social benefits, a model she believes must be prioritized ahead of the moral and social expectation model of personhood. In response to Masolo (2010), she discounts the view of moral perfection as the basis of personhood. Instead, individual personal excellence should be pursued ahead of the duty to improve the welfare of others in the community. For Tshivhase, leading a personal, meaningful life is essential to help others maximally. She notes that individuals should not be committed to fulfilling communal obligations, for instance, helping others, while doing so inconvenient the agent. Acting against one's interest can be likened to putting an oxygen mask on others rather than on oneself in a crashing plane. Tshivhase takes moral conduct and duties to others as what people do in public to get a thumbs-up from the community. The significance of her analogy is that what promotes an individual's interest should not be compromised.

Considering personhood primarily as beneficial to the individual being considered a person makes it easier to locate how rights can be primary, especially for self-expression. Rights are tools and mediums for individual self-realization and, therefore, should have primary status in the Afro-communitarian theory of persons and conceptions of the political structure of modern African societies. The degree of obligation and loyalty to the community makes it unclear where to find the place of rights in communal obligations. This analysis is vital in recognizing individuals' distinct identities within the Afro-communitarian framework.

3.3. Understanding the politics of limited communitarianism

In this section, I analyse the role of limited communitarianism in thinking about the individuals. The idea of limited communitarianism is the withdrawal of the rights of dominance from the community in what constitutes persons in African thought. As a theory of persons grounded in the metaphysical features of individuals, it seeks to limit the presence of community, its demand and influence on individuals' formation and how they perceive themselves (Matolino, 2018a:111). By

extension, the idea of limited communitarianism aims to narrow the role of community in how it features in nearly all philosophical categories in Africa.

Limited communitarianism responds to the challenge that could arise at the clash of both the metaphysical and communitarian features of personhood and why the constitutive features should be prioritized in such a dilemma. I agree with Matolino on this, the community ought not to be prioritized over the individual insofar as it is the individual that we are trying to define. The point of personhood is the individual and not the community. This understanding further points to the gap that community has not been the focus of most communitarians in evaluating the core tension in Afro-communitarianism, the conflict between the community and the individual. The notion of personhood simpliciter is the normativity of the self, and hence what qualifies as that should not relegate the parts of the individual that are deemed constitutive. I worry that this move may only be relevant to our understanding of persons qua persons, but not relevant in making sense of the relations between individuals, and the individual and the community. The normative force for the relationship between persons and community differs from the force of conceiving the self. However, with the metaphysical account, Matolino (2018a) aims to free individual rights from the politics of individual-community relationship through prioritizing the less problematic metaphysical features and placing limits upon the community on what should constitute the standard for personhood. We can conclude that Matolino's aim is well pursued.

Nevertheless, there are still contradictions to be identified in Matolino's limited communitarianism. If limited communitarianism prioritizes the metaphysical notion, it means the communitarian notion and its accompanying values are also recognized but of a lesser degree and honour in the making of persons. That is, communal values may contribute but little to our conception of self. However, Matolino posits that limited communitarianism is about the defence of the metaphysical notion of persons. It avoids the debate of values that Afro-communitarian view is caught up with.

Despite avoiding the thought of values and mores, Matolino insists that metaphysical notion of persons is authentically African. However, he did not show how the metaphysical theory of persons retains its 'Africanness', especially what distinguishes such articulations or approach from non-African articulations of self. It is corrupt enough that the discussion of persons in the

metaphysical approach avoids any sense of morality[15] that individuals ought to engage in applying their rationality to, but to qualify a thing as African without respect to values, at least cultural values, does not sound authentically African, as Matolino think it is. Even if communitarianism would only regulate individuals' social aspect, as Matolino stipulates, it will do so with the inclusion of specific values.

One may object that the metaphysical conception of persons will be African if we agree with Matolino that we should not essentialize what is termed 'African'. Consequently, accounts of personhood and what would produce individual identity may be shaped by factors that are not necessarily communal. One may reply that we can only make sense of the communal essence if we periodize the conversation on Africa. We may have numerous reasons to term traditional African societies as essentially communal, where all phenomena are defined in reference to community. It is only in the talk of modern African experience that we may begin to evaluate the monolithic understanding of 'African'. Here, the concern would be on what ought to be and not what is in the African philosophical traditions. However, I do not think limited communitarianism is making a claim only on modern African thought. It is preoccupied with the modern, with some notes on questioning what was the case in traditional African thought and practice.

3.4. Limited communitarianism: moderate or non-communitarian?

In this section, I attempt a further assessment of the nature of limited communitarianism. The aim is to test of the communitarianess of the idea. My assessment can be classified into two camps. The first is that limited communitarianism falls in the camp of moderate communitarianism. Limited communitarianism seeks to keep an aspect of the communitarian and the core benefits of the metaphysical accounts. The second is that limited communitarianism appears non-communitarian. This is demonstrated in how Matolino overstretches the function of the theory and, consequently, takes it out of the realm of community discourse. I argue that it cannot be both.

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[15] Earlier, Matolino (2008) queried the classical Afro-communitarian personhood for subscribing to the dictates of morality and virtues. He argues moral judgement; standard of rightness and wrongness of actions are contentious even within the same society. I think one cannot conceive of the idea of community without a sense of morality, even if one conceives community as a metaphysical entity, in the manner of the classical communitarians, or as a social phenomenon of Matolino.

Matolino (2018a) refers to one of Gyekye's arguments for moderate communitarianism, which is the idea that the individual has a capacity for invention as leading towards a non-communitarian version of the person, if logically pursued to the end. In the previous chapter, I noted how Gyekye's project may best be seen as a review of the community primacy and the assumed docility and insignificance an individual may become as a political subject under a political structure resting on such theory promoted by the radical conservatives. Gyekye, on another look, seems to be promoting the recognition of the significance of both liberalism and communitarianism in the formation of the modern African person, which is arguably rights-focused. However, unaware to Matolino, his metaphysical theory of persons, which is the foundational logic of limited communitarianism, pursues and advances the commitment of Gyekye's moderate communitarianism. If the claims of limited communitarianism are correct, Matolino notes that the political structure or theory that would emanate from it would recognize the equality of the facts of individuality and community. Unlike Gyekye (1997), the form of responsibility such political structure may accommodate, I argue, would be one in which the individual willingly decides what her commitment is to the community in relation to self-concerns; that is, a community's needs that affect the existence of such an individual. Matolino's limited communitarianism is an account of the concern of rights in the modern African experience and how evolving African modernity can embrace the liberal values of rights in its socio-political arrangement.

Eze (2008) notes that the constitutive features of persons ought to complement the sociality of the self. Individual rights should not oppose obligations to the community. The complementarity agreement here can be said to be heading in the same destination as Gyekye's equal moral stance between duties and rights. One may object that having equal moral standing does not appear as exact as one idea complementing the other. Complementarity could only mean fulfilling the other or filling a missing gap in the other. I reply to this objection by arguing that no complement on either side of the spectrum fulfil the complementary task by opposing other complements. Also, none takes the position of primacy over the other. On this account, we refer to Matolino's (2014; 2018a) limited communitarianism as a contribution to moderate communitarianism.

However, Matolino pushes the project further to a systematic assessment of duty-based primacy and other attempts to resolve community/individual tension. He concludes that duty-based theorists are careful with the defence of individual rights. This review makes Matolino arrive at a

point of locating individual rights by elaborating an under-explored self-component, known as the metaphysical. He advances this to arrive at an idea of metaphysical communitarian personhood. As discussed earlier, this stage has the roles of the community limited in the ways it informs the making of personhood and the kind of demands it places on individuals. It becomes evident that Matolino maintains a position that weakens communitarianism and community, while he believes he is making communitarianism more flexible and receptive. Bearing in mind that community is the hallmark of Afro-communitarianism, restricting community from the demand of persons is rejecting what may be known as Afro-communitarianism. It is at this level that Matolino can be said to have crossed the communitarian threshold or crossed the communitarian boundary.

While the metaphysical communitarian personhood is assumed to be a label that does not prioritize the communitarian aspect, the goal of individual rights was achieved at the cost of the communitarian aura of the theory. This I consider a link towards a non-communitarian account of personhood. I am not sure if Matolino would be bothered about his theory losing the flavour and aura of communitarianism, as Gyekye. Recall that it is implied in Matolino, the persistence of communitarianism and his account of the person in modern African thought is worrisome and should be contested. It is because its demand in traditional African societies does not exist in modern African realities; realities that exist for modern African societies can inform our review of community, argues Matolino.

However, he was explicit on the claim that modern communities are likely to create more individualized orientations. He notes, "there is nothing distinctly un-African about modernizing and losing communal aspirations" (Matolino, 2008:156). Oyowe (2015:506) seems to agree with Matolino on this when he notes that "the pressures of modernity can impact our understanding of our identity as persons, leading even to the recognition of anatomist, or at least some non-communitarian, conception of personhood as a viable option". Matolino and Oyowe's claim suggests the incompatibility of communal orientation with modern societies. Therefore, what Africa needs for the kind of modernity that Matolino envisages may not include communitarianism or communalism.

In what follows, I discuss Matolino's further commitment to strengthen his rejection of Afro-communitarian values in modern African polity. This time, he focuses on one of Afro-communitarianism's core outlooks dominant in the Southern African societies, known as Ubuntu.

3.4. "The end of Ubuntu":[16] An extension of Matolino's scepticism

In this section, I further my assessment of Matolino's position against the ideas of Afro-communitarianism. This time, I focus on the extension of that argument in the 'end of Ubuntu'. I argue that Matolino's paper with Kwindingwi confirms his doubt on Afro-communitarianism and its essentializing status in African thought. Matolino holds a sceptical position to attributes ascribed to Ubuntu and other Afro-communitarian outlooks as uniquely African and the space those ideas occupy in modern African thought. This doubt has resulted in the rejection of the claims of Afro-communitarianism and its Ubuntu outlook. The importance of Matolino's sceptical attitude demonstrated in the 'end of Ubuntu' and other works laid a decisive foundation for a conversation on the significance of indigenous mode of thought in Africa. While Matolino and Kwindingwi's doubt in 'the end of Ubuntu' resulted in the relinquishment of Ubuntu, the title of the paper that conveys the announcement suggests closure of any debate on Ubuntu. However, many scholars' attraction to the thought and practice of Ubuntu through Matolino and Kwindingwi's claim suggests the beginning of a conversation.

In this section, I attempt a review of the merit of the dialogue. Its significance supports the need to pursue conversations on other African authoritarian ideas and beliefs and the nature of such conversations. In the first subsection, I attempt a conceptual meaning of Ubuntu, taking into account the danger of meaning and definition of the idea. In the second subsection, I examine Matolino and Kwindingwi's disagreement with Ubuntu. In the third subsection, I highlight the significance of the intellectual space to debate created by 'the end of Ubuntu'. In the fourth subsection, I discuss the importance of Matolino's sceptical approach to Afro-communitarianism and its various outlooks. I argue while both Matolino's strategy of engaging indigenous ideas and

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[16] 'The end of Ubuntu' is a joint paper by Bernard Matolino and Wenceslaus Kwindingwi published in the *South African Journal of Philosophy*. The paper has generated controversies on the functionality of Ubuntu in modern Africa. The choice of discussing it is to demonstrate Matolino's strategy to analyse indigenous ideas in African thought. As a result, I will only reference Kwindingwi in places where I discuss the arguments in 'the end of Ubuntu'.

its conclusion require different analysis, his conclusion which attracts other scholars shows the importance of arguing from the negative, what may be considered as a pessimist approach.

3.5.1. Ubuntu: A conceptual meaning

Afro-communitarianism, an African social ontology that permeates its social, moral political, and educational ideas, has been expressed in different outlooks. A few of which have been developed in African philosophical literature include the ideas of Ubuntu (Oyowe, 2013; Ramose, 2014; Oelofsen, 2018; Rauhut, 2017), *ujamaa* (Nyerere, 1968), *ibuanyidanda* (Asouzu, 2011; 2013). These theories emphasize the communal principles of social relations and the importance of community in the identity formation of individuals. Though specific to different African cultures, these concepts are united in subscribing to the value of mutual dependence, in a specific ontological, social and moral term, as maintaining an obligation to others/community. I will only explore in this dissertation the idea of Ubuntu. This choice is informed by the fact that the idea of Ubuntu is arguably the only Afro-communitarian concept that has benefited the most from the review of scholars. It is essential for the commitment to drive home my assessment of Afro-communitarian rejectionism.

Ubuntu is one of the dominant ideas in African literature, where African scholars have done the most extensive work in developing the all-embracing communal philosophy of the African culture. It represents the African ontology of humanness and the essence of African humanity (Dauda 2017). Ubuntu could be understood as "being there for each other" (Masitera, 2018:17). Ramose (2014) refers to it as the lived experience of the Bantu-speaking peoples and not a kind of hypothetical ahistorical philosophy that lacks the past, like the social contractarians' state of nature hypothesis. As a result of the uniqueness of Ubuntu, Ramose (2014) worries about why the idea of Ubuntu did not form part of South Africa's 1996 post-apartheid constitution. This problem is considered as the exclusion of the people that share this philosophy and consequently a violation of the rights to their way of life. Ramose might be right to spot on the question of exclusion; especially as it has become one of the key ideas of analysis and concern in modern African socio-political conversation. However, he might not have seen where the actual exclusion is located, and what could trigger it in modern African polity. Exclusion and Ubuntu may need to be a theme for a separate dialogue. The question that may arise in such dialogue would be whether Ubuntu has an exclusionary nature and outcomes or excluding Ubuntu in Modern African polity and social

space results in an existential exclusion of the pro-Ubuntu. Nonetheless, the talk of Ubuntu occupies the center stage in the public sphere of South African society. It has been used in various realms to show how the African cultural value can influence its mode of social living.

Besides the influence of Ubuntu in defining the ethics of social relations in both formal and informal spaces, Ubuntu holds the capacity for setting the standard of identity and conception of persons in society. As an Afro-communitarian theory, Ubuntu rests on the humanness idea that an individual becomes a person by acknowledging others. This interpretation of Ubuntu, on close look, has a different interpretation from Ubuntu as the belief that "a person depends on other persons to be a person: *umuntu ngumuntu nga Bantu*" (see Maris, 2020:315; Matolino and Kwindingwi, 2013:200). However, both speak to a process of identity creation of the individual. The first entails accepting the humanity of the people around us is both a necessary and sufficient condition for establishing and recognizing our humanity. This conception places meaning on our perception of the other, which informs how we treat them. Beyond the claim that this conception sets the code for social relations, it holds the assumption that the individual can self-determine his personhood through a self-evaluation of their treatment of others.

The second sense of Ubuntu with the central word 'depends', places emphasis on the process of identity creation of the individual through others. It takes the 'others', herein known as community members, to determine one's personhood and identity, not the individual carrier of the identity, but through the individual dependency on community. This conception has more existential implications than the former. One may argue that the distinction put forward is merely an ignorable linguistic challenge. One may reply that meaning of ideas often rests on the analysis we make of them by what is presented to us through language. Therefore, a linguistic clarification may be needed by Ubuntu scholars to avoid the problem of interpretation of the idea.

Beyond the domain of the ontology of the self, Ubuntu can also be seen as a moral philosophy. Ubuntu is an expression of African social ethics, which Dauda (2017) links with the idea of *omoluabi* in Yoruba thought. Dauda argues that both Ubuntu and *omoluabi*, the Yoruba version of the former, demonstrate the traditional Afro-communal moral codes. However, it is essential to clarify that the idea of *omoluabi*, unlike Ubuntu, does not qualify as an outlook of Afro-communalism or communitarianism. A communalist outlook and whatever must qualify for one must be a community's essence, such as Ubuntu. *Omoluabi* is not a cultural system or community

essence, but a signpost indicating that an individual has attained personhood status in the Yoruba thought. It connotes an individual's social acceptability, believing to have distinguished himself in characters befitting the community's style. However, like *omoluabi*, ubuntu, not Ubuntu, can be used to describe an individual who demonstrates the normative demands of the system of Ubuntu. An individual can have ubuntu simply by exhibiting certain values, particularly, and more importantly, moral values. Such individual becomes a symbol of an ideal human in the African thought. That stature, nevertheless, is attained through 'others'.

3.5.2. Understanding the Matolino-Kwindingwi disagreement with Ubuntu

Despite Ubuntu being an ideal that has been in use by Africans in traditional societies and has been affected by different existential conditions that have altered its influence, it is still considered to hold some significance for modern African social and political structure. Hence, the revival and theorization of its merits in modern African philosophy. However, Matolino is indifferent to this agenda. In the "end of Ubuntu" co-authored with Kwindingwi, they argue, resting on a few sequential premises that Ubuntu is dead and attempts at reviving it as a moral and political order in Modern Africa is an exercise in futility (Matolino and Kwindingwi, 2013:202). In this subsection, I discuss their argument against Ubuntu.

Firstly, they argue that the intention to revive the idea is guided by political aims: to promote African uniqueness. The quest for the African difference is a familiar spirit among the African elite in their use of African indigenous concepts.

The second, which follows from the first, is that the elites deploy Ubuntu to interpret the authentic mode of being in Africa. It sets the appropriate form of identity for Africans through its conception of personhood defined by adherence to certain obligations and conformism to certain values. Matolino and Kwindingwi note that this Afro-centric focus is put forward as a political position without an explicit expression by actors promoting the narrative of return. As such, taking being African, explored in the details of Ubuntu as a political philosophy may conflate with other existing political ideals such as democracy and cosmopolitanism. In this sense, Ubuntu is seen as the opposite of political ideas and ideals such as democracy and tolerance. In Matolino and Kwindingwi's assessments, the small communities where Ubuntu flourishing is possible are known

for intolerance of opposing views. Hence, the promotion of Ubuntu may be antithetical to the demands of modern African societies.

Thirdly, Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013:202) note the difficulty with reviving communal concepts like Ubuntu due to the architectural space that has shaped means of livelihood and social relations in modern African societies. Matolino and Kwindingwi submit that Ubuntu can best be practised in homogenous, monolithic, small communities. There are competing views of moralities in urban cities, unlike communities where people are closely knit and by necessity develop the ethics of mutual dependence and solidarity. Industrialization and modernity have destroyed the space that supports the practice of Ubuntu. Space here refers to natural habitat, informal settlements that characterize traditional indigenous communities. As a result, they declare an end to the idea of Ubuntu as an ideal for social and political theorizing and ordering in modern African societies characterized largely by complex, urban, multicultural features.

In a similar claim, Táiwò (2016) argues that the disconnect between the realities of everyday living on the African continent, with the evidence of individualistic-driven life among the people, and the theorization of communal values in literature as representing what is African and its people, makes the idea of communalism irrelevant as a guiding force. Táiwò's position agrees with Matolino and Kwindingwi's. In Táiwò's case, the new choice of individualism among Africans against the ideological preference in literature influenced and continues to influence modern architectural space on the continent. Táiwò's claim implies that Ubuntu did not die at the advent of complex urban structure; we only became conscious of its death at the sight of the growing new space in Africa.

One may not agree less with these Afro-communitarian sceptics. It is only in the interior spaces that we can largely find an atmosphere or the sense of communal wellbeing among the people. Every individual basically focuses on the survival of the self in urban spaces. One reason that might have influenced this might be the nature of urban work and means of livelihood that may, sometimes, separate families. However, Afro-communalism might therefore be prescriptively relevant, as therapy, for reducing the pressure of growing individualism and consequent isolated life on the continent, and I think Táiwò, would agree with this, given the methodological sense of the communalism thesis. However, he seems to be more persuaded, forthcoming and explicit, unlike Matolino, in recommending embracing the realities of individualism on the continent.

As the fourth point of analysis and relevance for this work, Matolino and Kwindingwi argue that moral questions in contemporary South Africa do not give the picture that it is a country whose social ontology is defined by the ethical principle of Ubuntu. They cite a few instances of moral ineptness to defend this position. These testimonies demonstrate the lack of ubuntu in people and perhaps the difficulty with having ubuntu. Confirming that, they posit to show how difficult it would be to maintain the kind moral rightness in the call of Ubuntu in modern African societies. They advise, upon announcing the death of Ubuntu, that all talk about it should end.

The defence for the rejection of Ubuntu by Matolino and Kwindingwi implies that the kinds of behaviour and relationships that Ubuntu calls for cannot be exhibited in modern societies. We may agree that the socio-geographical setting of traditional African societies allows the ease of Indigenous systems and practices. It encourages easy convergence of people to share ideas, deliberate, and agree on the solution to problems. Nevertheless, the questions that readily come to mind in the thinking about transition would be, is Ubuntu meant for small villages alone? Is its practice limited to a small number? One may further ask if Ubuntu is conceivable as an idea that can transcend borders in terms of providing a solution to global challenges? If we see Ubuntu as an abstract idea that exists with humans, hence, having the capacity for transgenerational existence and utility, and trans-territorial relevance. Would that be sufficient for those who argue that it be left to rest, having served the interest of past generations? These are concerns that arguments for the support and rejection of communalism hold, and for which no hasty conclusion could be entertained. Nonetheless, different scholars have raised numerous questions regarding Matolino and Kwindingwi's dismissal of Ubuntu in the modern African socio-political order. I examine some of these reactions.

3.5.3. Beyond Matolino-Kwindingwi: Analysis of the Ubuntu conversation

Matolino and Kwindingwi's position on Ubuntu triggered a conversation on the idea. The essence of the ongoing conversation is the evaluation of the information on Ubuntu Matolino and Kwindingwi has. In this subsection, I examine the chronicles of reactions against Matolino and Kwindingwi's position in the 'end of Ubuntu'.

Contrary to Matolino and Kwindingwi's (2013) announcement of the death of Ubuntu, Metz (2014) counters that the discourse on Ubuntu is only getting started. He argues that Matolino and

Kwindingwi's (2013) evidence is logically insufficient. That an idea has been used negatively, points Metz (2014b), does not mean that it is intrinsically bad and cannot be used for its good relevant purposes. Metz is right on this. It is defensible that a misuse of an idea does not justify that the idea is false or bad to the point of declaring it practically and theoretically dead. The fact that certain individuals do not exhibit Ubuntu, or that the socio-economic and geographical conditions presented before them do not allow their exhibition of Ubuntu values connotes that there is a standard form of behaviour, an Ubuntu-like form of social and moral ordering. We consciously and unconsciously use this existing ethical framework to evaluate moral actions and make an everyday moral judgment. This implies some individuals can tell when others do not act as people with Ubuntu, justifying the flow of the system among the people. Given the above, Matolino and Kwindingwi's pronouncing the idea dead because of the failure of some individuals to act in accordance with what has come to be known as an acclaimed national moral ethos may be unjustified, except if their rejection of the idea is based on the difficulty with exhibit Ubuntu values, and say, traditional African moral norms in modern societies; a defence that is easily refutable.

Metz notes, reiterating his conviction, that Ubuntu that holds the norms and values capable of thinking around contemporary ethical theories and dilemmas. Ubuntu moral oughtness is worth appealing. It holds a sound ethical philosophy. Metz argues that Matolino and Kwindingwi has neglected this dimension of the idea and focus their rejection of Ubuntu on the political motive in the revival of Ubuntu. Praeg (2017) offers an exciting explanation of this political view when he notes that the political dimension of Ubuntu, and African philosophy in general, would always present itself first before any other dimensions of the idea and the subject. However, Ubuntu, like Afro-communitarianism, could also be framed in different categories such as Ubuntu as epistemology, ontology and ethics, as well as political, but "by thinking Ubuntu we are implicitly doing politics long before we get to do what we explicitly aim to do, namely, to explore epistemology, ontology or ethics" (Praeg, 2017:294).

Metz (2014b) posits in his reaction that Matolino and Kwindingwi's admittance of the conceptual meaning and characteristics of Ubuntu, such as humaneness, caring, sharing, respect, and compassion exposes the weakness of their rejection of the concept. Indicating that Matolino and Kwindingwi are persuaded by the significance of Ubuntu but express its denial, Metz adds that the

virtue of respect and hospitability, especially with how strangers are treated in most African cultures, is compatible with large-scale communities, modern lifestyles of the cities. Exhibiting such behaviours is fashionable and possible in industrialized African spaces. As a recommendation, Metz believes that political governance could aid the practices of Ubuntu through creating architectural space that enhances its flow.

I do not think physical geography should need to be reinvented, as Metz (2014b) suggests, to enhance the flow of the Ubuntu system. The flow of Ubuntu could survive changes in physical geography if we see indigenous practices and ideals as first a state of mind. Moreso, Metz's failure to take into cognizance that outside physical geographical spaces, time could influence the practices of values by a people.

Furthermore, while I believe that certain values of Ubuntu are practicable and worth promoting, especially in 'caring for others', the economic realities, with individuals strategizing for survival could affect the flow of Ubuntu in such societies. For an individual to live within the confines of the normative demands of Ubuntu, like 'sharing', an act inherent in 'caring for others', and 'being-with-others' in the face of insufficiency and low-income earnings, they must be allowed to have a reflection on such traditional philosophies placed before them and how their interest is advanced in promoting them. As a result, it is easier to see that what strikes Ubuntu the most are not the absence of physical geography that enhances the ethical system, but modern existential challenges that, perhaps, would have been considered imaginable for traditional Africans that first lived out this ethical system.

In what appears to be an enduring conversation in African philosophy, the exchange between Matolino-Kwindingwi and Metz continues, with Matolino (2015) reacting to the charge against the position he held with Kwindingwi by the Metz on Ubuntu as less philosophical. Matolino's (2015) reaction seeks to point out how Metz's charge does not dislodge their position. He then takes him on on the response he gave their rejection of Ubuntu. Matolino (2015) notes that Metz seems to draw on the existence of similar communitarian ideas such as consensus, as justifying the viability of Ubuntu as a living African ethical theory. As pointed out by Matolino, this reference makes Metz ignore the numerous pitfalls in those ideas, especially those that have been identified in the literature by other African philosophers. Acknowledging such criticism and providing

responses would give a sense of the strength of his rejoinder. This pursuit for defence Matolino (2015:224) calls "a dogmatic search for certitudes disguised as scholarly enquiry".

Matolino posits to evaluate some of the ethical values associated with Ubuntu, used by Metz to defend the practice in modern societies. The emphasis on hospitality to strangers in traditional African societies, which Metz argue can conveniently stand in practice in modern African cities, is irreconcilable, in Matolino's assessment, with the incidence of attacks on foreign nationals in the Ubuntu South African nation. However, Matolino's claim has been challenged by Koenane and Olatunji (2017:265-6). Drawing on an analogy from American pragmatism, Koenane and Olatunji claim that pragmatism[17] would not be denied by Americans as authentically theirs, simply by the criticism that has been levied against the idea. Again, it is easier to defend Matolino on this charge. The claim to authenticity is not the same as relevance. Here Matolino's aim is on the latter. However, Matolino sometimes raises questions on the claim to African uniqueness of some of the values we ascribed to Ubuntu, and of course Afro-communitarianism generally, but his reference to xenophobic events supports the position that the ethical idea of Ubuntu has overstayed its relevance and should be put to rest. Alternatively, and as I see implied in Koenane and Olatunji's analogy, Matolino should have argued that in the case of past xenophobic attacks, Ubuntu was temporarily dumped for an immediate social exigency. An objection may be framed that xenophobic is a reaction urged by the moral instinct of the people, given some of the reasons popularly given, some of which relate to abuses that have ethical implications by some foreigner nationals. Even if we take it as a given that some of these reasons are valid, the attacks cannot be justified as a moral response to an ethical wrong.

Matolino sticks to the notion that talk of Ubuntu must consider how Ubuntu is either being practised or ought to be practised. He notes that Metz's self-imposed task is not with the former. Metz's commitment is, as seen from his work, working out the moral theory of Ubuntu that discusses 'tendencies' and not 'essences' (Matolino, 2015:216); that is, what Metz thinks Africans should be thinking about in developing a moral theory that is compatible with modern realities and can be compared, philosophically, with the western ethical system. Whatever idea of Ubuntu

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[17] Koenane and Olatunji (2017:265-6) draw attention to the charge of individualism and commodification/commercialism of human value against pragmatism by scholars such as Hanzaeen and Khonsari (2011:34-45), Ehala (2009:107-118) and Shoemaker (1999:183-199).

developed from that intention would be nothing other than uniquely Metz's invention arising from his intuitions, which may, in the long run, not be Ubuntu. We could infer that the conversation on the 'death and life of Ubuntu' with his first set of participants has been betrayed by misplacement, in that those in dialogues are talking to different theses.

Matolino's re-echoing his earlier submission with Kwindingwi that subjecting Ubuntu to different interpretations could amount to being uncharitable. Matolino is right. Taking Ubuntu from the perspective of proliferating meanings connotes some form of vulnerability for any subjective interpretation. If that is the case, what would make such subjective meaning retain its 'Ubuntuness'? I posit that having different interpretations of Ubuntu might not, as it may look, pose the danger of contradiction. The different interpretations might be a hermeneutic challenge on the Ubuntu essence. The hermeneutic challenge may result from the training, worldviews each interpreter might have been exposed to that could have refined their intuitive direction. The context of practices could also inform this type of different interpretation. Therefore, a roadside vendor would expect a kind of exhibition of Ubuntu different from that of a police officer or a university professor. But again, if we look closely, these are dimensions or the multifaceted of Ubuntu, different from how we may want it to operate in current social arrangements.

Praeg (2017:299) weighs into the debate more decisively, responding to the controversy on interpretation. He notes that making sense of the Ubuntu discourse requires making the distinction between Ubuntu as praxis, characterized by phallo-primocentric values and Ubuntu as an abstract philosophical construct, with its abstract glocal values that have their roots in Christianity and human rights discourses. In Praeg's assessment, both camps seem to have a particular understanding of Ubuntu that informs the decision on the existence of the concept. He notes that the rejection of Ubuntu would be tenable given the difficulty in practising and exhibiting some of the values and behaviours of Ubuntu praxis in modern democratic societies such as the primacy of masculinity. However, Matolino and Kwindingwi's conclusion is indefensible as they also agree to the conceptualization of Ubuntu in terms of its ascribed glocal values – humanness, caring, sharing, compassion, as Metz does. This is why Metz, argues Praeg, would be correct that Ubuntu would be compatible with multicultural and democratic societies.

I am sympathetic to the distinction made by Praeg on how the conversation on Ubuntu can be organized. We can argue that indigenous ideas that guide modes of existence and relation should

be understood in their etymological mode of practice, differently, from the kind of theorization we may want to make from them. In this sense, I note that indigenous modes of thought might be challenging in its core details for modern societies, but a commitment to an abstract philosophical construct on them is possible and holds merits even for practice, if properly done.

However, part of the challenges of seeing Ubuntu from the above claim; that is, as a theoretical postulation, is to assign to it values already present in other ideas or value theories, such as religious ethics. Insofar as we try to disassociate with some of the core values of Ubuntu in its historical context, we may fall into the challenge of duplicating value principles. The question would not be where to locate the Ubuntu in such intellectual exercise. This again, we may categorize as not properly done cautioned against in the previous paragraph. Our task as philosophers is to engage with the idea of Ubuntu and see what we can make out of its leftovers in an engaging fashion.

It suffices to say at this point that putting ideas in context and epoch is essential in determining their relevance and the meaning we give to them. Also, we can agree that the associated abstract ideas we give to Ubuntu to fit into a philosophical idea must be derived in terms of and compatible with the essence of the idea even in its actual practice and etymology. Matolino (2015) also shares this position, noting that the starting point of any scholar's interpretation of Ubuntu must be rooted in seeing it as an indigenous mode of being for the people of sub-Saharan Africa. We would simply be defining another idea and not Ubuntu if all we affix to the philosophical Ubuntu cannot be linked to what it perhaps holds as characteristics. Philosophical Ubuntu, like we see in Metz's conception, fulfils the terms of reconceptualization. Whether that reconceptualization is successful in retaining its originality is a separate debate.

It is important to note that the conversation on Ubuntu is ongoing, a symbol of the continued existence of the idea. This dialogue is envisaged to produce an outcome, one that exposes the weakness of the concept and further strengthens its formulation and development as a social theory. I think such engagement is unavoidable in producing a theory that would have a global reach. It fulfils the protocols of reconceptualization, which is to thrust intellectuals to research and document critical questions on indigenous ideas and thought to build on them to address contemporary social and political issues. Critical questions ought to be asked by theorists before a proper appreciation of these ideas can be made. These questions must be referenced across time,

space, and existential exigencies. The use of an Ubuntu not borne of complex interactions would be a mere romance of the idea.

Exclusionary ideas, such as those found in Ubuntu conceptualized, would be an antithesis of the spirit of any modern constitution. Some of the inherent values I refer to here include Ubuntu notion of identity, on which classification has some individuals as persons and some as non-persons. This, of course, has implications on how we conceive of the self and the other in any form of socio-political ordering. Therefore, the details of what we call Ubuntu and the context we want it to function would determine its implementation. What is needed for Africa's present is a redefinition of associated norms of Afro-communalism to offer meaningful explanations to current challenges and not an outright rejection.

Our scepticism should spur the need for refining of the idea. The outcomes of such interrogation may breed a new concept as neo-Ubuntu, the details of which would be determined by the outcome of the interrogation we have on the idea, as well as other system of Afro-communalism and Afro-communitarianism that will be considered essential to the African thought and African identity. It would be a more engaged version of the idea that is grounded in the methodological stance that, rather than rejects a claim, refines it.

One way of getting the conversation going is to engage communalism with ideas considered to be its anti-thesis, such as individualism. However, the bid to be loyal to certain traditional philosophies accounts for the uncharitable criticism of other philosophies. This drive often leads to committing a genetic fallacy – the claim that certain ideologies cannot work in Africa because they are not from Africa (see Dauda, 2017). A reaction to a bracket notion of African may be seen in why Molefe (2017d) has shown, through an assessment of some African philosophers and theologians (Menkiti, Gyekye, Metz, Bujo), that African ethics are more in tune with individualism than with communitarianism. He argues, using the notion of personhood and dignity – the major themes in African philosophy, that the 'self' is at the centre of benefitting and profiting in African norms and values. Molefe (2017d) thinks that the goal of morality in African culture, as elsewhere, is to promote the good of the individual moral agent. What the community does that portrays communal ethics is the instrumentation of these goods.

Elsewhere, Molefi (2020) argues that the African account of a meaningful life is anchored in the principles of personhood defined by moral excellence and perfection. If the logic of Molefe's

argument is correct, it means it could be affirmed that communally oriented African culture does not frown at individuality. Individuality may be a more appropriate word to capture the premises of Molefe's claim. The attention on the 'self' in African philosophy may not stand as a good defence for claiming the African appreciation of individualism if individualism is conceived as a system of social ordering and living. The significance the focus on the nature of self in African thought holds for the individual does not transcend explanation of the self. The goal of what is theorized as personhood in the Afro-communitarian thought is to mould the individual into a being fitting the substance of the community, and consequently sustaining community structure. It is not a theorization that aids the promotion of the full self-expression of individuals as captured in individualism. Also, outside moral analysis, which is mainly agential, one could argue that African culture does not embrace individualism as a system of social ordering. Its tolerance for individuality only stops at the level of respect for the individual self. The instrument of relations is intrinsically communal.

3.5.4. Ubuntu extreme rejectionism: Exploring the significance of the sceptical approach

Matolino and other Afro-communitarian sceptics had one conclusion to maintain, the rejection of Afro-communitarianism and its outlooks. This, I argue, is extended in Matolino and Kwindingwi in the declaration of the end of Ubuntu, what may be referred to as removing Ubuntu from the moral and political scheme of modern African societies. One may argue that the side-lining or exclusion should be after arguments defending its relevance in modern African political space no longer holds water. They may add, Afro-communitarian rejectionism is an attempt at cutting the head because of ache rather than seeking therapy. However, we may think of the significance of Matolino's project if we separate Matolino-Kwindingwi's conclusion on Ubuntu from the epistemic strategy that produced the conclusion. This is what I seek to do in this subsection; that is, to discuss the importance of Matolino's sceptical approach to Afro-communitarianism and its various outlooks. I illustrate how an outcome, in this case the rejection of Ubuntu, draw attention to the meaning of its process – the sceptical method.

The merits of Matolino's contribution would be done better if a look is taken on his method in earlier works; analysing its significant separately from the conclusion expressed in the "end of Ubuntu". Matolino's sceptical approach is not only expressed in the 'end of Ubuntu'. It has been deployed in other writings where he took a hard turn on Afro-communitarianism. The 'end of

Ubuntu' is a conclusion that expresses his doubt of Afro-communitarian ideals. The lack of reference to Matolino's earlier project and the method employed to arrive at his conclusions may account for why some critics took Matolino's rejection of Ubuntu as too hasty.

Notwithstanding, Matolino and Kwindingwi's 'The end of Ubuntu' with its rejectionist thesis is an example of how a conversation that can bear a new idea ought to commence, especially in intellectual spaces susceptible to authoritarian ideas and beliefs. A look at Matolino's sceptical epistemic process may offer Afro-communitarians and defenders of traditional African ideas to reflect on beliefs and idea necessary for modern African thought and societies. This epistemic procedure that resulted in the rejection of Afro-communitarianism and in particular Ubuntu has been classified by Chimakonam (2016:231) as a kind of ground zero scepticism in that it is sceptically nihilistic.

As an alternative, Chimakonam suggests a method of systemic doubt, capable of interrogating similar ideas like Ubuntu in African thought known as conversationalism. Conversationalism, argues Chimakonam (2016:231) "is not strictly interested in a supreme outcome or the certitude of our knowledge claim. Rather, it is more interested in the efficiency and efficacy of the knowledge-acquisition procedure". Conversationalism takes seriously the inconsistencies in ideas and the complementarities of ideas. Its aim is the unfolding of new concepts. The kind of scepticism, as an epistemic procedure found in conversationalism, is not one that closes debate on an idea, but one that welcomes participants to join an ongoing debate. It is believed, argues Chimakonam (2016:229), that philosophical theories are by nature inexhaustible, hence always calling for dialogue.

However, Chimakonam believes conversational thinking offers a way of thinking about the reinvention of Ubuntu rather than its restoration. Nonetheless, a close look at Matolino's sceptical method would show that the right approach to the reinvention of Ubuntu requires a negative or pessimistic approach to what we already know of Ubuntu; that is, an approach that outrightly turns down or rejects its claims is necessary to pick up new ideas of the concept. A total rejection can inform the nudge to restart a conversation on an idea.

The sceptical attitude in Matolino can be likened to the Socratic. The Socratic form of inquiry rests on the essence of denying a known idea or what is generally accepted and taken as a given. The aim of this epistemic enquiry, as Socrates used it, is to come to authenticity and affirmation of the

truth of what we claim to know. This method tests the relevance of ideas that have hitherto guided human (our) existence. Whether this epistemic process ever leads to the point of certitude is contentious.

The Socratic method usually organizes its inquiries in the form of censure. While the Socratic questioning of his interlocutors on ideas we believed is known by common sense can result in an unhappy ending between the interlocutors,[18] the real displeasure is the factors that lead to asking those questions, which is about how people lack the awareness of ideas and beliefs they allow to guide their lives, which often they are unable to justify or are not self-convinced about. The philosophers' duty to their society is self-examination and the examination of others, which usually result in the process of an unending explanation. Similarly, in the case of Matolino, his interrogation of Ubuntu and other associated communal ideas, as well as the discomfort that led him to rejecting those ideas may be informed by how Afro-communitarian ideas, particularly Ubuntu, have become rhetoric in the mouths of people whose behaviours lack the reflection of the reality they profess.

Censure[19] plays a significant role in the commencement and the continuing of the conversation on Ubuntu, in that other participants in the dialogue also invoke it as a strategy for their various

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[18] Socrates engaged in the act of questioning by providing the ground to see how his interlocutors build arguments in defence of their claims. As with Miletus, one of Socrates' accusers, during his cross-examination, Socrates interrogated his interlocutors, most of whom had experts' credentials, feigning ignorance of the ideas he sought to be clarified on. However, the nature of the questions and the background he provided suggest that Socrates had a reasonable understanding of the ideas he questioned people about. In *Apology*:21a-21e, Socrates speaks of his friend, Chaerephon, whom he claims inquired of the gods on who is wiser than Socrates, and the god claimed there was none. From here, a conclusion can be made that if the gods affirmed to Chaerephon that Socrates was the wisest and Socrates believed that the gods did not lie, then Socrates knew that he was the wisest. Any denial of his wisdom was not only a form of humility, but to be reassured of his knowledge; that is, if he had other reasons to believe, or if others had reasons to agree with the gods that he was the wisest. After conversing with individuals he believed were wiser than him, he became reassured that they were not wiser than him as he thought. The point of this note is that the Socratic strategy of an outright denial and rejection of ideas is an epistemic endeavour that aims towards attaining conviction and certainty on things we have partial or full reasons to believe. This is why we may interpret Matolino's rejectionism as an exercise in scepticism.

[19] Censure is used here as a tool for knowledge claim. It may be seen as an epistemic strategy to aid the strengthening of the justification for a claim or belief.

reactions and contributions. However, the significance of the censure factor could be felt in how striking ideas on Ubuntu are unearthed in the continued conversation.

Though Matolino's sceptical method seems to start from a closure of the possibility of what may be known of an idea or theory, it is nevertheless seen as a call to defend ideas on both theoretical and practical grounds. There is never a hard way to defend an idea or concept we have generated self-conviction to believe, even if the ideas are declared to be 'nothing'. I do not believe Matolino would not be persuaded of the reality of Ubuntu as a theory and practice, as well as other Afro-communitarian outlooks if reasons are provided to show the relevance of Ubuntu in modern Africa beyond all reasonable doubt. It is the 'beyond reasonable doubt' that ought to constitute the knowledge of Ubuntu that would be up for consumption in modern Africa.

Furthermore, taking a cue from Lemos (2007), Matolino's worry would become clearer. Lemos notes that scepticism about knowledge holds that people may be justified in believing various kinds of things but maintains that the level of justification for believing those things is not high enough for knowledge. This usually occurs with beliefs about external worlds, such as a belief in spirits (Lemos, 2007:132).[20] If we take adequate knowledge of a thing as a requisite for how it would function, we will see why Matolino's style of interrogation explores scepticism about knowledge of the Ubuntu idea and the idea of Afro-communitarianism. In 'the end of Ubuntu', Matolino-Kwindingwi does not claim that the people of Southern Africa do not have a belief in Ubuntu as an overriding ideal. They are justified in doing so. Matolino-Kwindingwi has shown that such belief exists, which may be seen as the Ubuntu worldview, dominant in the traditional communal southern African societies. The concern for modern Africa, argues Matolino-Kwindingwi, is that while people claim to know Ubuntu or have ubuntu, by theorising its ideals, their justification on both theoretical and practical grounds does not level up with the knowledge of Ubuntu which they profess, or not enough to come to certainty on what the ideal stands for and how it will operate. This becomes more evident in the critique of the African uniqueness of some of the element scholars ascribe to Ubuntu as a theory.

Proving the relevance of the Ubuntu theory as an ethical ideal in modern Africa is an enormous task that requires going beyond what intuition and cultural inspiration offer on Ubuntu to a piece

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[20] See Lemos (2007:131-132) for the distinction between scepticism about knowledge and scepticism about justification.

of knowledge on how the ideal finds practical workings in contemporary societies. The proof must either showcase the people's willingness to follow the Ubuntu ideal or showcase the capacity of Ubuntu philosophy to remedy some contemporary obstinate moral crisis. This lack of justification or the adequacy of the same in the claim to knowledge of the relevance of Ubuntu precedes Matolino-Kwindingwi's announcement of the death of Ubuntu. Conversely, we take the announcement of the existence of Ubuntu or its rebirth seriously if certainty is attained on the claims to knowledge of Ubuntu and its functionality in modern African thought. The scepticism about knowledge seems to be what Socrates wants the Athenians to come to terms with; it is what informs the philosophical activity of denial.

3.6. Olufemi Táiwò and the case with Afro-communitarianism

In this section, I discuss Olufemi Táiwò's contribution to the status and relevance of the idea of communalism as a guiding philosophy for modern African societies. Táiwò differs slightly in analysis with Matolino on communalism and communitarianism in Africa. In his paper titled 'Against communalism', Táiwò (2016) shares the same concern with Matolino on African resort to communalism as a framework for ethical conduct and political organization. Táiwò's thesis is captured as follows: the types of communalism that are on offer by African scholars do not appear to take the fact of radical changes that have occurred through the historical transformation that African societies have undergone. He posits that Africa and Africans need to take individualism seriously (Táiwò, 2016:81-82).

Táiwò's essential contributions can be seen in the evidence he presents in supporting his argument against the relevance of African communalism in contemporary Africa and the need to embrace individualism. In his view, communalism and many African multiple inheritances require some illumination in the contemporary context. Arguing that communalism is not peculiar to Africa, he notes that the idea's most significant problem is the individual. He notes that some ascription made to African communalism as recognizing individual was never part of the idea, but a product of the introduction of individualism, a mode of social ordering that emphasizes the individual in recent history.

Táiwò identifies and defends the position that some of the cultural commonalities that scholars ascribe to African traditional societies and are used to justify the thesis of African communalism

are not exclusively African. Like Matolino, Táiwò points out that the desire by Afro-communalists to emphasize these commonalities through what appears to be an all-African subscribed idea called communitarianism and personhood is to draw the line of the African difference in the global worldview and thought. This move to pursue difference could be interpreted as dislodging the individualism and capitalism assumed to be imported from the West. Therefore, the idea of communalism becomes essentially relevant as a way of telling the world that a better system of order exists in African before colonialism.

Táiwò questions the rationale of labelling everything traditional African societies as communalistic. He queries that, "on what basis could one affirm of 17th-century Ọ̀yọ́ with its hierarchies – including an aristocracy and monarchy that lived off the surplus labour of others – and a complex division of that it was a so-called 'traditional society'?" (Táiwò, 2016:85) From this quotation, an inference could be drawn that what is termed a communalist economic system in traditional societies exists, an economic system where the land is held in trust by the King. However, unfair relations might be seen in how custodians of the land or labour excessively acquired lands to create an economic class. One may object, however, that given the fact that everyone has access to farms, irrespective of the portion they get from those trustees, the system can still be largely defined as economic better, in that everyone has what it takes not to be a burden on others.

Táiwò's (2016:88) scepticism on African communalism is further captured in his agreement with Senghor's view of the ideal society. He quotes Senghor, stating that desired African society would be such that combines the best influences in play in the African situation, whether indigenous or external. This suggests a non-total allegiance to the claims of communalism as defended by African intellectuals as recommending the best ideal for African societies. Theories of social ordering in contemporary societies will be such that it delivers the best human society. He adds that his interest in communitarian discourse is in "examining whether or not it offers us a more insightful way of making sense of being human in the world" (Táiwò, 2016:86). Therefore, African communalism defended as uniquely African and as thick opposition to individualism cannot be recommended for such universalizability of an ideal society.

The second, like Senghor, is of the view that we mind historical changes in our claims on what should constitute the model of explanation and prescription for modern African societies. If this is

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correct, we need not romanticize the idea of African communalism. He points out certain challenges with how communalism can and cannot be conceptualized at present. Some of which includes the claim of a classless society in Africa. Táiwò seems to be making the claims on how to reconstruct Afro-communalism, if need be, to serve as a model for an ideal society, one which is universal. The challenge with his conception is that he does not see how that reconstruction retains the Africanness of the variation of communalism in African philosophical literature. Consequently, he does not suggest how we can achieve the inclusion of new ideas into what we may still retain in literature as Afro-communalism, one which can be tagged as the African variation to the word. Táiwò's (2016:94) conclusion affirms the claims that communalism is not theoretically and practically promising. Quoting the Yorùbá proverb:,"*Aṣọ kò bá Ọmọyẹ mọ́; Ọmọyẹ ti rin ìhòhò dọ́jà.*" [The clothes came too late for Omoye; Omoye already marched naked into the town square.]

Outside the gaps in Afro-communalism, especially as it relates to the place of the individual, Táiwò believes there already exists a disconnect between what is been theorized by scholars and what ordinary Africans are embracing. He holds the opinion that individualism had gone beyond a rival theory of communalism to fast becoming the chosen model of social relations.

Like Táiwò, Asiegbu and Ajah (2020) hold the view that the reconstructionist agenda in Afro-communalism adds no benefits, and the attempt at making it fit through reinterpretation by some scholars, like Gyekye, is nothing but a desire to present the difference between the Western and African thought on persons. They posit that the pressure of social conformism in the community's demand and the implication it has on individual agency in the Afro-communalist system as Afro-communitarianism's major challenge. The emphasis on community in Afro-communalism is at odds with current understating of global society, which flourishes largely on non-conformist strivings of their members. However, Asiegbu and Ajah (2020) do not show how responses to the tension between individual and community by some Afro-communitarians, and the re-interpretation and reassessment of the social expectation tension between individual and community offered by some generate the conclusion that the project of Afro-communitarianism is all about the metaphysics of difference; a position on which they ground their rejection of the idea. Moreover, one may want to ask what is wrong with the need to demonstrate difference, is such a move completely lacking significance?

Despite the merits of Táiwò's claims, it is crucial to interrogate two important pieces of evidence recurrent in his conclusion. The claim on the nature of the metaphysics of difference and the disinterest in western ideas as the ground for the appeal to communalism in African philosophical literature. Táiwò's claim is insensitive to the decolonial project on the African continent. Either Táiwò does not have an interest in the call for decoloniality, or he is not convinced of the need. The decolonial agenda is, among other things, a recognition of intellectual and social ideas and theories from hitherto oppressed and marginalized African societies in the global epistemological and political community. Rather than unduly taking in handed-down epistemic ideas, the appeal for communalism in literature is shifting the centre base of ideas for inclusivity. This does not affirm that African contribution to global discourse should be a mere cosmetic presentation of traditional ideas, but a rigorous interrogation must accompany a descriptive account of those ideas.

However, the above should not be mistaken for a defence of forceful inclusion Afro-communalism and Afro-communitarianism in modern African social arrangements. I argue that its side-lining or exclusion should be after arguments defending its relevance in modern African political space are no longer sufficient. Also, I do not argue that a system of social ordering in contemporary African situations should be an emotional appeal and romance of an idea, supposed to be uniquely generated from Africans, but a product of a critical engagement, even if it is domiciled in traditional or indigenous thought. Williams (2001) advises that the current debate about communitarianism should not cause us to reject it. He posits that what needs to be done is how to improve it, after going through history to know how it was practised, its accommodation of rights and human dignity, and how colonialism affected it. While the cost of the breakdown of communal realities and unity is enormous, we can seek to recreate some of these practices and their benefits. This chapter acknowledges the merit in the claims of Afro-communitarian rejectionism, which may serve as grounds for refining the idea. Afro-communitarian rejectionism is, however, an attempt at cutting the head because of ache rather than seeking therapy. This is because some of its worries can be recreated to serve a new purpose in the development of modern African political philosophy.

Conclusion

The rejectionist thesis in the Afro-communitarian debate can be summed as the incompatibilism of Afro-communitarianism and modern African philosophy. The Afro-communitarian emphasis on community primacy has been alleged as neglecting the rights of the individual and her interest. The failure of the right-based communitarians such as Gyekye to provide a concrete ground for individual rights in his conception of persons formed part of the lack of faith in the communitarian project in modern Africa. In this chapter, I discussed how Matolino and other scholars have used the failure of classical communitarians to reject the idea. The chapter examined Matolino's assessment of communitarianism and its Ubuntu outlook. Matolino's assessment of these ideas questions a certain conception of persons that is alleged problematic in modern African societies. He posits to defend a way of thinking of the individual that embraces the idea of individual rights needed for life flourishing in the society. I note that, since Matolino supports a kind of communitarianism known as limited communitarianism, we may refer to his claim as a rejection of classical Afro-communitarianism and not all may be known of the idea.

CHAPTER FOUR:

FROM PERSONHOOD TO COMMUNITY: ENGAGING THE TWO ACCOUNTS OF COMMUNITY IN THE AFRO-COMMUNITARIAN LITERATURE

Introduction

From the foregoing on personhood response to the tension between the individual and community in Afro-communitarianism, I have identified and discussed different accounts of personhood. I examined how the idea of personhood manifests in the duty-based conservatives, rights-based compatibilists, and modernist Afro-communitarian rejectionists' responses to the tension between individual and community. Having discussed the three senses of the personhood debate and the dimensions of the debate by contemporary African scholars, it is essential to look at what the debate is able to achieve in the discourse of Afro-communitarianism and how Afro-communitarianism can further be reimagined. Each idea of personhood is informed by what the theorists consider the pattern of arrangement of the human society or social structure. This pattern and standard define the roles of persons and benefits, such as honour, rights, autonomy, and freedom accrue to the individuals.

The theoretical relationship between the ideas of personhood and community in literature emphasizes the significance of community in the discourse of Afro-communitarianism. That community features predominantly in the conceptions of personhood in African philosophy, whether to its acceptance or rejection, indicates its significance in the discourse, which should inform the nudge to focus for a moment, attention to its analysis. While the personhood debate is a defence of the individual component of Afro-communitarianism in that it is concerned with what defines an ideal individual, it adopts different understandings or senses of community in its conception of personhood. Personhood theorists often refer to two forms of community in discussing what should constitute the notion of the ideal human in African thought. In this chapter, I give a concise analysis of these forms of community and show how they establish the argument of this thesis to consider a discussion on the idea of community in resolving the tension in Afro-

communitarian thought. The first form of community is the idea of the cultural community. This form of community is considered a troubled, non-flexible idea of the community involved in the primacy thesis and the blockade of individual expression. As a solution, an alternative account of the community aimed at a flexible idea of community that enhances the reception and dignity of the various forms of individuals in communitarian African societies is theorized. I regard this alternative as the idea of 'community as self-interested individuals' because of its different ontology. While the cultural community is implicated in the Afro-communitarian thought in that it is said to be strict and primary to the ideas of personhood, hence, closing the possibility of individual expression and rights, the review outcome, that is, community as self-interested individuals is implicated in the degree of the communitarian essence in it. I note that since the cultural community is what we quote when we reference the community/individual tension in Afro-communitarianism, epistemic fairness requires its review to be done without losing its communitarian essence. I posit that the interrogation of the idea of community as self-interested individuals shows that it is either the individual is not wholly separated from the community, as presented in the idea of a cultural community or the push to disassociate the individual from the influence of the community leads to a non-communitarian idea of community. What is then required is to review further the traditional Afro-communitarian idea of community, otherwise known as the cultural community.

The chapter is structured as follows. In the first section, I give a background to the framing of these two ideas of community that have been up for discussion among personhood theorists in the Afro-communitarian discourse. I do this through Menkiti's (1984, 2004) analysis of community. In the second section, I discuss the idea of the community informed by an appeal to traditions and norms of culture in African thought. In the third section, I discuss the community informed by a suggested notion of community in Afro-communitarian thought. In shifting attention to the idea of community in this research, I do not intend to undermine the contributions of the discourse of personhood to Afro-communitarianism but to strengthen Afro-communitarianism.

4.1. The two models of community: A conceptual introduction

In this section, I analyse the background to the two forms of community that have been up for discussion in the Afro-communitarian discourse that personhood theorists often refer to in their

analysis. These two forms of community have their reference in the classification of the community as 'collectivist' and community as 'constituted' in Menkiti (1984). I start by highlighting and discussing these two kinds of community and how they can be interpreted. The aim of outlining these two models is to have a framework for assessing arguments and ideas of Afro-communitarians, such that personhood theorists can self-assess where their idea of the community belongs, that is, the idea of community that informs their notion of the ideal individual and/or the notion of community their recommended idea of personhood imagined.

Menkiti (1984:179-180) distinguishes the idea of community as collectivist and community as constituted. On the one hand, a community is collectivist if the relationship between its members has an organic dimension. This is a form of human society characterised by kinship relations. The realities of common ties and interdependent relationships are crucial in understanding this form of community. It is where the paradigm of social arrangements is influenced by culture, and its values and norms dictate the ideal of the good. Its membership is difficult and almost impossible to renounce. This is the Afro-communitarian view of community that could be defined as the idea of cultural community.

On the other hand, a community is constituted if it is made up of an aggregation of self-interested individuals, realising the need for others in achieving their individual goals, choosing to be part of a union to pursue their preferences. Menkiti likens this form of community has having the ontology of an association and not a community in the real sense. The relationship between its component individuals is inorganic. Menkiti associates this description of community with the western understanding of human society. Reference to this form of community in the personhood discourse is what I classify as the idea of community as self-interested individuals.

Unlike the constituted community, the collectivist community has its ontological movement from the community to individuals, where the individual's interest is dependent on that of the community. Going by their different nature, the collectivist community would emphasise obligations and duties to the collective others or community, while the constituted community, made of atomic individuals, would emphasise individual rights, as certain individual rights are taken as the groundwork for the existence of human society.

The first notion of community highlighted by Menkiti is the received African idea of community in which individual, personhood and the politics of identity are implicated. The second is an

attempt by some contemporary Afro-communitarians to review the first notion of community. The task, which is aimed at withdrawing communal primacy over the individual, usually ends in defending an idea of community that is non-communitarian. While this dissertation is aware of the danger of promoting a received notion of community, it is not ignorant of the danger of authentic existence if certain elements that signify the African essence are absent in the conception of an ideal framing of society in modern African political arrangements.

I argue that reconstructing the notion of community in African thought is vital in making sense of the relationship between the individual and community. This reconstruction aims at achieving a non-humiliating African view of the community. While I take theorising the reduction of the influence of the community in the Afro-communitarian theory of personhood as an attempt in reviewing the influence of community norms and consequently, achieving a non-humiliating community, the reviews, I argue have been overstretched to the point of losing the essence of an African idea, or say an Afro-communitarian concept (see Matolino, 2014; 2018). This overstretching threatens the existence or the identity of the community.

What undergirds the development of the idea of community is the issues surrounding the community/individual relations being replied to in the discourse of personhood. As Kirk Lougheed (2022, 31) rightly points out, "community is a fundamental building block in African thought particularly its relationship to personhood." It is therefore essential to think about how achieving an ideal individual, known as human personhood, takes the shape of what kind of community we have in focus, especially in African political thought. This motivation informs the cultural community/community as self-interested individual distinction in this chapter.

However, on closer scrutiny, the focus has not been on the idea of community in Afro-communitarianism. Michael Eze, Bernard Matolino, Kwame Gyekye, and Menkiti, focus more on the state of the individual in the Afro-communitarian spectrum than being committed to the claims of community. In comparison, Menkiti is concerned about individual loyalty and reference of life fortune to the community – a conception of the self that let the individual disappear into a deep communal space. Gyekye and Matolino try to rescue the individual/self from that shackle by proclaiming his endowment and capacity for self-determination and autonomy. Eze's move is also motivated by this intention, insisting that the individual cannot remain or solely be understood as a sole product of the community because the individual's subjectivity is not inferior to that of the

community. This claim he defends by showing the ontological complementarity of the agreed unique subjectivities of the two. To do this, it is imperative for them to throw out the conception of community inherent in the Afro-communitarian scheme.

In what follows, I discuss the distinction between these two forms of community in the literature. I start with the African view of community, which I refer to as the cultural community.

4.2. The cultural community: A description of the Afro-communitarian view

In this research, I refer to the cultural community as the Afro-community; that is, Afro-communitarian view of the community. However overarching this may sound, the description of cultural community best defines the tensioned community that personhood theorists seek to clarify in their analysis of the nature of the self. This version of community has its ontological foundation in culturalism – an idea that holds that "individuals are thoroughly determined by their culture and may only lead a satisfying life within its confine" (see Stjemfelt, 2012:49). This form of community is more enforcing as its values inform almost all aspect of the individual's existence. As Chin Liew Ten notes, we make choices as persons whom our cultures and our historical experiences have shaped. Culture provides a perspective from which to view the world and to interpret events in it (Ten, 1993:7). Irrespective of the religious or social association individuals belong to, the demands of the cultural community still largely influence their existential experiences.

Cultural community involves the social formation of a group of people, usually identified as ethnic communities. It is what Will Kymlicka calls societal culture. Kymlicka (1995:76) defines societal culture as "a culture that provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres". Importantly, societal culture emphasises territorial integrity and a shared language.

Community here is understood as a group of people guided by cultural principles, norms, and morals. The source(s) of these norms is/are contested and require/s a meta-philosophical analysis. These moral values are not self-generated, evaluated and defended by individuals. They are generated by the community, received and lived by individuals. Some Afro-communal norms and

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their legitimacy are rooted in generations of history and viewed as ultimately a derivation from the gods.

A cultural community is the kind of community where social obligations and reciprocity are considered as a way of life. It fits the classification of community Ikuenobe (2018a:591) refers "any social group with some natural or contrived commonality of interests, goals, values, and sense of solidarity." The cultural community is characterised by communal framework where social and moral norms that mold people's identity, character, choices and actions are transcendental (Ikuenobe 2017a:214). In particular, welfare and care for others are regarded as part of the community's shared existence. Gyekye (1997:42) affirms this when he notes that sharing an overall way of life distinguishes a community from a mere association of individuals. While Gyekye intends to give an account of community that supports the idea of cultural community, the interpretation of his idea of community makes it doubtable if it fits into the idea of cultural community.

Gyekye's account of community is demonstrated in the analogy of the forest. Quoting an Akan proverb, Gyekye (1997:40) likens a community to a forest. Individuals represent the various independent trees that make up the forest. Gyekye submits that the constitution of the forest and its recognition does not presuppose the primacy of group over the individual tree (person). It is important to point out that Gyekye's use of the proverb is to defend the individual uniqueness and the self-assertive thesis in moderate communitarianism. Gyekye's analogy purports to describe an African idea of community that ascertains individuality. Nonetheless, Gyekye does not show us if the trees are products (seeds) of the same tree or they are of different species. What can be inferred from this narrative is that each tree in the forest is planted independently of others, hence, maintaining a unique existence not tied to 'others'. It is arguable that part of the description of a cultural community is that its members have the same genealogy.

Gyekye's analogy does not appear to be the best one. First, social complexities that aid the establishment of rules for social interaction and arrangements among humans do not hold the same in a tree-like community, where the system of interaction cannot be measured, or its existence guaranteed. Secondly, the creation of a forest presupposes a plantation owned by an individual or a group. If it is that artificial, it means it is planted for a purpose known to the planter(s). It holds

a different meaning if the creator of this forest is not known; that is, if it presupposes a natural habitation. In that case, its purpose can only be naturally inferred.

On the one hand, this analogy falls short of describing an Afro-communitarian community. This is because an African view of community is seen as one that indicates a description with both physical and spiritual components, on the other hand, the idea of community demonstrated in the analogy of the forest may indicate a distinctive feature of Afro-communitarian community. The resistant nature of individual trees against destructive winds and storms is guaranteed by the mutual dependence of the trees and a form of unquestioned uniformity and solidarity. To that extent, it could not have been argued that the relationship between the trees does not prioritise the collective ahead of the individual. It is, therefore, a matter of obligation to help one another in such a community and not a demand of rights on others during a storm. Despite Gyekye's preference for rights compatibilism in the Afro-communitarian thought, his accounts of community in African thought suggest a duty-oriented Afro-communitarianism. We can safely submit that the ambiguity in the notion of community in Gyekye's analysis is not unexpected. It is the same as the equivocalness of the umbrella idea of moderate communitarianism.

The idea of cultural community is mostly promulgated and defended by duty-based personhood theorists, including those that demonstrate the status of rights inspired by communal normative features of humans (Mbiti, 1970; Menkiti, 1984; 2004; Gyekye 1997; Metz, 2011; Ikuenobe, 2018; Molefe 2018a, 2018b). This form of community places a stricter demand of duty on the individual than a community as self-interested individuals. The structure of social relations and social arrangement in cultural communities rests on the prescription of obligations on the people (Ikuenobe 2018a:591). As we can see from Mbiti (1970) and other duty-theorists, these imposed obligations are not limited to the living alone, as the ownership and inhabitant of the community transcend the living to the spirit. Individuals owe obligations to the living, ancestor and the unborn generation of the community.

Community in the Afro-communitarian sense is made of a web of humans, including the ancestors, living, and unborn.[21] This form of community is both physical and spiritual. There are important lessons to be taken from this conception. One, it promotes a consciousness for catering for the

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[21] For an understanding of the organisation and the structure of the relationship between the living and the living dead, see Mbiti (1970) and Menkiti (1984; 2004).

well-being of future generations. The awareness of an unseen generation as constituting an important part of the community we belong gives us a sense of putting in place certain benefits such as strong financial security, environment tenderness, and a stable and peaceful society, among others. One may argue that societies without this guiding notion of community do have similar plans and concerns for the future generation. However, emphasising certain social phenomena informs the kind of system we build around such phenomena. In this case, the cultural emphasis placed on the unborn in the duty-based Afro-communitarian political thought that characterises cultural community strengthens the ethics and justice of future generations.

What sets the cultural community on the table of criticism is the demand for total compliance with its norms. The worry about total compliance with communal norms and obligations may not be as intense in traditional African societies as in modern African societies. This concern is further exacerbated by rights enlightenment – a dominant feature of modernity.

It will be stating the obvious that communal obligations and self-interest are to a large extent incompatible and competing, and traditional African societies are tribal village communities whose expansion has been accompanied by the effect of external cultures and norms. It is difficult to return to the tribal arrangement and its social institution with its legal backing to comply with the customs and norms. Some norms of community that prioritise members of tribal/ethnic communities ahead of non-members within a political territory (states) are now being reconciled with current political realities that prioritise the laws of the state over the norms of cultural groups. For instance, political arrangements and the advent of constitutionalism in modern African societies abhor segregations in communities among members and non-members sharing the same citizenship.

However, attempts at reinterpreting this idea of community and its norms do not seek a middle ground between the nature of the Afro-communitarian community on the one side of the spectrum and the realities of modern life on the other side. The challenge for scholarship, which this dissertation also took on, is how some African intellectuals tend to substitute the idea of cultural community, known as the Afro-communitarian community, with theorising a union of socially isolated individuals in the bid to reinterpret the idea and to formulate a notion of community with its conception of self that is compatible with modern African societies. Any form of community interpreted as African must retain its communalistic essence, its Africanness.

While Gyekye's moderate communitarianism might have failed in the project of reconstruction of the idea of Afro-communitarianism, as a result of the numerous objections to the evidence to its claim, that move and strategy whose aim is the 'mean' of two necessary extremes are convincingly the direction that African political theorists should sustain. Modern African political philosophy requires seeking the mean between opposites, for instance, taking into account Africa's multicultural realities in the 21st century and the communal nature of African societies. I argue that we can review Afro-communitarianism by identifying the community in African culture as natural and ontological built into its members (the individuals). This review should not suggest (i) a rejection of community life, or (ii) a community that shares the same labelling as an association or social interest group. Doing that will amount to theorising a community that has transcended the border of Afro-communitarianism.

In what follows, I assess the second model of community in Afro-communitarian discourse, a community referred to in this work as defining the attempt of Afro-communitarian theorists at suggesting a new kind of community in the name of avoiding or reviewing the claims of cultural community.

4.3. Interrogating the idea of community as self-interested individuals

In this section, I examine the commitment of some contemporary African theorists in interrogating the influence of community on the constitution of the self in African thought. Assessment of the influence of the community in Afro-communitarianism has led to a different conceptualisation of community in Afro-communitarian thought.

Kwasi Wiredu weighs in on the influence of community over the individual through a reshuffling of the thick conception of community by Classical Afro-communitarians. He notes that it is not the case that personhood is defined by the community, as that would suggest a tyranny of community (Wiredu, 2008). Wiredu argues that individuals define the personhood of others using the community set rules. This claim is problematic and requires some unpacking.

Wiredu's argument suggests that individuals are unique entities and community is an abstract entity separated from the individuals. Meanwhile, what actually takes place is individuals confirming the personhood of others through the norms and institutions of the community. Wiredu defines community as "a certain contextualization of individuals with respect to their locations and to their

perceptions of their interests and of those of others" (Wiredu, 2008:334). Within the framework of community which Wiredu defines, the community cannot be separated from the individuals. First, the individuals form what we know as the community. Secondly, the individuals are responsible for the rules developed in the community to pursue their interests, including those of personhood. If the individuals in the community are responsible for defining individual's personhood using the rules developed in the community, it is therefore safe to assume that the community does the defining.

Wiredu (2008:334) adds that the relationship between community and individual is symmetrical. According to him, the individual's interest can be adjusted to suit the community's interests, and this also holds the same in reverse order. This shows that none of the opposites is subordinate to the other, as both have equal worth. While I accommodate the possibility of an individual adjusting his interest to the community's, the question would be how possible is the reverse, adjusting the community's interest to suit individuals. How likely is it for the community to adjust its interests to suit that of a particular individual. Given the weight of the number of individuals that stand as a community, adjusting the community interest to suit the individual seems problematic. The compromises suggested in the symmetrical relationship between individual and community will leave the individual at the losing end, such that in the long run, the individual becomes a subordinate to the community.

For his part, Matolino (2018) argues, African thought should not be limited to the conception of community defended in the Afro-communitarian thought. He notes, there could be more than one interpretation of community in African thought. Conceptions of community may be influenced by time or epoch. Matolino believes that the realities in traditional Africa inform the sense of community of the time, as having tight-knit relations. He posits that the realities of modern African societies purport a different kind of conception. As a result, Matolino defines community as the "result of the histories of contingencies of human interaction" (Matolino, 2018:115).

According to Matolino, community should be understood as a creation of the individuals to serve their shared needs. It is the product of human choices and will (Matolino, 2018:112). As a result, community norms are creations of the individual members of the community. Matolino argues that the rationality behind this formation of the community should not affect the individual's interest, who should still see its existence independent of the community. One may want to question the

truth of the claim that the community came into existence through human agency. It may be asked if the claim is valid of traditional ethnic communities bound by culture and often share the same descent? One may further ask if the origin of the normative legislation against certain forms of sexuality is known by the current members of the cultural or ethnic communities that sustain and uphold such binding.

Matolino's defence for the possibility of varieties of community in African thought informs his conception of a different kind of communitarianism different from the dominant Afro-communitarian version. He names his version 'limited communitarianism'.[22] In limited communitarianism, unlike in classical Afro-communitarianism, the community only provides a framework for discovering the relational aspect of life – the relationship between fellow individuals and between individual and collective. In that light, Matolino (2018:112) argues that communitarianism must be properly understood as a theory of ordering social relations. It should not be concerned with how individuals are constituted, which it has taken its task to be. Theories of social relations are such that they provide a framework for ethical conduct that guides individuals and their surrounding community or society.

However, Matolino seeks to make the logic of limited communitarianism and its notion of community as a product of human choices and will to defends individual rights. Matolino believes limited communitarianism best captures the notion of persons that gives the right place for individual rights. He notes that the duty-based theorists are careful with the defence of individual rights. Matolino (2018) aims to free individual rights from the politics of individual-community relationship through prioritizing the less problematic metaphysical features and placing limits upon the community on what should constitute the standard for personhood.

Like the duty-based personhood theory relations to the idea of cultural community, most attempts at defending individual rights, freedom and autonomy in Afro-communitarianism end in the conception of community as the coming together of people to establish a relationship – an Afro-communitarianism, which suggests that the community is the product of the will of its current members (see Chimakonam and Nweke, 2018; Chimakonam and Awugosi, 2020; Metz, 2020). This conception of community is highly contentious. It does not describe and respond to the strict

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[22] I have provided a detailed analysis on the claims of limited communitarianism, especially as it relates to its conception of personhood.

sense of community identified as Afro-communitarian, where identity and marginalisation are tensioned in African thought, from which contemporary modernist thinkers try to rescue the individual. The African idea of community is more than a current arrangement of people with interests (Menkiti 1984).

Eze (2008) weighs in on the tension in the individual/community relationship through the ethical discourse of Ubuntu. Resting on the idea of realist perspectivism, he argues that both community and individual be seen as contemporaneous. According to Eze, each component has its unique subjectivity but shares a kind of interdependence. The existence of both community and individual is one of intersubjectivity. Each has its identity resting on a dialogic relationship, as either communal primacy or individual primacy would threaten the identity of the other. Put succinctly, neither the community nor the individual should be prioritised over the other.

Contrary to the Mbitian idea of community as the creator of the individual, the identity of both individual and community and their subjectivity, argues Eze, are mutually constitutive (Eze, 2008:388). As Molefe argues, Eze's (2008) work describes the necessary balance between the communal and individual (Molefe, 2017). This task of finding a balance between the community and the individual was first taken up by Gyekye (1992; 1997). It also acknowledges non-communal elements that constitute part of the individual's formation.

Eze continues that understanding the relationship between community and individual can be seen through a discussion of the politics of common good, which he argues has often been equated with consensus. Ethical discourse, especially that of Ubuntu, that espouses the relation between community and individual appeals to consensus as a regulative ideal; hence charged with the problem of totalitarianism and unanimity. The challenge of totalitarian uniformity spotted in consensus informs Eze's recommendation of the alternative regulative ideal called realist perspectivism.

Realist perspectivism does not strive towards conformity as in consensus, but a conversion of beliefs that guarantee and justify the contemporaneity of individual and community. The idea of conversion in Eze's realist perspectivism demonstrates a refined viewpoint. Rather than consensus, the conversion of beliefs entails a re-examination, amending, reviewing, revaluating our views or existing beliefs to accommodate others' viewpoints. None of the parties involved in the deliberative process is coerced explicitly or implicitly to agree on decisions; everyone retains their

subjectivities in the process that produces the individual's commitment to the shared good, the self and community, the subject and the other, and their goods can still be distinguished. This demonstrates a form of community where individuals are distinct entities and a society where the imposition of the communal does not hold. Therefore, realist perspectivism as a regulative ideal encourages unity of diverse beliefs and conversion ahead of unanimity and conformism (Eze, 2008:396).

Eze takes it to be the case that the community is a web of individuals; a group of people with shared histories and heritage; of common fate and destiny. The community as a group of people living together to achieve their life goals. The community needs individuals to retain its status as a community. Simultaneously, the individual needs the community. The actualisation of the community is through the will of the individuals that formed it and, in turn, individual actualisation is located in the community. The identity of the community and the individual is given essence in terms of such trivially inter-subjective formations (Eze, 2008:389). Eze adds, "the community is a guarantor of my subjectivity, whereas I guarantee the community's survival by advancing its constitutive goods, knowing that if the community hurts, it is the individual that hurts" (Eze, 2008:388)

The issue for Eze is not that his conception of community contradicts the idea of cultural community. His reference to a shared history connotes the existence of past gone members of the community that has contributed to the community. However, the issue is with the dialogical status of the relationship between community and individual. Whereas in the cultural community, the community precedes the individual, both are contemporaneous in Eze's account. None precedes the other. The issue, then, is how to categorise the account.

Eze notes the importance of this relation when he states that advancing the good of the community must be seen as advancing the good of the individual insofar as we understand the common good not from the totalitarianism of the community and the common good, under the discursive formation of consensus, but through a realist perspectivism that gives understanding to the contemporaneity of both individual and community. Both the individual and the community are guarantors of each other's good. This model of relationship does not presuppose the lack of challenges that ensue in community-individual in Afro-communitarianism, especially those relating to the individual, such as rights and autonomy. However, I agree with Eze that the issues

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are issues of subjectivity, in this case, that of the individual. To do that, we must investigate the adequacy of Eze's reference to subjectivity in his Afro-communitarian account. To accept Eze's claim on intersubjectivity/contemporaneity requires an analysis of the nature of the community and the individual in relation to subjectivity.

It is quite difficult to see how the interest and good of the community and individual can always be concomitant with each other and not radically opposed. This is because the essence of the community and the individual differs. As far as we may not want to talk about the primacy of one over the other, we cannot successfully show the similarity or sameness of the ontology of both. The community and individual have competing forms of life, in that the community has a moral obligation to keep the interest and good of the collectives, the individual pursuit of the good is first to self-promotion.

One may object that there cannot be a community without individuals, in that the community cannot be without the presence of the collections of individuals. This collection, which affirms the uniqueness of each individual component, contributes to what the community takes as its good and interest. Therefore, individual good finds itself in the common good of 'others' -community.[23] This objection implies the reduction of community essence to a reality created by the expression of human agency. It also implies that the community we are talking about is created by the current inhabitant we seek to resolve their hurdles through our analysis. Taking this objection seriously to

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[23] Similarly, Oelofsen (2018) likens the relationship between community and individual to that of lovers. In an equal romantic relationship, she argues, each lover, with different interests, comes together to contribute to the well-being of the relationship and themselves. The relationship's growth is exacerbated when each lover is critical of the rules and values of the relationship. The relationship's growth is simply the growth of the individuals in the relationship. She argues that both community and individual need each other for self-realisation. The communal self, otherwise known as the community, does not override the realisation of the individual self. The flourishing of the individual self – character development and consequently personhood – in the Afro-communitarian community is consequent upon the flourishing of the communal self.

The question that comes to mind would be that if a realised communal self is a formation of individuals critical of varying interests, believing to know self-good and the common good, then the realised communal self through common good should not be needed for the realisation of the individual self (self-good). It would be a wasted demand. Also, one can agree with Oelofsen that a well-nurtured community can be a peaceful, good and just community; as a result, having a good atmosphere for the well-being and development of its members. However, there are instances where the interests of some people, say the disadvantaged or marginalised group, are not captured in the scheme that defines the community's growth. In that sense, the developed or flourishing community might be that of the abled, advantaged, straight bodies and persons. If personhood is a product of communal affirmation and social acceptability, it becomes a faulty recommendation, given the possibility of an unequal relationship that produces the communal self.

defend the relatedness of the interest of the community and individual would make Eze's conception of community pass for a description of an association, having the nature of voluntary membership, without a solid binding sociocultural force. Even if the history of the community is the history of people coming together, the continuous existence of generations of individuals in the community gives room for the existence of strong norms of culture that, over time, empower the community over the individual. Some of these norms were agreed upon based on the issues and dilemmas the community confronted in history, which led to a resolution that defines the cultural community. The continuity in cultural communities makes it different from a mere association of individuals whose formation is easily dissolvable.

Even if we take it to be the case that the community shares the same reality as social groups in other to defend the relatedness of the interest of the community and individual in Eze (2018), one may reply with a question: Can the existence of a unique ontology of the collective or social group be proven? If the answer is in the affirmative, we may ask: Do social groups have the same existent reality as their members? Insofar as we agree on differences, these differences, when identified, will play a massive role in forming their conceptions of the good. What follows is whether the ontology and the good of the community are prime over that of its members.

Outside the analysis of the relatedness of the good of the individual and the community, the degree of the uniqueness of an individual's subjectivity, the ground on which Eze's notion of persons in African thought lies could be put to question. It is unclear in Eze's account if a distinction is made between subjectivity as other-ascribed and subjectivity as self-ascribed (see Olivier, 2014). Sociality, argues Abraham Olivier, is the foundation of subjectivity. In Olivier's words, social experience determines the selfhood/identity of an individual. Even if one is not an African, living in an African community exposes an individual to the sociality of an African context. The experience of living in an African community and sharing the African ways of life is a necessary condition for one to acquire the African identity. Olivier sees sociality and the experiences involved in the social space one inhabits as essential in shaping one's identity. As a result, selfhood is first "who our social world turns us into" (Flikschuh, 2019:82). It is not whom we choose to be – what Oliver notes as "other-ascription" and "self-ascription" (Olivier, 2014:98). As Flikschuh (2019:86) analyses, Olivier's phenomenology suggests that even if we desire to be who we are not, we cannot choose to be who we are.

It is difficult to assume which subjectivity Eze refers to in his realist perspectivism. If we take it that reference to the individual in Eze's account is the other-ascribed, we can argue that an individual consciousness may be influenced or limited to the web of cultural ideologies that have dominated discourses and life issues in her environment. As a result, autonomy granted by self-consciousness in an other-ascribed subjectivity cannot achieve any form of self-determination, as Eze, Matolino, or Gyekye would think the individual possesses the capacity for. Furthermore, Eze takes it to mean that the reality of African culture, the individual subjectivity, does not get entangled in the dictate of the community; instead, the community norms act in part to the actualisation of the individual's subjectivity. This justifies why one may conclude that Eze might not be referring to individual subjectivity as a self-ascribed subjectivity. While it may appear contentious what forms of subjectivity Eze's individual holds, we have evidence to believe that his theory embraces the other-ascribed subjectivity, which raises the question of what he wants to achieve with his theory of persons in African thought. The point I am making is that subjectivity is not as unique as Eze supposes. Subjectivity itself is entangled in sociality, and it is other-determined or influenced; that is, socially ascribed.

From Matolino to Eze, we see an outcome that makes the 'individual' a reflection of the cultural community or a notion of community far from the communitarian specie. However, this thesis does not argue that tradition is incapable of changing. It does not present a stereotypical idea of community. Community and norms passed from one generation to the other can benefit from interpretations. However, interpretation and reinterpretation of beliefs, culture and norms do not suggest a replacement but rather an advancement for future transmission and reception.

In addition, theorists of persons-community relations in the communitarian African thought ought to operate within the specific or specifiable limits imposed by the norms and principles of the given social system in which they are located rather than introducing an external critique of the norms. Improving the social system or social ideals should not be considered a migration into other modes of ideal. For example, if a social formation is liberal, no matter how resolute the people, they should not make or implement laws that suggest or promotes a communitarian order of social relations and social arrangement. Such actions can destroy the social structure and the benefits that come with it. Whatever social reformation they seek to make should retain the liberal essence. Therefore, the suspicion associated with community and personhood in the ideas of community as

self-interested individuals betray the nature of the idea of community and the system of ordering that contemporary Afro-communitarian theorists want to improve on.

Conclusion

The style adopted in this thesis, which is to move from personhood to community, must be understood in two related ways. First, starting from community to personhood is not to reject the contributions of the idea of personhood to the tension and debate in Afro-communitarianism but to expand the scope of the discourse of Afro-communitarianism. To do so, a systematic exposition of the concepts of community available in the literature is required. This was the preoccupation of this chapter.

Second, analysing the forms of community that are recurrent in the personhood discourse is, among other things, to reimagine Afro-communitarianism by identifying its ideal notion of community, that is, the cultural community. Findings from diagnosing the idea of community show that the challenges associated with the communitarian view of personhood, such as individual rights, are an implication of the ideas and norms of cultural community. Therefore, reconstructing Afro-communitarianism must take its notion of community seriously before the individual it imagines. The goal here is to establish that what needed the most reform for the reception of Afro-communitarianism is the community. Doing this will make us realise if there are more worries about Afro-communitarianism, as I aim to show in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE:

IN DEFENCE OF A NON-HUMILIATING IDEA OF COMMUNITY

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explained the notions of community that undergirds the discussion of personhood in African philosophy. I showed how the reference to cultural community captures the tension in the Afro-communitarian thought between individual and community and duty and rights. As this thesis intends to show, it is essential to focus on the analysis of the nature of community in Afro-communitarianism and the forms of individuals to be imagined. The focus on community aims to strengthen the discourse of Afro-communitarianism. While the thesis is persuaded of the significance of the cultural community as representing the genuine Afro-communitarian idea of community that should inform our analysis, I establish the challenges associated with grounding modern African political theory on such an idea of community. I show that cultural community and the conceptions of individuals, which it, in turn, gives, create the problem of humiliation.

Due to the problem of humiliation associated with the idea of cultural community, it is imperative to state what kind of community contemporary Afro-communitarian theorists should consider. This notion of community, I refer to as a non-humiliating community. I regard a non-humiliating community as one that respects identities outside of its traditional norms, which have taken the label of marginalisation due to hitherto conception of them by cultural norms. It is an inclusive community that grounds basic respect, which individuals should have towards one another on dignity in virtue of being human and not dignity in virtue of fulfilment of approved obligations to the community. It is a community that does not describe the essence of personhood on dignity

gained from the community; instead, it accommodates different conceptions of the self. It is the expectation of this thesis that a non-humiliating idea of community will resolve the persistent tension of individual rights, autonomy and freedom in Afro-communitarian thought. However, achieving a non-humiliating notion of community in Afro-communitarianism entails the revision of the claims of cultural community – the Afro-communitarian view of community – through an exercise I entitle the doctrine of cultural permissibility.

In the first section of the chapter, I discuss the issues with the idea of cultural community. I demonstrate that the system of community and the notion of personhood it imagines creates the danger of the polarisation of individuals and humiliates the self-respect of non-persons in the community. I offer some directions on how we can deal with the problem of humiliation emanating from the idea of cultural community and personhood. In the second section, I show how we can further overcome the problem of humiliation in the ideal concept of community in Afro-communitarianism through a process of identifying permissible norms of the culture that I tag the doctrine of cultural permissibility.

5.1. Personhood as other – regarding and the idea of humiliation

In this section, I discuss the ideas of personhood, humiliation, and self-respect. I show why the concept of personhood in the Afro-communitarian thought mirrors harm to the self-respect of certain individuals and how the distinction between individuals emanated from the thought of personhood informs social relations. I begin with a synopsis of the issue with the idea of personhood that acknowledges the view of Afro-communitarianism. An analysis of humiliation and self-respect will follow it. After that, I establish the connection between this idea of personhood and humiliation and its implications. As this section intends to show, a community system exhibits acts of humiliation if its mode of social ordering negatively affects the flourishing of individuals' self-respect and promotes human stratification resulting in other-regarding social relations. I conclude that identifying how the communitarian view of personhood mirrors humiliation and fixing it is essential to building an inclusive social system.

The increase in the advocacy for the recognition of marginalised identities, that is, those who fall outside of accepted social norms/conventions, such as homosexuals, in African spaces, has necessitated the thinking on humiliation domiciled in the interpretation and understanding of personhood in the Afro-communitarian thought. Attempts at analysing and re-interpreting the

conception of persons in African thought have dominated Africa's philosophical literature. It is believed that essentialising traditions in African societies pose the danger of continued marginalisation of specific individuals in African political space that do not conform to the traditional norms of the group or community. While the marginalisation has been discussed in the light of specific political ideas and benefits that dominate modern political thought, such as rights, autonomy, and freedom, the significance of this discussion has not been felt in African social and political development, especially concerning how the individual is conceived. This thesis shows why it is essential to think about this challenge by investigating other factors that are implicated in the African view of personhood, especially the communitarian view.

An idea of personhood is communitarian if it prescribes some forms of relationship in the community and makes duties and responsibilities to others a necessary means for achieving personhood (Menkiti 1984,2004; Gyekye, 1997; Ikuenobe 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2021; Molefe & Maraganedzha 2017, 102-3; Molefe, 2018a; 2018b; Oyowe 2021, 2022). It is a form of personhood that prioritises the sociality of the individual and humans' social-moral nature. The communitarian view of personhood is the view of personhood that holds that moral excellence/achievement and duty to the community are social and cultural norms essential in defining who an ideal individual is.

Morality and the test of individual moral standing reside in the relationship with the community. Also, these moral principles are communal in that they emanate from the community's cultural and normative principles. The community prescribes the norms. Personhood entails recognition by the community for adhering or conforming to norms, values and practices laid down by the community (Menkiti 1984, 2004; Gyekye 1997; Ikuenobe 2018; Molefe 2018a, 2018b, Oyowe 2022). This affirms why major works on the communitarian view subscribed to the view that there is no conception of persons without the community. These scholars' views differ only in the degree of community involvement in the conception of persons. A person is one whose frame of mind and thought patterns are guided by the cultural and moral values of the community. Consequently, a non-person is any community member whose mode of living contradicts the principles of the community.

From the thought of community-based personhood, there is an ideal to be followed. One in which all candidates for personhood must conform. It is an objective model of being conferred the personhood status. Also, since personhood is what the community desires of its citizens - whether

it is to promote the good of the community or for the self-actualisation of the individual, every member must not only desire or aspire to be a person; they are obligated to be. Interpreted thus, the idea of personhood is the final good or the goal that Afro-communitarian prescribes for people. This normative nature of personhood rules out the thought of whether an individual wants to be referred to as a person by others or not and whether one can self-validate the process of acquiring personhood.

The decision to have a conception of personhood where individuals are believed to live a good only when they prioritise the demands of community norms and values such as being married, having the potential for progeny, and contributing to the family and community, among others (see Wiredu, 2004; 2008), will always create the tension for the recognition of self-expression and identities that are outside of the scheme of the community standard. As shown from the proceeding analysis, the problem with non-conformity to communal norms that resulted in the non-person status of certain individuals may be because of the nature of the individual to express their agency and the intention to avoid a conception of the self outside of the individual. Consequently, the non-persons status arising from the communitarian idea of personhood with its emphasis on duty to the community, without doubt, suppose a tension for autonomy, individual rights and freedom. The tension has generated an endless debate, with scholars either defending the primacy of duty in communitarian thought or questioning its implication on the individual and agency (see Mbiti, 1970; Menkiti, 1984, 2004; Wiredu, 1995; Gyekye, 1997; Matolino, 2018a, 2018b; Ikuenobe, 2018a, 2018b; Chemhuru, 2018; Oelofsen, 2018; Chimakonam, 2018; Molefe, 2018a, 2018b; Chimakonam & Awugosi, 2020; Adeate, 2022). A large percentage of the history of African philosophy has been devoted to addressing the issue of community and autonomy through the competing notions of personhood. I have offered a critical assessment of the literature in my previous conversations.

The central issue identified with the idea of personhood implicated in the prioritisation of the community and its moral and cultural norms is the description of human dignity. This issue is central to my claims on the communitarian view of personhood as humiliating. The idea of personhood in African thought can be interpreted as an attempt to give an account of the ideal human, one that has a dignified life. While theorists are divided on what should count as the level of the input of the community in it, human dignity is subject to acknowledgement by others in the community, resting on the level of conformity to communal norms and values. Afro-

communitarian idea of dignity is guaranteed by individuals' fulfilment of approved obligations to the community. It is an accompaniment of personhood (see Menkiti, 1984, 2004; Gyekye, 1997; Ikuenobe, 2018a; Molefe, 2018a, 2018b, 2020, Metz, 2011, 2013). Following that, human dignity that should ground social and political ideals such as rights and autonomy, as well as mode social interactions such as respect for others, and the notion of dignity that ought to guide respect for the self in African societies has been informed by the communitarian notion of personhood.

As the ideal of personhood continues to inform thought and patterns of social relations, it is essential to look at other dimensions of the implications. One of the issues the idea of personhood generates, which requires attention, is humiliation. However, to push the implication of the communitarian view of personhood further and claim that it creates the problem of humiliation requires clarity. The question then becomes: is humiliation a product of conforming to the community's norms or the loss of the self in the process of conforming? Does the absence or the denial of the reality of the self in the conception of personhood sufficient for humiliation? Does creating a distinction between group members through a system of social ordering and living defined by the idea of personhood affect the personality of non-persons? Does the social isolation of non-persons through the communal framework of personhood affect the flourishing of their self-respect? In what is next, I discuss what I describe as humiliation and show how it captures my worry about personhood, that is, how it fits into the dilemma identified by the thought of personhood.

Margalit (1996,9), an Israeli philosopher, conceptualises humiliation as "any behaviour or condition that constitutes a sound reason for a person to consider his or her self-respect injured". He distinguishes between two sources of humiliation. The first is humiliation by institutions. This involves institutional practices and the actions of agents of authority. We can understand this to mean when a society has what it takes to seek the welfare of its citizens through the provision of what guarantees their independence and the availability of enabling environment and capacity for flourishing but refuses to do so; such a society humiliates its citizens. Furthermore, society is humiliating if it has regulations or provisions of the law that delimit its citizens' expression. In the same vein, if a group or community has standards, values or norms that delimit their members' expression, such group sets the stage for humiliation. I interpret this description of humiliation to mean when an individual engagement with society is confronted with events by individuals, institutions or social norms that reduce the self-confidence needed to approach the world and make

the most of existence. The second form of humiliation is what Margalit calls humiliation by fellow members of society. This involves the relationship between individuals. It consists of how people deal with one another in society in everyday non-institutional settings. The second kind form of humiliation happens when a person calls another person names or puts them down in public. It is about one person's behaviour towards another and not social norms.

Discussing humiliation as harm to self-respect is not enough; we must clearly understand what self-respect is and how it should be understood in this work. While humiliation is to have one's self-respect injured, one way of seeing self-respect is to understand it as the honour or respect individuals accord themselves without needing the opinions of others (Margalit 1996,14). This understanding of self-respect is in reference to stoicism. I interpret this definition of self-respect as a standard of dignity consciously set which the individual independently conforms. An individual sets the standard for respect using his principles, values and judgement, which inform how a person provides respect for self by the self. This explains an individual's selfhood that must not be injured. Self-respect demonstrates the degree of an individual's attention on the self, and whatever good the society must hold must be one that promotes individual self-attentiveness necessary for the sustenance of self-respect. In that light, the public morality of a group can be measured by the consciousness of the value of the self its members have.

This idea of self-respect anchors self-respect on values an individual places on self. It is a self-appreciation that does not appeal to external justification, such as the affirmation from the community or groups to which such an individual belongs. This sense of appreciation enhances the individual's ability to pursue his conception of the good life. This is because an individual respects himself based on what he thinks he is capable of doing or becoming, what he thinks is valuable to his wellbeing and, more importantly, on the label he chooses to carry. If an individual believes in transparency and that, under no circumstances should public goods be used for private gains but for the collective, such individual demonstrates self-respect by sticking to that guiding philosophy insofar as he uses that principle as one of the elements for self-respect. This description of self-respect, emphasising personal standards, is what Colin Bird (2008, 5) refers to as standards self-respect. A conception of self-respect devoid of external authorisation suggests what is immune to external influence.

Daniel Statman (2000) corroborates the above position by noting that whatever form of humiliation that may be experienced by an individual, going by the stoic view of self-respect would be merely psychological/subjective and not normative. Such humiliation does not rest on standards independent of the individual. According to him, a subjective form of humiliation would mean "any behavior that makes a person think she is unworthy, or less worthy, of respect, according to her own standards" (Statman 2000,527. see also Evelin Lindner 2000,6). Statman's position on a subjective form of humiliation also implies that if an individual is worthy of respecting himself based on certain traits and standards set by himself, no actions or inactions of another member of the society or institutions can constitute a sound reason for that self-respect to be injured. As Bird (28,5) adds, the individual is capable of resisting external assaults on his worth.

Statman's argument takes it for granted that norms of society where one coexists with others must not promote standards that may endanger the individual's standard of worthiness. Statman's claim also fails to consider that the absence of humiliation or elimination of humiliating conditions is a ground for the quick flourishing of self-respect. Statman's position suggests that, in a society that sees sexual violation as a norm, the victim's feeling of humiliation does not take away the characteristics that qualify them to respect themselves. However, as I will show later, self-respect is fuelled by the recognition of one's worth by others. A sexual violation indicates disregard or disrespect of the individual's self-generated worth, this time by socio-cultural norms. Humiliation is beyond the feeling that accompanies a humiliating situation, but one that is defined by an individual being placed in a significantly inferior situation by 'others' – human actions or social norms.

Contrary to the stoic view of self-respect, Margalit notes, "self-respect, although based on one's human worth in one's own eyes, implicitly assumes the need for other respectful human beings" (Margalit 1996, 126). Margalit worries about the near difficulty with seeing self-respect as mainly self-made and invulnerable. It should not be limited to how a person provides respect for self by the self. Self-respect also depends on others' attitudes towards us. On the one hand, how people are treated affects how they regard themselves. On the other hand, our treatment of others shows if we regard them as humans sharing the same standard of humanity with us.

While the stoic argument for self-respect seems persuasive because it offers a clear view of how individuals value or treat their self-respect, there are grounds to argue that it is difficult to defend. Margalit's notion of self-respect is defendable, especially if we pay attention to how self-respect

is acquired or developed. I note that since the stoic view does not regard factors independent of an individual's worthiness as capable of harm/disrespect, it would not require or need people to see an individual's ideals of self-respect as worthy of honour or high honour regard. Not regarding others' evaluation of one's self-respect appears implausible as one coexists with others in society. My acceptance of Margalit's definition stems from his emphasis on the idea of humiliation. I note that irrespective of the immunity of self-respect, the effect of external influence will overpower it if the structure of the society to which an individual belongs does not support the ideals that inform their self-respect. This form of humiliation or disrespect is different from and more stringent than specific disrespectful acts by individuals. Self-respect is more harmed if the structure of a given society is designed in such a way that certain members of the society are bound to be humiliated by it. In that light, norms of culture and system of social ordering and arrangement that guide daily interaction can harm an individual's self-respect if it differs from the standards of acquiring respect.

Therefore, we can conclude that if humiliation harms self-respect and humiliation is external to the self, self-respect might need more than the self to be formed – it may require facts and ideas that are socially and culturally interpreted or given. The degree of the ideas picked in society has a more substantial weight of influence in forming self-respect than those self-generated and approved. Therefore, self-respect may be construed as the respect an individual accord to the self, aided by external influences. Core among those external influences is the respect the society gives to individuals, especially those relating to the respectability of personal identification.

The above definition is beyond stating the nature of self-respect; it clarifies how self-respect is formed. Considering factors that could undermine self-respect is essential in knowing indexes that inform how individuals develop their self-respect. In particular, how ideals of social ordering can humiliate and affect the formation and sustenance of self-respect.

Part of the reason for not restricting self-respect to what is internally generated is the fact of the sociality of beings. It should not be assumed that setting standards to be respected by individuals would not encounter challenges in a society where the ethics of social relations are the product of the community and cultural orientations. The possibility of a clash between some personal and communal ideals that affect self-respect exists. As van Stolk and Wouters (1987, 477) have illustrated, the inability to model one's ideals according to the new demand made on individuals by 'others' ends the individuals in a trap between reality and the ideals they have developed to

guide their lives. The contradiction between personal ideals and the reality of others makes the affected individuals grow dissatisfied with themselves, thinking others no longer respect them in the community, which later results in the loss of their self-respect. The vulnerability of our self-respect to others' disrespect affirms why Margalit argues that society must promote norms that respect its members, not norms that allow for their humiliation.[24]

In that it is the role of society to respect its members, members can demand such entitlement when it is not given. This confirms why Bird classifies Margalit's idea of self-respect as entitlement self-respect rather than standard self-respect. Bird's classification clarifies how to use Margalit's idea in this research. Since self-respect is beyond the stoic view of an internal generation, we can argue that other political ideals that have the nature of entitlement, which people share with others and informs their self-view, such as equal rights, worth and dignity, go with honour/respect as indexes that informs self-respect.

The entitlement thesis in Margalit's idea of self-respect confirms that honour in non-humiliating (decent) society shares certain nature with rights in that individuals can make claims. Claiming respect as what belongs to one or due to from others affirms why Daniela Renger (2018,6) views self-respect as "people's ability to see themselves as equal to others in terms of rights and dignity". It is an internalised conviction of having equal rights with others. In this sense, self-respect is sustained not only through a perception of one's equal worth with others but the capacity to confirm the self-respect through claims or stands for rights when self-respect is disregarded or poorly treated by others (see also Feinberg, 1970 and Luchies, et al., 2010). Following Renger's conception of self-respect, Dillion (2022) identifies unjust social institutions as a threat to self-respect.

The significance of the nexus between rights and honour in the idea of self-respect shows that self-respect is guided by facts that the individual and others in the group should have as due to all. In addition, the nexus makes the call for a decent society of honour and a just society of rights related to providing the notion of a good society where individuals' self-respect is protected and allowed to flourish. Following that, a notion of self-respect grounded on recognising the universal basic

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[24] Margalit distinguishes between two forms of society – the decent and the civilised. A decent society, according to him, does not humiliate its members. Here, the behaviour of institutions, usually represented by their policies and enforcing agents, must guarantee the presence of honour for the people they are meant to serve. A civilised society is one whose citizens do not humiliate one another in their daily interactions. It is a society where members respect themselves in non-institutional relations.

rights of humans does not suggest a contradiction with basic respect due to individuals in a decent society.

However, having the capability and conviction to see oneself as equal is not enough to secure respect in places where the notion of universal dignity of persons is not sufficient for respect. Where it is required that the notion of dignity that promotes entitlement and the development of self-respect is structured around a contested ideal such as personhood informed by the logic of cultural community, rights, even if it exists, cannot be expressive. Self-respect suffers attacked when its ideals contradict the social ideals the individual is expected to be guided by. It is the tension in the notions of persons that makes the idea of equality difficult in African thought, where equality of persons assumably exists among individual persons and not individual humans.

To put the conversation in direct context, the connection between self-respect and personhood in modern African societies is easily captured in the identity discourse. It is easier to observe that in societies guided by the communitarian social order, self-respect, like personhood, will be linked to moral responsibility and acceptability. Theorising the nature of self as moral conformity with traditional communal norms holds the same for developing an individual's self-respect. However, doing that denies the individual the liberty of self-determination and expression. While the liberty of sexual identity should form parts of individual regard for the self, it becomes complicated when markers of sexual identities, like morality, reside only in the community. It becomes challenging to develop self-respect that deserves others' respect when the norms of the community towards individuals' sense of identity negatively affect their feeling of being a better human and their confidence for the pursuant of life goals. In this sense, we can submit that individuals with non-conventional identities in an Afro-communitarian-stratified society suffer humiliation. Often, such individuals conceal their identity to attain a communal-justified notion of personhood/respect. As van Stolk and Wouters (1987, 478) put it, it is like homosexuals fantasising about a heterosexual future because they lack a practical, socially acceptable future perspective. The burden of concealment results in the eventual loss of self-respect. Furthermore, bearing in mind Robin Dillion's (1992,136) position that to lose one's self-respect is to lose one's life, the implication of grounding social ordering and social arrangements in multicultural societies on the communitarian understanding of community and personhood may be enormous.

It is easy to see the possibility of concealing identities in societies where particular identities are not regarded and respected. Many African states today do not have legislation that allows certain

sexual identifications. This is because state benefits are informed by the guiding socio-cultural ideas that define the state or the nation-state. Where personhood/virtue or idealness is seen from the narrow light of identity formation, respect and rights will be withdrawn from such identities. In this regard, it is not only individuals' thinking through the lens of culture that withdraws respect for gay identity but also institutions, thereby undermining their sense of worth as a human.

If institutions are to ensure the removal of structural conditions for humiliating the people as Margalit would define a decent society, the ideal of personhood framed in a manner that disregards certain forms of identities as non-persons will have to be removed.

The ideas of identity and sexuality are beyond issues of concern in modern African societies. They also attract global attention. As the world thinks about how best to achieve a society that accommodates and manages differences, African philosophy must continue to reinterpret certain traditional canons in the light of changing society with respect to the narratives of inclusion and exclusion confronting the global and local communities. This is important for the global reception of the ideas of personhood and other Afro-communitarian ideals that set the conditions for defining persons.

Reflections on personhood have not been on self-respect, especially on those that could be regarded as the victim of the idea, the non-persons. The focus has mainly been on defending the questions of rights.[25] While we think of the defence of rights (equal rights with others) as a defence of self-respect (see Renger, 2018; Feinberg, 1970 and Luchies et al., 2010), the reverse is not always the same. Showing self-respect is not often captured as a demand for rights, like the example of female children demanding access to the inheritance of their fathers mentioned in chapter two. One can argue that inheritance is a privilege of biological connection and not a right. As such, the female child's demands may not necessarily be towards getting some property from the late parent but of asserting the self in such a way that queries the ontological marginalisation, necessitating the assumption that being a woman restricts her from sharing from the largesse of

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[25] In the current literature, one of the dominant questions regarding community/individual relations in Afro-communitarianism is that of individual rights. In the previous chapters of this thesis, I identified the significance of the works of thinkers such as Ikuenobe, Metz, and Oyowe, which seek to capture individual rights in Afro-communitarianism. I have also expressed worries about such defence of rights and addressed the issue with the scepticism on rights expressed by thinkers such as Molefe (2018a). The various issues I raised regarding their analysis of individual rights result from their conceptions of personhood informed by communitarian thought. As I argue in this chapter, a conception of personhood that considers the challenge of humiliation and an analysis of self-respect will address the problem of individual rights in Afro-communitarianism.

inheritance. Not all instances of individuals' expression indicate the demand for rights rather than, say, for self-determination and actualisation. It is imperative, therefore, to consider the unfolding dimensions of the idea of personhood.

On the other hand, promoting self-respect can help with the challenge of individual rights associated with Afro-communitarian thought, which has dominated the discourse on personhood in African philosophy. Achieving a non-humiliating community – that is, a community of honour and respect grounded on universal notions of dignity – being human, and not communitarian stratified dignity gained from individuals' fulfilment of approved obligations to the community will help resolve the tension between community and individual, especially those around individual rights and freedom. In a community where basic respect is accorded not based on attaining personhood but on being human, self-expression will not be constrained. If an individual's formation of self-respect is not affected or altered by social ideals that harm the individual selfhood or it is enhanced by the principles that guide the society, restrictions of expressions that question the place of individual autonomy, rights and freedom will be limited. This is part of the benefit that can be annexed from the discussion on self-respect.

Thinking about self-respect and humiliation in relation to the discourse of personhood is essential in identifying the challenges of human stratification and social relations associated with the thought of communitarian or community-based personhood. The communitarian view of personhood in African thought is a theory of human stratification. It encourages the distinction between humans, noting that while some individuals are persons owing to fulfilling some specifics, others are not due to their inability to fulfil such conditions. The social conformist is a person, and the non-conformist a non-person. The personhood framework makes obvious the distinction between these groups in the community and enables the humiliation **of** non-conforming individuals, otherwise refers as non-persons.

The implication of this obvious distinction for social relations is that while persons, defined as morally perfect, praiseworthy individuals whose personality the community prides in, see themselves as superior and advantaged, the non-persons are perceived as inferior, disadvantaged, and the repository of insults. With its accompanied 'self' and 'other' kind of social structure, the communitarian view of personhood becomes other-regarding. It sees the morally excellent individual as belonging to one side of the social spectrum and the morally erred other as belonging to another.

This 'self' and 'others' social orientation informs how the community is understood by its members. The community is seen as serving only the interest of individuals that have attained personhood, that is, individual persons and not individual humans. This is because persons are the only individuals recognised by the community framework. As a result, we may refer to the Afro-communitarian form of community as a community of persons and not a community of humans. With this, we can trace how the Afro-communitarianism account of human dignity explains humiliation and self-respect in relation to institutions imagined or proposed by it.

While the point of personhood is honour/respect for individuals who can attain it, it should ordinarily relate well with the idea of a decent society of Margalit. The modes of acquisition and the conferment of such honour are narrow and rest on contested moral ideas and cultural values, thereby making such honour the rights of certain individuals with enormous implications for exclusivity and inclusivity. The condition of the excluded non-persons gets one thinking about self-respect and the humiliation of their selfhood.

As such, any cultural principle or social convention that widens the gap of social relations through aiding human stratification, thereby constituting grounds for the inferiority and alienation of certain individuals, is a humiliating cultural norm. Cultural groups/communities whose members' criteria of identifying as persons revolve around adherence to norms and ways of behaving that are already configured as male and heterogenous promote human stratification and constitute a sound reason for marginalising and oppressing minorities, hence humiliating them.

It is essential to note also that self-respect and humiliation are at the core of many polemics in multicultural societies. Gender tension and sexuality are questions of recognition, acknowledgement, and respectability of the human person. Most aggressive treatment of women is traceable in principles to disrespect and dearth in the acknowledgements of standard for the self-respect of others, as having equal worth with the self. To put in perspective, our perception of the 'other' in heterogeneous societies, as either 'self' or the 'other', as properties or 'inferior in reasoning', are indexes susceptible to elements of humiliation – a negation of the self-respect and value for the dignity of others. Avoiding humiliating one another is to deal with issues that bring 'otherness' to the table of social interaction.

Some objections could be raised against the position of this chapter. I will discuss two to strengthen the argument of the link between personhood and humiliation. First, since the community sets the norms that guide its members, it should also draw guidelines that avoid humiliation. As a result,

the community's framework of personhood may not be termed humiliating if the community takes care of actions that may be labelled humiliating. This objection takes it to be the case that community norms work for the interest of all. As such, the community should be trusted to provide a framework of social relations that shun the humiliation of its members. An understanding of ideas and acts of humiliation knowable to everyone must have informed why Margalit (1996, 133) notes that humiliation is what an agent expresses towards others but is unwilling to be directed at them. This definition implies that an agent of humiliation is aware of its danger and, as such, would not want to suffer such an effect.

Consequently, what may be termed humiliating is left to the agent's judgement. I reply to this objection by arguing that the individual - object - decides, upon assessment of the various norms and obligations set by the community, to know which one is humiliating, that is, capable of hindering the flourishing of their self-respect. Humiliation should be assessed by the recipient of the humiliating actions, not the agent. It is not the community or its values that should define what its members should consider as humiliation. The possibility of society setting the standard for what could be termed humiliating is high in a social system where the community defines who qualifies as an ideal individual. If an agent's standard for a form of respected sexuality does not include homosexuality, they may not count disregarding it as an act of humiliation. A homosexual who receives such action has sound reason to consider the action or expression towards her person as humiliation. Margalit would, however, be correct in that humiliation connotes what an individual expresses towards others but are unwilling to be directed at them if there are exhaustive and universal examples of humiliating-capable actions known to the agent and the object, that include, for instance, humiliating others' sexuality. That is, once individual sexuality is abused, irrespective of the form of sexuality, humiliation is experienced. The agent of humiliation in the above illustration would be humiliated if similar humiliation is directed towards his or her sexuality, say heterogeneity. Nonetheless, it is easy to see that in communally stratified societies, non-convention identities are more susceptible to humiliation for not sharing identities conforming to dominant cultural norms. The point I seek to make here is that what counts as the framework for humiliating actions could not have been left to the agents of humiliation but to the object.

The second objection to my thesis could be about the nature of personhood. Since the communitarian view of personhood is a moral theory of persons, a theory that holds a framework for producing moral beings, mainly through its ethics of social relations, it contributes to

developing a moral/good society. Therefore, it could not have qualified for a theory of humiliation. However, it is essential to note that having reasons to see oneself as the 'other' and be seen by others as an 'other' are examples of humiliation as harm. Being treated as an 'other' is an unavoidable outcome of the Afro-communitarian idea of personhood. While moral and cultural principles are necessary for social development, they must be both for the reception and the flourishing of all. To be a person is to translate the community's moral values as principles that guide the self. As such, a person is a moral or cultural conformist. The moral norms of personhood in Afro-communitarian thought do not hold a principle of dignity that affirms the claims of a meaningful existence for non-conforming individuals. The treatment of non-conforming individuals by the community is the beginning of the consciousness of 'self' and 'other'. Social alienation is imminent at the moment social interaction is truncated because of a supposed disregard for the community's principles of personhood by some individuals. This social alienation or non-belongingness experienced by the affected individuals could influence their self-respect, especially in a society that primes social interactions.

In addition to the view that personhood contributes to developing a moral/good society, it offers a sense of a meaningful life (Molefe, 2020). The thought of a meaningful life draws attention to the significance of the communitarian notion of personhood as promoting self-respect. Molefe (2020) notes that the goal of pursuing moral excellence and fulfilling social expectations that are requisite for personhood is to benefit the lives of individuals and not only the community. Having a meaningful life is linked to the experience of having a dignified human existence, which is what being a person in African thought entails. We may infer from Molefe's analysis a link between the presence of a dignified existence to an unhindered respect for the self. However, the danger with this notion of dignity is already captured in the previous paragraph. In addition, in the advent that some individuals fail in the pursuant of personhood, they are taken to have failed the course of a meaningful life. The failure to pursue personhood may not be associated with a lack of capacity for moral excellence but a prioritisation of self-promotion and actualisation. The thought that certain 'X' is not living a meaningful life will not only be shared by members of the community but also shared by the individual 'X' regarded as a non-person due to the factors of personhood that affect his relationship with others. Therefore, one may conclude that models of meaningful existence built around the notions of the communitarian view of personhood promote the danger associated with other-regarding.

One way to avoid the polarisation of individuals as persons and non-persons is to see personhood mainly as what is beneficial to the individual being considered a person. It is not out of place if we agree that an individual can self-affirm his personhood. Suppose an individual sees himself as a person. In that case, he must acknowledge a certain moral rectitude exhibited to profiting their life goals and self-development and not only an acquisition of some communal values responsible for servicing the continued tradition of a community. This is the kind of personhood that empowers self-respect. When an individual has developed and followed up on his idea of the good life, he can begin to think about how to contribute to the community's common good.

The significance of such a framework of personhood is that personhood will go beyond the objective structure that centres on universal principles to the subjective. By so doing, make personhood private. Making the idea of personhood private in nature will suggest a multiplicity of the conception of the term. This multiplicity will disallow the idea of personhood or a notion of it to qualify as an ideal principle of social and political ordering. There would no longer exist a single framework of defining individuals recognised by the system of community that makes only heterosexuals qualifies as persons and homosexual not. Also, the communitarian standards that hitherto benefit only heterosexual identity will no longer harm the self-respect of homosexuals. As such, social relations would cease to be guided by the hitherto communitarian idea of personhood. It will be guided by principles that affirm respect for all. This is why a non-humiliating community would have different conceptions of personhood and may not be guided by any.

While a non-humiliating community is essential and desirable, there are different ways to achieve it. One among the many models is a medium of dialogue for the purpose of committing to a review of culture as a model of explanation in the community. As culture becomes vital to explain human and social categories, cultural norms and impetus must be subjected to the continuous scrutiny of thinkers in order to have what I refer to as permissible culture. I will discuss this model in the next sections.

5.2. Cultural Permissibility: Towards a non-humiliating Idea of Community

Having established that individuals' self-respect may be threatened by community - others' disrespect, it is imperative to consider the requirements to achieve a non-humiliating community that promotes the self-respect of all its members. Because our attention is on the system of cultural community, I offer a model on which the communitarian view of community can be repaired to

become non-humiliating and inclusive. This is a process of cultural review, which requires looking through the lenses of 'cultural permissibility'. In this section, I put forward a brief but concise analysis of cultural permissibility. Specifically, cultural permissibility aims to show how we can arrive at permissible norms of personhood and, if possible, establish whether the ideas of personhood as identity should be regarded as impermissible norms of culture, hence, be excused to maximise Afro-communitarianism in modern African societies.

I define culture as what is characterised by knowledge, values, beliefs, and customs that define members of the society or group and inform their social relations. I use permissibility to name the sorts of things that are allowed. Permissibility is used with respect to what a system allows as a form of social order. Put succinctly; cultural permissibility offers the condition on what should be allowed in the community. It means what cultural elements, practices, values and norms should be acceptable or express themselves as societies evolve.

Forms of permissible cultural norms must be measured on what is morally good for individuals in the community and morally worthy for promoting the human self. It is assumed here that moral reasoning and justifications are an essential index for assessing culture, especially thinking about the continuing practice of traditional norms and values. Social practices such as female genital excision, to cite an example, would be put to the test on moral reasoning to determine its qualification for desirability and acceptance as societal norms.

Human acceptance of cultural values, especially values and norms finetuned through the principle of cultural permissibility, is those that cultural groups have the right to demand of their members. Key on the thought of norms and ideas to be interrogated to produce permissible norms are those that mainly enhance the self-respect of community members. This research believes that a good (non-humiliating) society is measured by its institutions' capacity to protect its members' self-respect.

Cultural permissibility strives on dialogue; it is not authoritarian and self-imposing but an honest conversation among stakeholders arising from immediate existential conditions. Stakeholders within a cultural group would seek to arrive at permissible norms, especially regarding those that define persons, that aid human, social, and political development. The stakeholders are individuals who can provide convincing reflections on the dictates and functions of culture, such as leaders of thought in the community and intellectuals. The significance of such engagement for modern Africa would be to achieve an inclusive idea of community, thereby fighting or resisting the

conditions, such as norms, traditions, conceptions of persons and identities that constitute reason for its members to consider themselves humiliated.

The use of conversation/dialogue as a method in the doctrine of cultural permissibility already suggests that such cultural dialogue shares similarities with other modes of engaging ideas and arriving at a conclusion, such as in consensus (Wiredu, 1997) or Eze' (2008) alternative, named realist perspectivism, which he argues addresses the challenge of unanimity and conformity created by consensus. My idea contributes to such methodology in African philosophy. However, my choice of the term cultural permissibility is the specific focus I place on arriving at not just any ideas or agreement but on permissible norms of culture regarding the conception of persons and identity. The choice of cultural norms and dialogue is borne out of the importance placed on culture in African societies and its influence on African social life and political development.

In traditional communal African societies, consensus as a method of social agreement is easier to manage because of the population and because the reality of difference is not apparent and only sometimes constitutes points of contestation. In modern multicultural African societies, the possibility of getting a huge population or fully represented representatives to continually deliberate on socio-cultural ideas and ways of living is problematic, hence the need to continue promoting dialogue on a theoretical level.

In a condition where the norms and institutions of the community constitute grounds for humiliating certain individuals, the reality of culture versus the individual can only be felt by the individuals with their daily struggle with community norms and cultural values without the possibility of collective-other deliberation in dealing with those struggles. This lonely individual's emotional face-off with the community facilitates the need for reviewing or interrogating the community through a different approach. As a way of helping individuals' lonely challenges, the method of achieving permissible norms must be through the legislation that comes through intellectual writings and intellectual agreements. This dialogue would take place on a theoretical ground through intellectuals writing to themselves and engaging in continuous conversations on the norms of culture, its transformation and development. On the practical level, it manifests in how people demonstrate concerns about the demands of culture and its standards and how they should think about cultural demands. Most conversations are usually divided between those who want to stick to the norms of culture as they have been handed down and those who believe the

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new culture should be an individual culture that empowers an individual to live as it suits their self-actualisation.

The question is whether the relationship between cultural community and personhood, otherwise analysed as the communitarian idea of persons, should continue to form part of how we think about Afro-communitarianism in modern African thought. A theoretical conversation must begin on such a topic, especially given the numerous challenges that encumbered the communitarian ideas of personhood, especially that of humiliation. We need to assess the place of personhood as an aspect of Afro-communitarianism through the doctrines of permissible norms. Before that, we need to inquire if all the norms of personhood informed by the ideas of cultural community should still have effects on the definition of the communitarian notions of persons. These two worries require clear attention, which I will attempt one after the other.

Many characteristics, norms and values inform the condition of personhood. They cover many moral principles, some of which guide daily human activities and interactions. One of them is the act of benevolence. Whether the act of benevolence is interpreted by a community – communitarian or non-communitarian, to a large extent, leaves the acts of benevolence as what describes a genuine way of life that an individual can consider sharing with others. This form of sharing entails reciprocating benevolence and extending it to others. We make others better by our convenient acts of benevolence and expect the beneficiary to pass them on. The acts of sharing benevolence demonstrate the nature of our selfhood. While we consider what is permissible as a norm and value to personhood, benevolent acts can receive general acceptance in determining an ideal way of life, which African moral theorists interpret as personhood or the communitarian notion of personhood.

The above analysis leaves the imprint that certain norms, values, and cultural practices may be regarded permissible based on their degree of reception by the people and their capacity to be passed on. For an act to fail the test of 'being shared with others,' it must have the capacity to create unhealthy relationships, such as divisions among people. To base social order and benefits on ideals that may not be widely accepted will deny some individuals access to social utilities and privileges. It will also make obvious the difference between those whose mode of living is compatible with the ideal and those that do not, creating an imbalanced social relationship.

The understanding that polarisation or division or any outcome of a similar sort may inform how benefits and privileges are allocated to individuals in a society is enough moral reason to regard a

norm as impermissible in a modern heterogenous community defined by difference. This is why I base my thought of permissibility and impermissibility of cultural norms and governing norms in the community on moral reasoning and wide acceptance.

It would have been noticed from the preceding permissible norms of personhood that to be a person necessarily requires an evaluation of oneself by others. The place of degree of public reception and acknowledgement here creates a hurdle for the thought of personhood. Personhood always involves others' recognition of us. At least, a general conception of it agrees with this and my hypothesis of personhood above. The way I understand this is that a person needs to act in a way that exhibits personhood in attitudes and behaviour, whether at a given time or over a period, for others to refer to such an individual as a person or a complete person, depending on the degree. Put differently, my acknowledgement of the person of others depends simply on a display of their personhood and not mere sighting a human being in a coordinated motion. It means I cannot describe an individual I encounter in a few minutes of conversation as a person if he is yet to display either one or two of the permissible norms of personhood. As such, I will be unable to accord the necessary privileges and treatment due to a person without such acknowledgement of the individual's personhood. I think this is problematic. An example of such an encounter could be me facilitating a one-hour online workshop, where the only time I get to hear from the participants is when they ask me questions or respond to mine. The online session can go on without a show of a kind of norm that will make me tell whether those participants are either persons or not. I think a display or otherwise of personhood-informed acts of an individual or an inability to recognise a person in an individual does not invalidate whether such an individual is a person. Dealing with this worry, among other things, may involve a resolve to a personal, internally convinced notion of personhood by individuals, which I refer to in the previous section. What matters should be whether an individual sees himself as a person. This will also lead to thinking that communitarian personhood and whatever it means should not constitute our mode of interaction with others. It should not constitute the ideal on which a community system is based.

A notion of personhood not grounded on a universal principle, one that does not make a notion of personhood become the mode of social ordering and social interaction, will enhance the relationship between the community and the individual. It will address the numerous challenges associated with the individual in Afro-communitarian thought. Part of what informs the conclusion is that norms of personhood, including those I refer to as permissible norms through a discursive

formation, such as the doctrine of cultural permissibility, tend to be totalitarian through the demand for conformity, thereby undermining people's self-respect. Therefore, it is imperative to take the thought of personhood from the discourse of Afro-communitarianism to reannex the benefits of Afro-communitarianism as a mode of socio-political ordering in modern African societies. This will enable Afro-communitarianism as a thought and pattern of social arrangement to serve a larger population of individuals and their differences.

Part of the motivation for separating personhood and Afro-communitarianism is the challenges of identity associated with the communitarian notions of personhood in African thought. Norms of identity associated with the discourse of personhood may be regarded as impermissible norms or aspects of African culture because of their lack of general acceptability as guiding norms and because of the distinction of persons/non-persons it inherently generates.

Afro-communitarian philosophy can disassociate from questions of identity and sexuality and still retain its duty political morality that is characterised by the ideals of communalism. It is possible to withdraw the normative criteria of personhood and retain the philosophy of mutual kinship relations that demonstrate or signpost communal realities. However, the suspicion of what being communal demands or requires from individuals may push the solution back to the initial problem, which we tend to resolve by escaping communitarian personhood. However, it could be argued that rational ground may be provided on how the community's demand on the individual may not generate suspicion of identity.

The relationship between the individual and community can be assisted by having a normative idea of persons different from duty norms that seek responsibilities to the collective good. The argument I seek to make here is that how community informs the individual personhood has its criteria through learning the values and norms of the community. Duty-based political thought demands a separate scheme that emphasises what the individual ought to relate with the community or collective others. We can pursue a duty-based African thought that revolves around what each owes to promoting the shared good or common good. It is possible to pursue the idea of a communal self that is separated from the community's definition of persons, which raises questions of identity, autonomy and authenticity. The choices to promote the good of others can be justified based on sociality and relationality grounded on the ethics of the golden rule; it is not the same as the choice to pattern one selfhood on the cultural dictates and demands of the community.

The withdrawal of personhood from the Afro-communitarian discourse does not mean that values of personhood are not important or that the literature on it should be rendered useless. What is argued for here is that identity crisis across gender, sexuality, ableism, and other forms of social categories implicated in the normative conception of person espoused in the Afro-communitarian discourse may not be useful for grounding African socio-political development. The chapter argues that pursuing duties and obligations to promote the common, collective, shared good, and social harmony and community are intrinsic goods of Afro-communitarianism that could be promoted. The community is the prime common good of its members. Its normativity, I believe, is different from the normativity of personhood, which I believe does not threaten the place of the individual, his self-respect and his rights.

An objection can be raised that my claim misinterprets the function of the morality of duties in African thought, that it is in fulfilling duties that personhood comes to be affirmed. One does not need to be conscious of being a person: the commitment to duty naturally confers that status. I do not object to duties because of the benefits it offers to the well-being of the collective, which transcends the criteria of personhood. Also, I do not argue that duty should not be the substructure of the communitarian idea of personhood. My concern is about moral judgement. Individual reactions to duties ought not to have a moral valuation that ends in a status that determines how an individual would be treated in society. We can develop and promote an Afro-communitarianism that is less concerned with identity formation (the main outlook of the notion of personhood) but emphasises the development of the ideal of social responsibility. Here, I take advancing the course of duty as the unique contribution of the community discourse in modern African thought. It is what holds community as a vital concept in Afro-communitarianism. However, the notion of duty needs critical engagement: a reinterpretation of duties is needed to present an Afro-communitarian community that accommodates individual rights and is difference sensitive. This is not out of the scope of what the dialogue of cultural permissibility can resolve. In following this pattern, a non-humiliating community can still be communitarian, retaining the elements of duty to others.

It is essential to state that the process of achieving permissible cultures is not conceived as an exercise in undermining the existence and growth of any tradition and culture. Cultural permissibility does not possess the threat of cultural elimination but cultural development and transformation through a pragmatic approach to what is useful and helps to make better sense of human existence and needs. Cultural permissibility will transform African communitarian cultures

to become amenable to instances of difference, such as homosexuality. While it is imperative to retain certain norms of culture, such norms must avoid the exclusive nature of the traditional notion of community in African thought. A non-humiliating society must demand cultural groups to respect identities outside of traditional norms, which have taken the label of marginalisation due to hitherto conceptions of them by cultural norms.

Cultural permissibility aims at achieving an inclusive community that allows the norms it operates to accommodate forms of human expression that are initially not part of what exists in the community. Suppose the conception of persons in traditional African thought is limited because of the non-existence of certain forms of identities among the people. In that case, it is arguably not to recognise such identities in the community's normative scheme. However, the claim of the non-existence of those identities might be due to their lack of awareness. Nonetheless, as culture advances and society changes, it is expedient to revisit these narrowed normative conceptions of persons and trigger their dynamics to explain the condition that guarantees the self-worth of the growing number of individuals with such identities. Culture has the capacity for such dynamism. The dynamic nature of culture may account for why Matolino (2018a) notes that classical communitarianism supports traditional communities because they facilitate the interpretation of the realities of traditional societies. As a result, modern interpretation and conception of the community should rest on facts and realities of modern experience. In this sense, cultural permissibility would enable community members to understand how they want their culture to interpret the notion of personhood in response to social change. The standard to achieving, as mentioned earlier, ought to rest on current social and existential needs.[26]

Conclusion

I have shown in this work that the community ought not to regard any conceptions of personhood as an ideal. I do this by identifying the possibilities of having multiple frameworks of personhood,

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[26] Matolino's idea of limited communitarianism has a great deal of influence in the development of the ideas in this work, especially with shifting the idea of personhood to the individual by withdrawing same from the community. Limited communitarianism considers the community – traditional African notions of community - to be anachronistic and incompatible with the modern conditions of human existence in the contemporary world. Unlike Matolino, this thesis takes seriously the role of the community system in the formation of the plural conceptions of personhood grounded on individuals' notions of self-respect. This affirms the need to re-evaluate the conditions and the systems of community to be non-humiliating in order to allow for the flourishing of the individual's self-respect and their personhood, whatever they are.

including those that are self-affirmed by the individual. This will strengthen the individual's self-respect and resolve further issues in Afro-communitarianism that bothers agency. In pursuing this argument, I showed that self-respect transcends individuals' internal energy; it requires some social conditions. I posited that the communitarian view of personhood and its emphasis on community structure taken as a means of social ordering would humiliate the self-respect of the category of non-persons. I attempted to fix this through a process of cultural review, which I call the principle of cultural permissibility. This theoretical approach to a non-humiliating community is to see how cultural norms can be refined in dialogue to serve a more significant percentage of society. While the thesis's intervention helps to think about the state of affairs of those regarded as non-persons, it is my thinking that identifying the problem of humiliation and suggesting ways to fix it would aid the self-respect of individuals hitherto conceived as the marginalized. It will, consequently, amend the fractured social relations that accompany the communitarian notion of personhood. While my recommended approach to reconstructing the community may be similar to other attempts at making the Afro-communitarian idea of community receptive, my diagnosis of the problem of the community is different.

CONCLUSION

This thesis examined the theoretical and practical attempts to ground postcolonial African politics in ideas of Afro-communitarianism. It argued that for that project to succeed, a new and better concept of community is required. The thesis is mainly preoccupied with the challenges associated with the reception of Afro-communitarianism as the underlying philosophy for modern African political theory. It argues that the major challenge Afro-communitarianism has in modern African societies hinges on how the individual is conceptualized, especially regarding the relationship of the individual with the community. This has led to a tension between individual and community, consequent upon which the tension between rights and duty in African political philosophy is hinged. The focus on resolving this tension has been to theorize the notion of the self, the idea of personhood, constituting a neglect of the problematic aspect of the relationship – community. The thesis submits that rethinking Afro-communitarianism as a political philosophy requires a focus on community and its reconstruction.

In the first chapter, I examined the defence of duty ahead of individual rights as a reaction to the tension in Afro-communitarianism. In the duty-based reactions to the tension, communal obligation is expressed in the personhood debate to demonstrate ideal individuals' expectations in a political society. This group of conservative thinkers propose that individuals in society owe obligations to their community more than the community owes them their rights. Individual personhood is owed to the commitment an individual has to duty rather than the demand for rights. As presented by Mbiti and other conservative, duty-based political theorists, personhood in traditional African culture informs the totality of African systems of thought and practices – religion, law, politics, and family.

At the beginning of the chapter, I examined Mbiti's collectivist moral and political philosophy and showed how we could take from it a theory of community beyond a troubled theory of persons. Following Mbiti, I discussed the works of Ifeanyi Menkiti extensively. The chapter notes that in the conservatives' response to the Afro-communitarian tension an unending rope of obligations in the community is spotted in the web of relations from the living to the living dead referred to as ancestors. This is apparent in both Mbiti and Menkiti's analysis of the ontological progressions of

individuals from pre-personalised being to depersonalised being. As a result, the duty-based Afro-communitarian theory has a merit of promoting a sense of loyalty to the society.

However, the theory's insistence on the primacy of community and its norms on the constitution of an individual as persons holds a problem on identity formation in the polity. The question of who dictates the choices of individual identity emerged in the duty-based approach to the relation between the individual and the community. As a result, the conflict between individual rights and individual duty to the community arose. The supposed trivialising of rights by Menkiti and other duty-based political theorists has been the basis of criticism of his notion of personhood and rejection of his duty ethics.

In the second chapter, I discussed the intervention of the rights-compatibilists with the tension in the Afro-communitarian thought. This group of thinkers attempt to answer the question: do rights exist in Afro-communitarian thought? If they exist, do they belong to the individual or the community? Locating rights and their status is the intention of rights-based Afro-communitarians. They insist that rights exist and are compatible with the exact status of duties. Prominent in this group is Kwame Gyekye. Gyekye (1997), focusing on the nature of the self, individual, argues that certain characteristics and features of the individual and in relation to others show the place of rights and its exercise in African culture. As a result, a person is one that combines these metaphysical features with the communal normative features. Through his moderate Afro-communitarian theory of persons, Gyekye contentiously demonstrates the derivation of individual rights in Afro-communitarianism in the individual. He is, however, convincingly unable to defend its expression, and the equality of rights and duties beyond a faint appeal to ascribe equal worth to them. While Gyekye fails the compatibilism scheme, the entire project can be taken for a review of African thought on the supremacy of the community and duties. Gyekye's moderate communitarianism can be regarded as a 'mean' between tradition and modernity, social and autonomous aspects of individual, community and individual.

In this chapter, I showed the commitment of other rights-compatibilists such as Chimakonam and Nweke (2018) and Masitera (2018) to identify certain forms of rights in Afro-communitarian political thoughts. These include economic rights, participatory and entitlements rights. I showed how a close look at the eldership concept in African socio-political thought suggests seniority rights. However, these rights can be likened to group rights, hence selective and not general. In

addition, I examined the attempts to ground an account of human rights in African thought in the ideas of Afro-communitarianism. Here, human rights are grounded in a notion of dignity derived from individuals' capacity for community and friendship; consequently, human rights violation is the lack of respect for this capacity (Metz, 2011). If human rights violations are disregarded to people's capacity for friendship in the society, then ability for friendship may be taken as the ground for human rights in African thought, a condition every individual can and must fulfil, leading to another form of obligation.

What we can take from the various accounts of the compatibilists is that a person, understood as a rights carrier, is one whose rights is derived from the community. He either takes the friendship/communing with others as the core or considers the common good and interest of the collective as prime. This foundation of rights poses the question of the nature and scope of rights in Afro-communitarian political thought.

While the Afro-communitarian tension appears unresolvable, I showed how some theorists are intolerant of why modern African political philosophy would be disturbed with a problematic idea of traditional African political thought. Scholars in this category are intolerant of the need for Afro-communitarianism in modern African social and political thinking. They argue that Afro-communitarianism has lost its relevance and should be discarded. This is the focus of the third chapter. In this chapter, I examined the works of the modernist Afro-communitarian rejectionists, who largely explore scepticism as an epistemic strategy to achieve their conclusion. Key in the debate is Bernard Matolino.

Matolino argues through his idea of limited communitarianism that understanding what constitutes a person whose rights as an individual would not be secondary but primary, involves reducing the influence of the community in African social and political experience and realities. This, he argues, entails prioritizing the metaphysical features of the self ahead of the normative conception. He adds that the communitarian scheme should be relegated to the ordering of social relations. Part of Matolino's worries with Afro-communitarianism is the essentialising space it occupies in African philosophy. He argues that the use of the idea by scholars is overstretching its importance. It is important to note that despite Matolino's rejection of Afro-communitarianism and its outlooks, such as the idea of Ubuntu, his conclusion suggests the 'kind' of Afro-communitarianism that

should be theorised. I also examined Táiwò's claim that modern African societies are becoming more in tune with the ideas of individualism, testament to the death of communalism.

While Afro-communitarian rejectionism is more sympathetic to the need of modern African philosophy, it failed to realise that understanding history and culture may help in making sense of current problems. In this chapter, I examined the response to the idea, especially while traditional ideas may be compatible with or in resolving modern realities.

Following this, I defended what ought to be done if Afro-communitarianism must serve as the foundation of African political theory and practices. This is argued as the conscientious shift to the nature of community as a political philosophy in African thought. This is the main argument of the dissertation, largely discussed in chapters four and five.

In chapter four, I acknowledge that the various ideas of personhood in African philosophy give an insight into the different forms of community in the literature. I identify the two forms of community that have dominated discourses in Afro-communitarian literature. The first, I refer to as cultural community and the second as community as self-interested individuals. While I think the second form of community does not describe the tensioned form of community in Afro-communitarian, the first, which represents the ideal nature of community, ought to be reworked as a first step towards reconciling the individual and community. I established the connection between the communitarian view of personhood and the cultural community. I pointed that the problems associated with the idea of personhood in modern African philosophy such as rights, autonomy, and freedom are implications of the cultural community, hence, the need to focus attention on this notion of community before the idea of personhood it produced.

In the fifth chapter, I identified an emerging problem humiliation in Afro-communitarianism associated with its idea of community – cultural community, and the idea of personhood that came from it. Here, I demonstrated how the communitarian conceptions of personhood could not be ridden of the problem of humiliation of the self-respect of marginalised identities. I argued that to resolves the hitherto tension in Afro-communitarianism and the emerging one is to reform its notion of community to become non-humiliating. In doing this, I engage the cultural community in conversation and evaluate some of its claims. The chapter suggests a model of working out a non-humiliating cultural community through what I call the idea of cultural permissibility. What the dissertation has been able to provide in this direction is a sketch that may be developed later.

From the foregoing, it is clear that a large percentage of the analysis in this dissertation is designed around the strands of the personhood responses to the tension between the individual and community in Afro-communitarian political thought. This is done to give a detailed account of the development of the debate. It shows how Afro-communitarianism has manifested in different aspects as a political philosophy, revolving around the political concepts of duty, rights and political scepticism. The nature of these political ideas is discussed around the idea of personhood; that is, understanding the normative and metaphysical nature of the self. Further significant of the detailed attention on personhood in the dissertation is to give a sense of how we should introduce, or rather, think about the idea of community as a political concept in African political philosophy.

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