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The Concept of the Human Person in Igbo Philosophy: Individuality, Community and Transcendence in the Thought of Innocent I. Asouzu

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ABSTRACT

The concept of the human person occupies a central position in philosophical anthropology because it raises fundamental questions concerning identity, individuality, relationality, community, moral responsibility, and the meaning of human existence. In Igbo philosophical thought, the person is commonly understood not as an isolated, self-sufficient entity but as one whose existence is embedded in a network of relationships involving the individual, family, community, the spiritual order, and the wider cosmos. This paper examines the concept of the human person in Igbo philosophy through the complementary ontology of Innocent I. Asouzu, particularly his philosophy of Ibuanyidanda and the method of complementary reflection. Rather than presenting Ibuanyidanda as Asouzu's original, complete theory of philosophical anthropology, the paper develops an anthropological application of his complementary ontology to the question of personhood. It argues that Asouzu's emphasis on the mutual dependence and non-exclusivity of realities provides resources for reconceptualizing the human person as an existence constituted through complementarity, while preserving personal identity and agency. This study therefore uses the expression "being-in-complementarity" as an interpretive formulation for articulating the anthropological implications of Asouzu's complementary ontology, rather than assuming it without qualification as a technical equivalent of Heidegger's being-in-the-world or *Mitsein*. The paper further examines whether the transcendence associated with Asouzu's ontology should be identified straightforwardly with indigenous Igbo conceptions of Chukwu, *chi*, ancestors, and other spiritual realities, or understood as a philosophical reconstruction shaped partly by his Christian and Western philosophical formation. The paper thus proposes Ibuanyidanda as a promising framework for reconstructing Igbo philosophical anthropology while acknowledging the interpretive and philosophical work involved in extending Asouzu's ontology to personhood.

1. Introduction

The question of the human person constitutes one of the enduring problems of philosophical anthropology. It concerns not merely what a human being is, but also what it means to exist as a person, how individual identity is constituted, and how human beings relate to one another and to the wider reality in which they participate. Contemporary African philosophy has increasingly challenged interpretations of personhood that portray the individual as an isolated and self-sufficient subject. Instead, a significant strand of African philosophical reflection understands human existence in relational and communal terms, emphasizing social participation, moral responsibility, reciprocity, and the interconnectedness of individual and community. Cordeiro-Rodrigues (2023), for instance, characterizes Afro-communitarian metaphysics as fundamentally relational, arguing that personhood is understood in relation to other beings rather than as a wholly intrinsic property of the individual. Similarly, Balogun (2023) argues

that the African concept of personhood provides an important basis for understanding communal life and its educational implications, thereby highlighting the connection between personhood, communalism, and social formation. The broader debate, however, does not produce a single or uncontested African account of personhood. Menkiti's influential formulation places considerable emphasis on the community and the progressive realization of personhood through participation in communal life, whereas Gyekye challenges stronger communitarian interpretations by affirming the intrinsic moral status and autonomy of the individual. Contemporary scholarship continues to examine this tension between communal embeddedness and individual agency, with studies distinguishing radical, moderate, and more limited forms of communitarianism (Adeate, 2023). Thus, African philosophical approaches to personhood can neither be reduced to an undifferentiated communalism nor identified simply with Western individualism. Rather, they disclose an ongoing philosophical debate concerning how individuality, relationality, moral responsibility, and communal belonging should be understood together. It is within this contested intellectual context that the present study examines the human person through Asouzu's complementary ontology.

Within this broader African philosophical context, the Igbo understanding of the human person presents a particularly important field of inquiry. Igbo thought does not ordinarily conceive the human being merely as an autonomous biological individual separated from the social and spiritual orders. Rather, human existence is situated within a network of relationships involving the individual, family, kindred, village community, ancestors, spiritual agencies, and the transcendent source of existence. Ngangah (2019), for example, argues that personhood and community in African thought are interconnected expressions of being, while Molefe (2019) demonstrates that African philosophical discussions of personhood cannot be adequately understood without examining the relationship between individual moral agency and communal life. The Igbo case, however, requires an additional conceptual dimension that cannot be supplied by the language of community alone: the notion of *chi*. Any philosophical anthropology that seeks to reconstruct the Igbo understanding of the person must therefore take the relationship between the individual, *chi*, community, and the transcendent order. The concept of *chi* is particularly important because it provides an indigenous conceptual vocabulary for explaining individuality, destiny, agency, and the person's relationship to the spiritual order. Chinua Achebe describes *chi* as a concept central to Igbo psychology and emphasizes its complexity, since it has been variously rendered as personal spirit, personal god, guardian spirit, soul, or spirit-double. Achebe's analysis further suggests that *chi* cannot simply be reduced to a Western notion of an individual soul. *Chi* is intimately associated with the particularity of the individual and the course of that individual's earthly existence. This is reflected in the well-known Igbo expressions concerning the relationship between human agency and *chi*. The proverb *onye kwe, chi ya ekwe*, commonly rendered as "when a person agrees, his or her *chi* agrees", suggests that human achievement cannot be explained exclusively by either individual effort or supernatural determination. Similarly, the saying *otu nne na-amu, ma otu chi adighi eke* ("one mother may bear many children, but one *chi* does not make them") underscores the uniqueness of persons even where they share a common biological origin. These expressions are philosophically significant because they locate personal identity within a relationship between individual agency and a spiritual principle of individuality.

The significance of *chi* becomes clearer when its relationship with Chukwu is considered. Achebe's discussion associates *chi* with Chukwu while also acknowledging that the precise relationship between the two remains difficult to determine within Igbo cosmology. He explores possibilities ranging from *chi* as a manifestation associated with Chukwu to a plurality of personal spiritual agencies related to the supreme divine reality. This ambiguity is important for the present study. It cautions against treating *chi* as simply equivalent to a Christian "guardian angel," "soul," or predetermined destiny. Such translations can illuminate certain aspects of the concept but may also impose foreign conceptual categories upon an indigenous notion whose meaning emerges from a wider network of language, proverbs, ritual, cosmology, and social practice. Achebe himself treats *chi* as a complex and elusive concept rather than as a neatly systematized metaphysical entity.

The idea of *chi* therefore introduces an important corrective to an exclusively communal interpretation of Igbo personhood. If the individual possesses a distinctive *chi*, then individuality cannot simply be regarded as a secondary product of communal recognition. The proverb that one mother may give birth to several children, each with a different *chi*, expresses precisely this irreducibility of personal identity. At the same time, *chi* does not establish an isolated individualism. Its significance is relational because the person's destiny, achievements, failures, obligations, and spiritual orientation are understood within a larger cosmological and communal framework. The Igbo conception consequently contains a productive tension: the person is distinct, but not detached; individually constituted, but not self-sufficient; spiritually particular,

but embedded within a wider order of existence. This tension makes *chi* particularly relevant to the present examination of Asouzu's philosophy.

Asouzu's philosophy of Ibuanyidanda offers a possible philosophical reconstruction of this relational structure. His complementary ontology rejects the tendency to understand reality through isolated or mutually exclusive entities and instead emphasizes the manner in which realities participate in complementary relationships. In his account, reality is not adequately understood through rigid dichotomization because entities and phenomena can function as "missing links" within a wider relational whole. This framework can illuminate an important dimension of *chi*: the individuality of the human person does not necessarily entail ontological isolation. The person may retain a distinctive identity while participating in relationships with other persons, the community, the spiritual order, and the transcendent source of existence. In this sense, Ibuanyidanda provides a philosophical language through which the tension between individuality and relationality can be interpreted without immediately sacrificing either side.

Against this background, this study examines the concept of the human person in Igbo philosophy through Innocent Asouzu's thought, focusing particularly on the three interconnected dimensions of individuality, community, and transcendence. It argues that Asouzu's complementary philosophy offers a valuable conceptual instrument for interpreting Igbo personhood without reducing it to either Western-style individualism or an undifferentiated form of communalism. From this perspective, the human person is a unique being whose existence is fulfilled through complementary relationships with other persons, the community, and transcendent reality. Such an interpretation presents personhood as fundamentally relational without denying individuality and as fundamentally communal without eliminating personal dignity and agency.

2. Conceptual Clarification

The Concept of the Human Person

The concept of the human person is a foundational concern of philosophical anthropology. It involves an inquiry into the nature, identity, dignity, freedom, rationality, relationality, and ultimate orientation of the human being. The expression human person goes beyond biological existence because it refers to the human being as a subject capable of self-awareness, rational reflection, moral responsibility, interpersonal relationships, and purposeful action. In this sense, personhood involves not only the question of what the human being is but also how the human being exists in relation to others and to reality as a whole.

The human person can consequently be approached from at least three interconnected dimensions: individuality, relationality, and transcendence. Individuality recognizes each human being's uniqueness and irreducibility. Every person possesses a distinctive identity, consciousness, agency, and capacity for moral decision-making. Relationality emphasizes that this individuality does not develop in isolation but through relationships with other persons and institutions. Transcendence, meanwhile, points to the person's orientation beyond immediate material and social existence toward ultimate meaning, value, and the transcendent dimensions of reality.

Igbo Conception of the Human Person

The Igbo conception of the human person is fundamentally relational. The person exists within an interconnected network involving family, kindred, community, nature, ancestors, and the spiritual order. Thus, the meaning of human existence cannot be adequately captured by considering the individual independently of the relationships that sustain and give meaning to existence. The Igbo idea of the person can be approached through the concept of *mmadu*, which refers to the human being or person. However, the significance of *mmadu* extends beyond biological existence. The person is understood as an active participant in the moral, social, cultural, and spiritual life of the community. Consequently, identity is partly established through one's relationships, responsibilities, participation, and contribution to communal life.

Individuality, Community and Transcendence

The three dimensions of individuality, community, and transcendence should not be treated as mutually exclusive in the reconstruction of Igbo personhood. Individuality concerns the person's distinct identity and agency; community refers to the relationships within which the person develops and exercises that identity; while transcendence concerns the spiritual and metaphysical horizon of human existence. The indigenous concept of *chi* provides an important link among these dimensions. It expresses the individuality and destiny of the person while situating human existence within a wider spiritual order. Igbo sayings such as *onye kwe*,

chi ya ekwe also suggest an interaction between human agency and spiritual determination. Thus, the individual is neither completely autonomous nor simply dissolved into communal and spiritual realities.

Community remains equally important because the person develops within relationships involving family, kindred, and the wider community. However, communal belonging does not exhaust personal identity. The distinctiveness associated with *chi* indicates that the individual retains a degree of uniqueness and agency within communal existence. Consequently, Igbo philosophical anthropology can be understood as holding individuality and relationality together, rather than reducing personhood to either isolated autonomy or communal conformity.

Asouzu's complementary ontology provides a useful philosophical framework for interpreting this relationship. His principle that every reality functions as a "missing link" emphasizes the interconnectedness of apparently distinct realities (Asouzu, 2007). Applied to personhood, this suggests that individuality and community can be understood as complementary dimensions rather than mutually exclusive alternatives. It is important, however, to clarify that applying Ibuanyidanda specifically to philosophical anthropology and personhood is an interpretive extension undertaken by this study, rather than a claim that Asouzu himself developed a complete anthropological theory under the expression "being-in-complementarity."

The same caution applies to transcendence. Asouzu's conception of transcendence should not simply be equated with indigenous Igbo notions of Chukwu, *chi*, ancestors, and other spiritual realities. His complementary ontology is a philosophical reconstruction shaped by his Christian and Western philosophical formation, although it can enter into meaningful dialogue with Igbo cosmology. The present study therefore understands the human person as individuality-in-community and openness-to-transcendence, while recognizing that these dimensions may also involve genuine tensions and conflicts. Ibuanyidanda is consequently treated not as an unquestioned solution, but as a philosophical resource whose ability to account for the complex relationship among individuality, community, *chi*, and transcendence must be critically examined.

3. The Human Person in Igbo Thought

Igbo philosophical anthropology approaches the human person as a multidimensional and essentially relational being. The person is not adequately understood as an isolated biological individual but within an interconnected order involving the body, spirit, family, community, nature, and the transcendent. Edeh (1985) makes the human person central to his articulation of Igbo metaphysics, deriving the notion of being from the Igbo understanding of *mmadi*—the human being as "the good that is." In this perspective, human existence possesses dignity because it participates in being and originates from the Supreme Good, *Chineke*. Edeh's position is significant because it places the human person at the centre of Igbo reflection on being rather than treating anthropology as merely a secondary application of metaphysics. Nwala (1985) likewise situates the individual within the wider Igbo social and cosmological order, showing that personal existence is inseparable from community, tradition, and the spiritual world. These perspectives suggest that Igbo personhood is simultaneously individual, social, moral, and spiritual.

The concept of *chi* provides an especially important basis for understanding individuality in Igbo thought. Achebe (1975) describes *chi* as a central yet complex concept in Igbo psychology and cosmology, associated with the individual's spiritual identity, destiny, and relationship with the transcendent order. The saying *otu nne na-amu ma otu chi adighi eke*—one mother may bear many children, but one *chi* does not create them expresses the uniqueness of each person. Likewise, *onye kwe, chi ya ekwe* points to an interaction between personal agency and spiritual determination. Metuh (1987) similarly emphasizes the interconnectedness of the human, spiritual, and cosmic dimensions of Igbo religious thought. Thus, the individual is not simply an anonymous member of a collective; personhood includes a distinctive spiritual identity while remaining embedded within a wider relational order.

The communal dimension of personhood is equally important. The individual is born into a family and develops through relationships with parents, kindred, elders, village, and society. Moral education, customs, language, rituals, obligations, and participation in communal life contribute to the formation of the person. This does not necessarily mean that the individual is absorbed into the community. Rather, Igbo thought presents a continuing relationship between personal identity and communal belonging. Ijiomah's (2006) account of harmonious monism is relevant here because it emphasizes the interconnectedness of realities without simply reducing their distinctions, while Iroegbu's (1995) *uwa* ontology similarly situates human existence within a broader network of being. Okere (1983) and Onyeocha (1997) further show the importance of examining African and Igbo thought through its own conceptual categories rather than imposing exclusively individualistic or Western categories.

The spiritual and transcendent dimension completes this understanding of the person. Igbo cosmology traditionally recognizes a Supreme Being, *Chukwu/Chineke*, divinities, ancestors, *chi*, and other spiritual realities as dimensions of a world in which the visible and invisible are interconnected. Edeh's account of *mmadi* and Achebe's analysis of *chi* both demonstrate that human existence cannot be adequately separated from this wider metaphysical horizon. At the same time, the relationship between *chi* and Chukwu should not be presented as completely settled, since Achebe himself recognizes significant complexity and variation in Igbo interpretations. The human person in Igbo thought may therefore be understood as a distinctive individual whose identity is lived through community and whose existence remains open to a spiritual and transcendent order. This threefold structure individuality, relationality, and transcendence provides the indigenous philosophical background against which Asouzu's complementary ontology can subsequently be examined.

4 Asouzu's Complementary Ontology and the Human Person

Innocent I. Asouzu is one of the major contemporary Nigerian philosophers to develop a systematic account of reality from an African philosophical perspective. His philosophy of *Ibuanyidanda*, also described as complementary philosophy, attempts to overcome what he regards as bifurcating and exclusivist patterns of thought that isolate realities and set them against one another. In *Ibuanyidanda: New Complementary Ontology*, Asouzu makes being itself the central question of his project and defines his ontological horizon through the claim that "anything that exists serves a missing link of reality" (Asouzu, 2007). The statement is not merely an assertion about social cooperation. It represents his fundamental ontological conviction that no existent is adequately intelligible as an isolated and self-sufficient reality. Being acquires meaning within a network of relationships in which realities complement and sustain one another. Scholars examining Asouzu's philosophy accordingly identify relationality, complementarity, and the rejection of exclusivist modes of thought as central features of his ontology (Bunting, 2025).

The Meaning of *Ibuanyidanda*

The expression *Ibuanyidanda* derives from the Igbo expression *ibu anyi danda*, which Asouzu interprets as "no task is insurmountable for *danda*." The *danda* is a small species of ant whose collective effort enables it to carry loads that would be impossible for an individual ant. Asouzu transforms this ordinary Igbo experience into a philosophical principle. He explains that the traditional Igbo experience of the ants provides an image of complementarity in which beings achieve what they could not achieve in isolation (Asouzu, 2004, pp. 108–109). The philosophical significance of the metaphor therefore lies not simply in cooperation but in mutual indispensability. The individual *danda* remains a distinct entity, yet its capacity is realized through its relationship with others. Asouzu subsequently universalizes this insight into an ontology. *Ibuanyidanda* is not merely a social ethic instructing people to cooperate; it is a way of understanding being itself. Asouzu states that "anything that exists serves a missing link of reality" (Asouzu, 2011). This implies that no existent constitutes the fullness of reality by itself. Every existent occupies a position within a larger relational order. Bunting (2025) similarly explains that Asouzu's "missing link" thesis understands reality as a dynamic network in which different aspects of existence interact and constitute one another. This makes *Ibuanyidanda* fundamentally different from a simple appeal to communal solidarity: its primary claim is ontological before it becomes social or ethical.

Complementarity and the Problem of Isolation

The principle of complementarity is consequently directed against what Asouzu regards as exclusivist approaches to being. His concern is not merely that human beings sometimes fail to cooperate, but that philosophical consciousness can mistakenly absolutize particular realities and thereby treat them as complete in themselves. In his formulation, the complementary ontology seeks to recover being from "bifurcating and exclusivist modes of relating to the world" and understands being as "inherently relational, comprehensive and future referential" (Asouzu, 2007, p. 13). The point is philosophically significant: complementarity changes the question from "What is this entity in isolation?" to "What role does this entity play within the relational structure of reality?"

This position also explains Asouzu's striking claim that the opposite of being is not simply non-being but being alone (*ka sọ mụ dī*) (Asouzu, 2013, p. 62). Uzoigwe (2020) interprets this as a fundamental feature of *Ibuanyidanda*: existence is meaningful insofar as it participates in complementary relations. The claim should not, however, be reduced to the sociological idea that people merely need one another. Asouzu is making a stronger metaphysical argument: isolation represents a distorted conception of being because

existence itself is relational. In this sense, complementarity is simultaneously an ontological thesis, a method of reflection, and an ethical orientation.

The Missing Links and the Human Person

The concept of the missing link is especially important for this study because it provides the point at which Asouzu's ontology can be brought into philosophical anthropology. If every existent serves as a missing link of reality, then the human person cannot be conceived as a completely self-sufficient subject. Yet this does not mean that individuality disappears. Rather, the individual possesses a distinctive identity while existing within relationships that make personal existence possible and meaningful. Asouzu himself explicitly extends complementary thinking to the human person, arguing that the human person should not be understood in a fragmented manner but as a complementary unity (Asouzu, 2013, pp. 148–150).

This is where the present study makes its own interpretive contribution. Asouzu develops *Ibuanyidanda* primarily as an ontology and a method of complementary reflection; this paper extends that framework to the philosophical anthropology of the Igbo human person. The argument is therefore not that Asouzu has already supplied a complete theory of Igbo personhood, but that his ontology provides conceptual resources for interpreting the relationship between individuality, community, *chi*, and transcendence. The individual can retain personal identity without being treated as an isolated substance, while community can be understood as constitutive of human existence without automatically absorbing individual agency.

The philosophical strength of Asouzu's position lies in its ability to challenge the false choice between absolute individualism and unqualified communalism. The individual is neither an isolated self-sufficient entity nor merely an instrument of the collective. Recent applications of *Ibuanyidanda* show the broader reach of this relational principle: Bisong (2024), for example, applies Asouzu's complementary framework to environmental ethics, arguing that human beings and the natural environment should be understood through relations of mutual significance.

5. Individuality and the Human Person in Asouzu

The question of individuality occupies an important place in Asouzu's philosophical anthropology. Although his philosophy strongly emphasizes complementarity, interdependence, and communal existence, this emphasis should not be interpreted as the complete dissolution of the individual into the community. Rather, Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy provides a framework within which the individual can retain uniqueness while simultaneously recognizing that human existence is fundamentally relational. Recent scholarship on African personhood similarly stresses the need to understand the relationship between individual identity and communal belonging without reducing either dimension to the other (Bayuo, 2025).

The human person, in Asouzu's framework, possesses a distinctive identity and cannot simply be reduced to the collective. Every human being represents a particular mode of existence with individual consciousness, capacities, responsibilities, and possibilities. The recognition of this individuality is important because a philosophy of complementarity would lose its meaning if the individual had no distinctive reality to contribute to the complementary whole. Asouzu's understanding of existence as consisting of "missing links" means that individual beings possess something indispensable to the wider order of reality. No person is completely self-sufficient, but neither is any person completely dispensable. Each person contributes something distinctive to the realization of a more comprehensive human and existential order. Uzoigwe (2020) identifies this principle as central to Asouzu's complementary reflection: whatever exists serves as a missing link of reality. Thus, individuality in Asouzu should not be understood as absolute independence. It is better understood as distinctiveness within relationality. The person is unique, but this uniqueness finds its fuller significance in relationship with other persons.

A significant distinction must be made between individuality and individualism. Individuality refers to the uniqueness and particular identity of a person, whereas individualism, particularly in its radical form, treats the individual as essentially autonomous and independent of communal relationships. Asouzu's philosophy affirms the former while challenging the latter. His *Ibuanyidanda* ontology is grounded in mutual dependence and complementarity. Mendie (2020) notes that Asouzu's approach conceives reality through the mutual dependence of different "missing links" and their contribution to common flourishing. Consequently, the affirmation of individuality does not require the rejection of community. A person can possess freedom, dignity, rationality, and personal identity while remaining dependent upon and responsible to others. This is particularly important in interpreting Igbo philosophical anthropology because the traditional emphasis on communal existence should not be mistaken for the denial of personal identity.

For Asouzu, the individual person is essentially relational. Human beings become intelligible through their relationships with other persons and with the wider reality in which they exist. Ojimba (2023) explains that Ibuanyidanda conceptualizes reality through “missing links,” mutual interdependence, and complementarity. This relational understanding challenges the image of the person as a closed and self-contained entity. The individual does not first exist in complete isolation and subsequently enter into relationships. Rather, relationality is already part of human existence.

The notion of the individual as a missing link of reality is perhaps one of the most important aspects of Asouzu’s philosophy for understanding personhood. If every existent is a missing link, then every individual possesses significance within the totality of existence. The individual therefore cannot legitimately regard himself or herself as completely self-sufficient. At the same time, the community cannot legitimately regard the individual as insignificant. Both require each other. This provides a philosophical foundation for human dignity. The dignity of the individual is not based merely on independence but also on the person’s indispensable contribution to the relational whole. Ojimba (2023) emphasizes that Ibuanyidanda is founded upon common sharing, complementarity, mutual relationship, and cooperative action. Although Asouzu’s complementary approach offers a strong basis for integrating individuality and community, a critical question remains: How much communal authority can be exercised without compromising individual freedom? This question is particularly relevant in contemporary societies where traditional communal structures encounter modern concepts of individual rights, autonomy, and equality. Ojimba (2023), in comparing Asouzu with Heidegger, observes that Asouzu recognizes a form of individual immersion in communal authority but interprets this within the framework of complementarity rather than simply as domination. This distinction is crucial. Complementarity should not become an intellectual justification for suppressing legitimate individual differences or freedoms. Therefore, Asouzu’s philosophy is most fruitful when complementarity is understood as mutual enhancement rather than unilateral submission. The community should enable individuals to flourish, while individuals should contribute to the wellbeing of the community.

6. Conclusion

The foregoing analysis has examined the concept of the human person in Igbo philosophy through the complementary thought of Innocent I. Asouzu, with particular attention to the interrelationship between individuality, community, and transcendence. The study has established that the Igbo understanding of personhood cannot be adequately reduced to either an isolated individualistic conception or an exclusively collectivist conception. Rather, the person emerges as a relational being whose individuality acquires fuller meaning within a network of complementary relationships. This interpretation corresponds closely with Asouzu’s Ibuanyidanda ontology, which understands reality through relationality, mutual dependence, and complementarity.

The analysis of individuality demonstrated that Asouzu’s philosophy does not abolish the uniqueness of the individual. On the contrary, the individual constitutes an indispensable “missing link” within the totality of reality. The significance of the person therefore lies simultaneously in personal uniqueness and relational participation. This position offers a valuable alternative to radical individualism, which tends to emphasize autonomy at the expense of communal responsibility, and excessive collectivism, which may subordinate personal identity to the collective. Asouzu’s complementary approach maintains that the individual and the community are mutually constitutive realities.

The study has also established that community is intrinsic to human existence. In the Igbo philosophical worldview, the person develops through relationships with family, kindred, community, and the broader social environment. Asouzu transforms this insight into a systematic ontological principle: to exist meaningfully is to exist in complementary relationship with others. Recent scholarship describes Ibuanyidanda precisely in terms of mutual interdependence and the rejection of isolated existence.

Furthermore, the study has shown that Igbo personhood possesses an important transcendent dimension. Human existence is not exhausted by biological individuality or social participation but is oriented toward a wider spiritual and metaphysical horizon. Concepts such as Chi, ancestry, destiny, and the transcendent ground of existence provide important dimensions for understanding the fullness of personhood. Asouzu’s complementary ontology allows this dimension to be integrated into a broader understanding of human existence rather than treated as separate from social and individual realities. The study therefore argues that individuality, community, and transcendence should be understood as complementary dimensions of the human person. Individuality provides the person with uniqueness and agency; community provides the relational context for personal development and responsibility; while transcendence provides a broader

horizon of meaning and ultimate fulfilment. These dimensions should not be understood as competing alternatives. Rather, they mutually enrich one another.

Asouzu's philosophy is particularly valuable because it provides a conceptual framework for overcoming what may be described as a bifurcating mentality the tendency to understand realities through rigid oppositions. His Ibuanyidanda principle maintains that what appears separate may constitute complementary dimensions of a larger reality. The individual and community, therefore, need not be enemies; difference need not produce exclusion; and individuality need not entail isolation. The contemporary relevance of this conception is considerable. In societies increasingly affected by individualism, social fragmentation, discrimination, political conflict, and weakening communal bonds, the idea that every person constitutes a necessary "missing link" offers a philosophical basis for human dignity, inclusion, solidarity, dialogue, and peaceful coexistence. Gwara, Ekor, and Attoe (2022), for example, demonstrate how Asouzu's complementary philosophy can be applied to the problem of discrimination against women with disabilities, arguing that each human being should be recognized as an indispensable participant in reality.

Nevertheless, the study acknowledges that Asouzu's philosophy requires continued critical examination. Questions remain concerning the limits of complementarity, the nature of individual autonomy, the resolution of genuine conflicts, and the metaphysical status of beings within a complementary ontology. Recent scholarship has also raised questions about the explanatory scope of Asouzu's account of being, demonstrating that Ibuanyidanda remains an active field of philosophical debate rather than a closed system. This study concludes that the Igbo conception of the human person, interpreted through Asouzu's Ibuanyidanda, offers a holistic and relational anthropology in which the person is simultaneously an individual, a member of a community, and a being oriented toward transcendence. The enduring philosophical significance of this conception lies in its insistence that human flourishing is not achieved through isolation but through meaningful and responsible complementarity. Thus, to be human is not merely to exist as an individual, but to exist with others, for others, and within a wider horizon of being.

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