



A STUDY OF KWAME GYEKYE'S NOTION OF PERSONHOOD AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO RIGHTS IN AFRICAN COMMUNITARIAN STRUCTURE

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Abstract

This work presents Kwame Gyekye's notion of personhood and how it relates to rights in African communitarian structure. Personhood for some scholars can be culturally defined if the attainment of it is fully embedded in a cultural community; likewise partially defined if the realization of it is partially embedded in a cultural community. For Gyekye, personhood is not fully embedded in a cultural community; for him, those individual rights and interests are meaningful and achievable only within the context of human society, and must, therefore, be matched with social responsibilities. Our aim, therefore, is to understand Gyekye's discourse on personhood and sieve out those recognition and equal moral standing between the individual and the community in terms of rights, ethical principles, tolerance, and choice. Using an evaluative method, it is argued that Gyekye's notion of personhood is partially defined by communal structure which defends individual rights, describes an individual as a communal being and also as an autonomous, self-determining, self-assertive being with a capacity for evaluation and choice. Gyekye's rejection that personhood is absolutely conferred on the individual by the community, does not mean absolute individualism, the kind that results in "moral egoism. However, the study found that Gyekye's view on personhood requires the recognition of equal moral standing between an individual and a cultural community which results in responsibility to oneself as an individual as well as the responsibility to the group. We contend that individual rights, as opposed to role-structural rights, guarantee cordial relationships among members of the community, and the various ethnocultural structures should be transcended for the sake of building the community and the emphasis should be on individual constitutional patriotism, rather than on ethnic loyalty.

Keywords: Personhood, Rights, Africa, Communitarianism, Culture, Choice

Statement of the Problem in General Outlook and its Connection with Important Scientific and Practical Tasks

What triggered the choice of this work are the different ideologies of personhood in African communal structure in search of a perception that will recognize equal moral standing between the individual and the community. Most scholars adopt the extreme position of communitarian norms, for them, it is the primary factor that influences the choice of an individual in the community. Others adopt liberal individualism, while some adopt extreme liberalism. It is noteworthy to state that each of these perceptions has different implications for African communities. For instance, the idea of the extreme communitarians in the likes of Mbiti and Menkiti, when critically examined, tailored person towards pessimistic tendency; making him a communal moral agent, instead of an individual moral agent of the community. Extreme individualism, on the other hand, will tend towards Anarchism and Existentialism; while Liberal Individualism will be geared towards individual autonomy, making an individual choose his good that does not depend on the common good. Indeed, the questions are: how is a person or personhood perceived in African communities. Is a person perceived as an autonomous individual? Or is a person perceived as a cultural extended being? Or is a person perceived as an ontological relationship that exists between an individual and a community? Does a cultural community enjoy ontological primacy over its members? Depending on how one conceives of the ontological relationship between a person and a society, one may argue according to Gyekye that personhood is either wholly culturally defined, partially culturally defined or not determined by cultural factors.

Aims of Paper. Methods

Our aim, therefore, is an attempt to understand the definition of person and personhood that will grant us equal moral standing between the individual and the community; because establishing an equal moral standing between the individual and the community is always the dilemma of personhood as it relates to rights in the African communitarian structure. According to Gyekye, personhood can be culturally defined if the attainment of it is fully embedded in a cultural community; likewise partially defined if the realization of it is partially embedded in a cultural community, or not determined by cultural factors. For him, individual rights and interests are meaningful and achievable only within the context of human society, and must, therefore, be matched with social responsibilities. The problems, therefore, lie in how Gyekye's notion of personhood can guarantee individual rights in African communitarian structure, in that it creates the notion of recognition and equal moral standing between the individual and the community in terms of ethical principles, tolerance, and choice.

Analysis of latest research where the solution of the problem was initiated

Using its tools/function such as, Critical, Analytical, Speculative, Evaluative, Normative, Inspirational, Prescriptive and Co-coordinating Functions; some philosophers have laid several emphases on personhood and how it can be achieved or not achieved in a cultural community. In the work, African Personality and the New African Society, Joseph Ki-

Zerbo examines what constitutes the main features of the African traditional social organization and conception. For Ki-Zerbo, the African traditional society was highly organized and governed by the authority of the elders. The Council of Elders in traditional Africa, was the supreme political master of the society, he maintains further that, "it was often this autocracy of the old that evolved into a veritable cult of ancestor worship" [1]. Another principle character of African traditional society is solidarity. This solidarity is imprinted on the very structure of African culture, especially; its economic organization. For Ki-Zerbo, "the concept of personal property in terms of the individual, is generally alien to African social concepts" [1].

It should be noted against Ki-Zerbo's exaggerated communism in traditional African society, that there exists room for private ownership of properties in African traditional society. No race is entirely communistic, we find out that even among the Africans, ownership of private properties such as; cattle, sheep, yam-barn etc, existed side by side with communal property such as land. The idea of Ki-Zerbo invariably is in connection with Gyekye's idea of personhood as partially defined by communal structure.

The African Personality, Alex Quaison-Sackey in his work sees African personality in its largest sense as "the cultural expression of what is common to all people whose home is on the continent of Africa"[2]. This embodies African social and political ideas in action and transformation in order, both to create and re-create the integral African character in the face of a world globalization. "In attempting to rid Africa away from foreign and post-colonial domination, the African is attempting nothing less than the recapture and reassertion of the dignity of the individual – a dignity which was not class based or distinction" [2].

However, the fact that African society was generally communal does not necessarily imply that there was no class system as Sackey argues. There exist different forms of discrimination and domination at different levels of individual existence. It was this class systems that encourages such practices as Outcast, (osu) Slaves, (ohu) even before the advent of colonialism. This class system may not be out rightly pronounced like in the European system, but it does not mean that they never existed. This means that individual right are still being questioned by the community and as such tried in tackling Gyekey's idea of equality in the community.

In Discours Prononce a, Leopold Sedar Senghor encapsulates the philosophy of Negritude, which he refers to as the philosophical search for black's identity and personhood. He argues that negritude is the intricate and totality of civilization in cultural, economic, social, political, and religious dimensions of the black people; more exactly the Negro-African world. For him, the expression of the person is done through emotional outburst which entails an abandonment of the self in identification with the object. In other words, the senses of communion, the gift of imagination, the gift of rhythm, are the traits of negritude that we find like an indelible seal on all the works and services of the black man [3]. It is a philosophy for a total rejection of the French colonial policy of assimilation. He therefore, calls for the recovery and cultural emancipation aimed at giving the African people a sense of pride and dignity in their culture as distinct mark from other culture. To achieve this agenda, Senghor argues that, the epistemology of negritude, which is that of

embrace (communalism) and not self-detachment (capitalism), will be the foundation of African brand of socialism. He opines that, the root of African socialism is founded on the family; family which embraces the living and the dead, communing together in all its extended roots. Thus, in negritude, all social forms of life are off-shoot of the extended family-brotherhood. Senghor is of the opinion that Africans should be embedded in strict communitarianism against the idea of Gyekye's moderate communitarianism.

In the work; *Freedom and Socialism*, Julius N. Nyerere believes that, socialism is the ultimate foundation of the traditional socio-political society of the Africans and a return to its very practices is, inevitably unconditional. For him, it is only through socialism embedded in the traditional way of life that the Africa can hope to build and rebuild a truly human and equitable society, free from the ills of colonial capitalism but equipped with a certain pattern of justice in which "equality and freedom of all will be assured"[4]. Nyerere contends that, the characteristics or principles of social life he advocates, is not foreign to traditional African society, and as such, there is no need to imitate and copy western ideologies or western prototype of African socialism. Thus, for him, Africans don't need to be tutored or converted to socialism; "for socialism is rooted in the past African traditional society which produced us" [5]. In, *Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism*, Nyerere opts for socialism.

Ujamaa is a Swahili word for family-hood. For Nyerere, Ujamaa is the philosophy of socialism since African socialism is rooted in the notion of extended family-hood system. Family here comprises the father, mother, children, cousins, aunts, nephew, grandparents, uncles, and host of other relatives both dead and alive. In this kind of family organization, lives and properties were shared in common. Consequently, means of livelihood such as lands were held in common and based on trust, and all the members of the family were responsible for the well-being and progress of the entire family. The wealth of any member of the family is by extension, the wealth of all. This kind of family orientation can be applied to the society, thereby forming a kind of universal brotherhood, whereby, both the rich and poor individuals are completely secured. From this perspective, Nyerere tries to build a social system where everybody is treated equally and justice prevails. The equality of all and justice for all will be granted because, there is no basis for separate or private ownership of properties; all properties are communally owned. [5]. Here Nyerere attempt to build a strict communal structure in African community against Gyekye's ideology. In this, he tried to provide equality and justice.

In the work; *Artistic and Aesthetic Experience*, K.C. Anyanwu argues that arts, music and words are some of the mechanism for understanding and articulation of African person and world view [6]. He argues that, a person in African thought is a being in the community characterized by artistic symbols and representations. The community is the life-force of individual persons. Outside the community which incorporates the visible and invisible realm of existence and the categories of existence therewith, the concept of person in African thought has no meaning; for the Africans see the individual person in the light of the whole [6]. Individual person's awareness is possible only in a community of forces and this is because persons are born into a community and their obligation is to manifest the spirit of community in them by sharing in collective belief, works, duties

and results. The African person loses himself in the other; God, community and family and this makes the self to be absorbed by the whole.

From the arguments adduced by Anyanwu on the concept of person, personhood for him therefore is all about obligation and function within the community matrix. The individual persons are absorbed totally in community norms, aspirations and obligations without a life of their own. The consequence of this line of argument is that, human beings are socialized into persons. On the contrary, community does not confer personhood through obligations and responsibilities; rather, the community recognizes the ontological status of human being as person, then assign obligations and responsibilities. The individual has will, volition, and self-determination to effect the obligations and responsibilities imposed on him by the community. These elements are constituents of a person which are not communally but ontologically given. Consequently, Anyanwu's communitarian concept of person failed to give adequate recognition to the individual's creativity and inventiveness in responding to individual's right, justice, obligations and responsibilities by Gyekye's notion of communitarianism.

In African Religion and Philosophy, John Mbiti underscores African community and its communal nature, which is marked by communal ties. The individual cannot therefore exist alone, he says: they are simply part of the whole. Mbiti's slogan: "I am because we are: and since we are, therefore I am", has immediate recognition as a play on and inversion of the well known cogito ergo sum of Descartes, which identifies the self with the "I am" in isolation from the "we are." Hence Mbiti is a strict communitarian. It is therefore on this note that Gyekye proposes a communitarian ethic that is moderate. Mbiti argues that in traditional African society, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. An individual owns his essence and existence to other people both alive, dead and those yet to be born. For Mbiti, after birth, an individual goes through the rites of incorporation in order to be fully integrated into the entire society [7].

In "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought" Ifeanyi Menkiti, articulates an extreme form of communitarianism asserting the ontological primacy of the community over the realities of the individual's life. He argues: Whereas most Western views of man abstract this or that feature of the lone individual and then proceed to make it the defining or essential characteristic which entities aspiring to the description "man" must have, the African view of man denies that persons can be defined by focusing on this or that physical or psychological characteristic of the lone individual. Rather, man is defined by reference to the environing community. As John Mbiti notes, the African view of the person can be summed up in this statement: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" [8].

For him, one obvious conclusion to be drawn from this Mbiti's dictum is that, as far as Africans are concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories, whatever these may be.

In "On the Normative Conception of a Person", Ifeanyi Menkiti again maintains that normative standing is one thing, and superficial biological considerations quite another. He uses the word "superficial" advisedly because, on a deeper level, both norm and biology do tend to converge [9].

Ontologically, the link between the African individual and his large kinship affiliations manifests itself as a combination of obligations and matching rights. Hence, according to him, the concept of personhood within Africa, not surprisingly, becomes essentially normative. The journey of the individual toward personhood, Menkiti reaffirms is that the community plays a vital role both as catalyst and as prescriber of norms. [9]. Gyekye's view on communitarian ethics attempts to integrate individual rights with the notion of community interests. This approach separates Gyekye's view on communitarianism from those of Menkiti and Mbiti, who are strict communitarian thinkers. Indeed, Gyekye argues that Menkiti and Mbiti's communitarianism are radical or unrestricted. He argues that the kind of communitarianism defended by Menkiti and Mbiti would have deleterious consequences for individual assertiveness. Hence, denying individual rights in the community.

In "The Human Person and Immortality in Igbo (African) Metaphysics" Richard C. Onwunibe argues that, the essential aspect or source of human person is the soul (Mkpuruobi), and spirit (Mmuo) [10]. For him, these essentials of a person give credence to the transcendence of the person from a metaphysical point of view. Thus, in Igbo philosophical reflection, the soul and spirit are ontological constituents of the self or person. Other aspects of transcendental personhood include; the mental to a certain extent, the spiritual aspirations and values of man. To talk of human person make sense only when to be human includes not only the physical aspect but also the transcendental aspects. [10]. This transcendental nature of personhood in African thought finds its expression in egalitarian spirit, theory of personal immortality and reincarnation. It takes the form of continual existences after death in the world beyond and reincarnation takes the form of rebirth in the world of the living [10].

Onwunibe further maintains that the conception of person in African thought involves the notion of presence. The notion of presence with regards to the constituent of a person is displayed in everyday living in warm greetings. Thus, the distinction between human person and animal is shown in corresponding attitude of greeting; for one does not greet animals. Consequently, not to be greeted among the African can be construed as a form depersonalization [11].

But problems arise with Onwunibe's claims that transcendental aspect of personhood is manifested in egalitarian spirit. On this issue of egalitarian spirit, he leaves us in the dark. He did not explain in order to clarify the meanings he attached to the concept of egalitarian spirit which according to him is an expression of transcendental personhood. On the other hand, immortality and reincarnation of the same person raises a philosophical question of identity. For instance, the deceased member of a family that is being venerated as an ancestor, is he the same person said to have been reincarnated? The answer Onwunibe gave to this question is not convincing and adequate.

On the issue of greeting as a means of personifying human beings, one may not agree with the claims of Onwunibe. Greetings in African thought are a mark of respect to the person and not a constituent of that person. Greetings do not differentiate persons from animals; for to argue this way will imply that, children who don't know the significances of greetings and who are not greeted by their elders will be classified as animals.

Onwunibe here attempts to explain that human beings have a singular right even as deceased as they reincarnate into the living. This therefore informs Gyekye's idea of moderate communitarianism that informs right of individual for assertiveness in the community where they lived.

In African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African realities, Segun Gbadegesin presents a metaphysical (descriptive) and normative conceptions of an African person and argued that, personhood in African thought is more of a normative concept than a metaphysical description. This normative interpretation assumes a judgment of moral standing which to an extent determines the recognition of human being as a person. [12].

However, if one follows Gbadegesin to his logical conclusion which is seeing moral judgments as the sole determinant of human beings as person, one falls into a problem of determining and denying the status of children as person who have not significantly developed their moral standings. This conception of person in African thought tends to suggest that elders who have epistemological monopoly over the young given their advanced knowledge on the morals and norms of their community are more persons than the young. It should be noted that, there is no ontological distinction between the young and the old who has mastered the obligations and responsibilities of their community. The young are not less persons just because their normative approach to life has not been developed. Gbadegesin seems to be confused on the definition of person and personhood. The children for instance or persons and the later part of their lives are personhood. For him, he is trying to play a dual dimension in view with Gyekye's notion on personhood that at the normative narrative one is moderately a person and at the metaphysical narrative one is strictly a person.

In "The Concept of Man's Spiritual Companion in Igbo Traditional Thought", C.O. Uchegbue argues that personhood is community based. He holds that, the idea of person-in-community is based on a metaphysical understanding of reality; a reality which has a binding communion and interaction between the communities of the spiritual and physical world. Thus, African view of man conceives man to be basically and essentially a being in relations - a social being [13]. For Uchegbue, it is the African's incorporation in society that really makes him a person and forms his self-perception and self-interpretation. To exist as a person therefore, is to live in the community and see things with the community [13]. From Uchegbue's analysis, it means that effective internalization and incorporation of communal norms and morals in one's daily conduct is evidence of status of personhood in exhibition. It follows that normativity is the only condition of being a person. But there is a problem with this account of personhood if one follows it to its logical end. Its logical conclusion will imply that babies and small children who are incapable of making any morally significant choices are not persons. On the contrary, it is the ontological elements of personhood which both children and adults share that establishes the moral or normative worth of persons which the community recognizes and develops; hence, Uchegbue's idea of personhood is in line with Menkiti and Mbiti and not Gyekye.

In “How Communalist is Africa?” Ike F.H. Odimegwu questions the nature of communalism on the conceptual, the theoretical, historical and existential planes of African thought [14]. This question became necessary in order to understand the being, nature and the existence of the human person and to see if much of philosophic theory of communalism can be studied, critically appraised for rational justification or refutation. Odimegwu argues that, the answer to the above question will help in resolving other pertinent questions such as; is African communalism a theory or praxis or both? What are the dimensions of communalism?, How communalist is the contemporary African person? [14]. In respect to the above questions, he recommends that any conception of communalism should be consistent with the traditional African notion of human person as primarily a spiritual being, a being endowed originally with certain inward dignity, integrity and value. This idea of personhood is in line with Gyekye’s notion of seeing a human person as a naturally having right and as such been in line with the community and not the opposite.

In Igbo Jurisprudence: An African Exercise in Legal Coherentism, Francis O. C. Njoku argues that, traditional African society was not totally communal in nature. For him, there were exceptions to communal tendencies where some individual persons do not partake in communal ownership and as such some rights were denied or deprived from them. In others words, African community were not all that communal. He however saw person as a randomly thought moving particles, who is a product from Chukwu (God), occupying a unique place among creations and shares a divine status with God through the conception of CHI. Thus, when God created human beings, He created everyone as persons and this shows that social recognition through community obligation whether performed or not by individual persons does not necessarily negate personhood.

What the community does is to enhance personhood which is a divine spark from God [15]. The linguistic impact of the concept “MMADU” is a manifestation of the ontological status of personhood. Hence, human being is a person by virtue of being endowed with CHI; the principle of individuation and identity which is moderately defined as stipulated by Gyekye. In another of his work; Ana Atutu: Igbo Philosophy, Njoku traces the meaning of personhood in African thought and identifies it with the concept CHI. He argued that CHI is that which explains the uniqueness of individual persons. It is on the basis of this concept that one can argue for identity. In Igbo world, personhood in a proper sense bespeaks a uniqueness of identity [16]. On the issue of identity, Njoku argues from an individualistic point of view, where the Igbo person is seen as a unique entity, occupying a unique position allotted to him by Chukwu. However, one may not totally agree with Njoku that the concept of Chi gives a comprehensive idea on identity in African thought. Identity goes beyond the uniqueness of individual person which the concept of Chi explains to incorporate the environs and biological traits which one acquires from the community and family lineage. Apart from the elements of Chi in individual persons, other elements identified as constituting the human person are the Obara/Igip (literally blood), taken by the Igbo to be inherited from one’s mother and father, and is regarded as the basis of clan identity and basis of membership of a patrilineal group. Njokwu’s idea

therefore, is really in an opposition to Gyekye's notion of personhood. For Gyekye, personhood should not be ascribed to biological or ancestral lineage.

In "Community and Human Well-being of an African Culture", Christopher Agulanna answers the first question of African person dissolving into a structure by arguing that persons are not dissolved into a communal structure. Rather, it is in community of other human beings that a life of an individual can have meaning and significance [17]. Community is the essential means by which humans can achieve their social goals and aspirations. It is the corporative instincts in persons that ensure mutual survival among them. Thus, personhood can only be conceived within the community rules, ritual, customs, traditions and norms. It is only in the community that the lives of individuals acquire true meaning. However, this kind of conception of personhood does not by any token deny individual liberty and or uniqueness [17]. This is in the same line of thought with Gyekye's idea of personhood.

In the paper; The (Mal) Function of "It" in Ifeanyi Menkiti's Normative Account of Person, Benard Matolino makes a critique of Menkiti's concept of personhood and by extension communitarian concept of person. Matolino argues that the word "it" has no ontological claim but a grammatical expression. The concept of "it" is a substitute of a name and not an ontological or moral status of a child [18]. He argues that most of the communitarian account of person juxtaposed and substituted epistemological growth with an ontological status and rendered the epistemological-moral learning exhibition as the only condition for personhood. He maintains that, the differences between a child and an adult are not ontologically given but epistemological. Thus, there is no difference with regards to person of a child and that of an adult. Epistemological difference, no matter how vast, cannot be taken to represent ontological differences [19]. Matolino disproving Menkiti with this statement that, the differences between a child and an adult are not ontologically given but epistemological, attempt to bond with Gyekye idea of personhood as a being with the community by having all epistemic right and fullness of understanding of his duties. In "Personhood, Human Rights and Health among the Akan and Igbo of West Africa", Alex J. Wilson articulates how the Akan and the Igbo concept of personhood provide the framework for understanding human rights and health care systems [20]. For him, persons are made up of material and non-material entities- blood, spirit and the soul. Personhood links the individual with the community and therefore, the cultural communities in which the individuals live are of foremost priority and not their selfish interest. However, this conception of personhood that emphasizes more on the wider community is not necessarily detrimental to the individuals and their personal initiatives. Thus, the community cannot dispense with the talents and initiatives of its individual members and the individuals too cannot develop outside the frame work of the community [20]. Invariably, this is a clear example of Gyekye's moderate communitarianism.

In A New Essay on African Philosophy, Bartholomew Abanuka examines the concept of person in relation to the community with the concept of 'perspective solidarity' and 'wholeness'. For him, an individual begins to actually exist and cease to exist in a community. It is the fundamental ethical principles of the community that is at the root of person's attainment of wholeness understood as self-realization and full actualization of

reality as an individual [21]. Personhood therefore, is based on perspective solidarity which is the aims and aspirations of the community. These community aims and goals are the qualities and yardsticks associated with a 'person' as such.

However, what one can deduce from Abanuka's argument is that, it is not every kind of human being that is considered to be a person. Human being who does not meet up with the ethical standards of the community may not be regarded as a 'person'. Thus, ethical maturity becomes the basis of personhood. It has been argued earlier that the normative consideration of personhood does not give a full and holistic account of what it takes to be a person. There are ontological constituents that constitute a person and go a long way to address the issue of dignity, rights, personal initiative and freedom. These constituents are not derived from the community but from God. Ethical maturity alone as a mark of authentic personhood excludes children and insane individuals from the category of person. In "Personhood and Human Rights: A Critical Study of the African Communitarian and Normative Conception of the Self", Oritsegbubemi Oyowe in his premise on the notion of self in terms of the individual as abstracted from and independent of actual social relations into which the individual voluntarily enters. He answers that, the most dominant moral-political philosophy in contemporary Africa draws on a particular metaphysics of the relationship between individual and community, which itself informs a specific conception of self [22]. Under pressure to adjudicate between demands of individuality and community, he says that Gyekye's so-called moderate communitarianism would assert the primacy of the community over the individual (rights).

Exposition of main material of research with complete substantiation of obtained scientific results. Discussion

Exposing Gyekye's Notion Of Personhood As Its Relate To Rights In African Communitarian Structure

The Concept of Person and Personhood

Person and personhood are concepts in both Western and African Philosophy. Some scholar's sees person and personhood from social aspect, some spiritual, some morals and others like the existentialist will see a person from having all to do with existence.

According to Willy De Craemer, a person is a being that has certain capacities or attributes such as reason, morality, consciousness or self-consciousness, and as such being a part of a culturally established form of social relations such as kinship, ownership of property, or legal responsibility [23].

He said that the defining features of personhood and consequently what makes a person count as a person differ widely among cultures and contexts. Adding to the inquiry of personhood, of what makes a being count as a person to begin with, he claimed that there are further questions about personal identity and self: both about what makes any particular person that particular person instead of another, and about what makes a person at one time the same person as they were or will be at another time despite any intervening changes [23].

A. .J. Ajer in his book *The Concept of the Person* posit that a person is viewed from the characteristic aspect, and as such having various physical properties, including that of

occupying a continuous series of spatial positions throughout a given period of time. He said they are also credited with various forms of consciousness [24].

In African philosophy, particularly, person and personhood are judged as concepts that are connected but considerably dissimilar in some respects. While the concept of a person is discussed only sometimes in connection with the notion of community, personhood seems to be discussed always in connection with the achievement of the person in the community; that is the later life or towards an achievement part of a person can be term personhood. For instance, the idea of ubuntu refers to a human being who has attained a status of being a person. A human being with ubuntu deserves high praise because of how he/she has conducted himself.

An Overview of Person and Personhood by Gyekye

Gyekye's notion of a person has its root from Akan culture. A person can be understood as being made up of three discrete entities: the okra (the soul), sunsum (spirit) and the nipadua (body) [25]. The okra is believed to be given by God (Onyame) and also bears the destiny of the human being. Again he posits that; since God is conceived of as good, human destiny which comes from God is good as well [26]. Interrogating further, the okra according to him, is assumed to be eternal but is proficently believed to have the power of reincarnating; the sunsum said to be the basis of one's personality and, similar to the okra, is believed to come from God; while the nipadua is the material aspect of a person's component which can perish and die [25].

Furthermore, personhood according to Gyekye, is understood in moral aspect in Akan cultural milieu [27]. He states that, someone is regarded as a 'person' if he/she has a disposition which is seen by the community as largely ethical. Such a person according to him, must be epitome of goodness in the community. That is, community sees him as largely ethical. Indeed, the choice he makes in the community must tame towards moral actions. Though, this does not advocate that in Akan discuss, the human ability to act dishonestly is solely ascribed to bad judgment. As taught by Socrates, it does not mean that all a person does is only what he knows to be virtuous [28]. What appears to be the case is that occasionally accidental factors (akwanhyia), moral complications or temptations at trying times (nshwε) and weakness of the will are believed to cause even the most upright of humans to act immorally. The moral foundation of personhood, to a large extent, links the individual with the community. For Gyekye, personhood is achieved on the basis of inter personal relationship with the members of the community

Gyekye's Understanding of Rights

Fundamental rights include the rights to life, rights to dignity, and rights to personal liberty, physical integrity, the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the rights to the freedom of expression and association and the rights to freedom from discrimination. Naturally, though not always the case, an individual possesses some attributes that project his or her ability to make important decisions that can improve both his or her life and that of others. Some of these attributes include rationality, ability to make moral judgments and decisions. The possession of these attributes does not depend on one's affiliation to an ethno-cultural or linguistic group. Rather, the possession of these attributes wholly depends on the fact that a person is an individual human being. These

attributes, where they are properly used, make it possible for members of the community to contribute towards the development of the community.

Gyekye's notion of rights is emanated from his idea of personhood which is represented in terms of communitarianism; and this should be understood as a normative inquiry into what constitutes a good society according to Gyekye [29]. The rights Gyekye is talking about has to come from the person or the individual in the community. This individual has to be interdependence and reliance; it is through this that one's morality is informed. Rights are seen as moral life which Gyekye calls it the process of personal growth, as deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human. And this means entering more and more deeply into community with others. So although the goal is personal fulfilment, selfishness is excluded, the achievement belongs to the community.

Gyekye again iterate that, "by the 'common good' African scholars do not talk in terms of aggregating the interests as is typical in Utilitarianism, but literally refer to a basket of goods that are necessary for an ordinary or even a flourishing life for each human being." From our understanding of Gyekye's system of rights, it seems that rights is left largely in individual's shoulders to settle issues of her own well-being; and, in a communitarian setting it is a function of our communion as human beings to assist each other as a moral requirement. This requirement to secure the well-being of all is well captured by Gyekye. So if the well being of all is secured, the above statement reminds us that communitarian logic 'assumes a great concern for values, for the good of the wider society as such'. It is this good of a wider society that takes priority. It is for this reason that ultimate rights will be sacrificed when they clash with duties to promote and secure the well-being of all. On this note, the work suggests that Gyekye's understanding of rights is hanging on a balance.

Gyekye on Personhood and its Relationship to Rights in African Community

The main issue here, is how a person is perceived in traditional African communities: is a person perceived as an autonomous individual? Or is a person perceived as a cultural extended being? Another issue we will investigate is the kind of ontological relationship that exists between an individual and a community. Does a cultural community enjoy ontological primacy over its members? Depending on how one conceives of the ontological relationship between a person and a society, one may argue according to Gyekye that personhood is either wholly culturally defined, partially culturally defined or not determined by cultural factors. Personhood is culturally defined if the attainment of personhood is 'fully embedded' in a cultural community. As such, the community determines the personhood of its members. Personhood is partially defined if realization of personhood is 'partially embedded' in a society, this entails that the realization of personhood is not completely embedded in a society. This view maintains that a person is an individual and at the same time, a cultural extended being. Proponents of the view that the attainment of personhood is independent of cultural factors hold that the realization of personhood is unembedded in a societal structure. Many philosophers claimed that the idea of individual right is foreign to African community. Gyekye objects to the idea that the notion of individual rights is foreign to cultural communities in Africa. To prove his point, Gyekye draws on his studies of Akan philosophy. The Akan culture, according to Gyekye,

recognizes the idea that an individual is both a communal being and a rational being with inherent moral worth. Gyekye argues: Besides being a social being by nature, the human individual is, also by nature, other things as well. By “other things,” I have in mind such essential attributes of the person as rationality, having a moral sense and capacity for virtue and, hence, for evaluating and making moral judgments [30]. Accordingly, Gyekye rejects the argument that personhood is absolutely conferred on the individual by the community. An individual enjoys some inherent rights despite the natural sociality of the human person which at once places him or her in a system of shared values and practices and a range of goals which in turn places him or her in a cultural structure. For Gyekye personhood can only be defined “partially, never completely by one’s membership of the community” [31]. Gyekye’s idea of personhood, therefore, disputes Menkiti and Mbiti’s views. Gyekye, in his view on personhood, restricts the possibility that the acknowledgment of personhood is completely implanted in a communal structure. This view may, as we will call attention to it later, represent a difficult issue when considered with regards to multicultural communities with various ethno-cultural and linguistic groups. Gyekye again posits that, persons come to know who they are in the context of relationships with others. Community consciousness serves as bedrock for individual expressions and fulfillment. The effect of Gyekye’s idea of personhood is that an individual member of an ethno-cultural group is not obliged to show strong allegiance towards that group for him or her to achieve personhood. Consequently the person is free to make choices. He or she can also stand out and criticize some decisions of the group which he or she finds irrational. In this way the transfer of loyalty from various ethno-cultural groups to a nation-state becomes possible. On this, Gyekye argues for the recognition of both communal and individual rights. This view becomes clearer when we analyze on Gyekye’s idea of metanationality; which de-emphasizes ethnicity and see individual constituents as the sole aim of achieving nationhood. Indeed, Gyekye holds that individual rights and individual interests, the exercise of which is meaningful and achievable only within the context of a human society, “must therefore be matched with social responsibilities” [31].

On the Idea of Individual Autonomy and Moral Values

On the Idea of Individual Autonomy and Moral Values, Gyekye disputes the idea of extreme liberal thinkers that the individual alone defines the self, or person, he or she is to become. He maintains that both the community and the individual play vital roles in defining personhood. Though a human being is by nature a social and cultural extended being, he or she is also by nature a possessor of mental features and essential attributes, such as rationality. Thus, personhood is both defined by the cultural structure and personal experiences and interests. Gyekye says: “if the mental feature plays any seminal role in the formation and execution of the individual’s goals and plans, as indeed it does, then it cannot be persuasively argued that personhood is fully defined and constituted by the communal structure or social relationships.” [31]. Again, Gyekye holds that “individualism” that is not self egosim is an “accurate description of the society that stresses individual interests and rights” [31]. He further points out that the supporters of such individualism “maintains the pursuit of a common good”, which is the main idea that under-

lies communitarianism and the autonomy and freedom of the individual". Gyekye disputes the views of those who defend extreme individualism and hold that personhood does not depend on communal structure. Again, Liberal individualism considers individual autonomy essential when discussing the issue of personhood. On the one hand, intrinsically connected with the notion of individualism is the idea that an individual chooses his or her own good.

According to the liberals, an individual's good and interest do not depend on the common good. On the other hand, intrinsically connected with the concept of communitarianism is the notion of common good - "a notion that seems to be a bugbear to individualists thinkers and has consequently been maligned and burlesqued by them" [31]. The individual's freedom to choose what he or she wants could be curtailed by the rights of the community. The individual owes some duties towards the community in return for benefits, such as security, socio-economic assistance which he or she receives from the community. Gyekye intends to balance the concept of individual rights against the notion of the common good. His idea of communitarian ethics aims at integrating the concept of individuality with the principle of communitarianism. He makes individual rights subject to the notion of the common good, which serves as the main underlying principle of communitarianism. Gyekye points out that by "individualism" he does not mean extreme individualism - the type that tends to ride roughshod over the claims of the community [31]. The kind of individualism Gyekye has in mind is a diluted one. In fact, it is a moderate kind of individualism. Gyekye argues that his idea of individuality "does not give rise to moral egoism" [31]. Rather, his idea of individuality promotes "individual initiative and responsibility for oneself". Gyekye, with regard to personhood, adopts much of the liberal picture to make possible a view of political organization which involves individual rights, on the one hand and the notion of the common good, on the other. This means that Gyekye makes provision for individual rights in his idea of communitarian ethics. The kind of communitarian moral and political theory that Gyekye defends considers the community as a fundamental human good. It advocates a life lived in harmony and in cooperation with others. His idea of communitarianism proposes a life of mutual consideration and interdependence. It supports a life in which a person shares in the fate of the other. It encourages a life that provides a viable framework for the fulfillment of the individual's nature or potential. Gyekye's notion of communitarianism advocates a life in which the products of the exercise of an individual's talents or endowments are regarded as the assets of the community.

The Implication Of Gyekye's Partially Definition Of Personhood As It Relates To Rights In African Community Responsibility among Members of the Community

In Africa human nature is ethical in terms of recognizing the perpetual dependency on others. This perpetual dependency is predicated on the fact that, we are yet to reach that realization where we can be completely self-sufficient. It is in the clause of not reaching the realization and completely self sufficient that Gyekye call on moderate communitarianism against Menkiti and Mbiti's notion of strict communitarianism where individual members will become a community property that can be used, at times destroying his/her

potentials. It is in this notion of Moderate definition of personhood that responsibility takes place. According to Gyekye it is essential to respect and acknowledge the dignity of every individual member or persons in the community. For him, this comes with responsibility from such individual. Acknowledging the dignity of individual members, serves as an important step towards the achievement of nationhood. Every member ought to be treated with respect. Advancing his argument, Gyekye writes: "Every human being, irrespective of her cultural background or status in society, does entertain feelings of dignity and self-respect and expects members of the wider society to acknowledge and respect those feelings" [31]. Indeed, we can invariably say that individual person have a rights for what he want and that right should be protected by members of the community even at dead. The question is, if a WILL of a decease person can be kept, why cannot his/her religious/eschatological believe be protected.

Tolerance and Mutuality of Interest in the African Community

A multinational communities, such as Nigeria, is by its very nature is a culturally plural society with so many cultural diversity. The reality is that the cultures of these groups remain real even after the new state is formed. This is one of the issues that makes nation-building in a multinational state problematic.

However, cultural pluralism does not necessarily exclude the possibility of horizontal relationships, inter-dependence and fruitful interactions among members of the various ethno-cultural groups that constitute the state. Members may have reasons to establish good relationships among themselves, realizing that they need one another in order to achieve their goals. In order to live in peace and harmony, members ought to appreciate and respect one another. This respect that will form part and parcel of the community norms is when the individual have carried themselves as virtues beings.

In order to establish good relationships and inter-dependence among members, Gyekye holds that the new multinational state must find ways of creating a sense of cultural belonging or identity in all its members without exception. An important way of doing this is by creating a sense of tolerance, mutuality and common interests which help in establishing cohesion, unity and fellow-feeling.

Following from Gyekye's argument, to achieve a sense of mutuality among members of a multinational community, strong motivational factors have to be developed and proper arguments have to be advanced in this regard. The kind of natural sentiments of loyalties and communal identities among members of multinational communities, which Gyekye is talking about, becomes possible if there are sound and reasonable factors to motivate members

Humanizing the Social and Moral Attitude of Community Members.

Gyekye claims that in the interest of attaining personhood, social and moral attitudes of persons towards one another must be positive and conducive to the promotion and maintenance of good neighbourly relationships. Gyekye posits that the kind of attitude that neglect individual right may lead to communal disintegration and may, accordingly, obstruct community interest. Gyekye makes the following remarks: Thus, people who are supposed to be fellow citizens, in a new multiethnic communities, regard one another as strangers. Attitudes toward the strangers are often not charitable. Fear, distrust, suspicion,

and sometimes antipathy are evoked by the presence of the stranger. Can a multinational state be built on the basis of such perceptions of its citizens? Hardly [31].

In agreement with Gyekye's view, we contend that a multinational community cannot be built on the basis of the perception of personhood which is influenced by strong ethnic affiliation. If personhood is to be achieved in the ethnically plural community, the attitudes and perception in which individual persons are conceived must be change. And individual must change themselves to moral agent instead of moral patient. The question is: how can this be achieved? We suggest that education is the only way out.

Building a Community of Affinity, Equality and Justice Beyond Ethnicity

Moderate conception of personhood is the key to building a Community of Affinity, equality and justice beyond Ethnicity.

In the context of Nigeria, the question of whether all the constituent ethno-cultural groups are equal and demand, therefore, equal treatment is just a rhetorical question because the empirical situation in Nigeria affirms substantive inequality. It is one thing to claim equality of cultures but it is quite another matter to treat cultures equally. There is always the tendency for members of one cultural group to claim cultural and political superiority and to look down on other cultures. Gyekye argues that: The most daunting, intractable, and resilient problem in the attempt concretely to realize the concept of nationhood arises from the fact that any form of nation-building - any attempt towards nationhood - however well-intentioned, will unavoidably privilege one ethno cultural group or certain ethno cultural groups over others. This privileging will derive from, or rather will be connected with, the numerical, cultural, or political superiority or dominance of one group or certain groups [31]. The argument here is that partial definition of personhood can de-emphasize ethnicity, which is essential for the achievement of national unity and for the sustenance of national growth and development. However, such a view does not entail that cultures of the various groups and their philosophies should be abandoned. Rather, cultures of the various groups should be maintained inasmuch as they help towards the realization of community growth, affinity and justice. For instance, a particular cultural community that is known for its work of arts and crafts ought to be supported. Also individuals with talents, such as clay pot-crafting, need to be encouraged and sponsored because the output of their talents will eventually benefit the entire nation. One of the major problems that confront multicultural communities in Africa, with particular reference to Nigeria, is how to realize a community spirit that is all-encompassing. It is a big task to achieve the kind of nationhood that Gyekye proposes in a multicultural state, such as Nigeria. The composition of these communities is a complex one. To tackle this problem, Gyekye proposes a new form of nation-state, which would serve the benefit of all its members. Gyekye's new concept of nation-state and community building, points to the concept of metanationality which makes the achievement of personhood a functional tool in a community realizable. Indeed, Gyekye, "personhood", even though they may not have a basis in a common descent, can be bound together by a sense of shared goals, values, and mutual sympathies and understanding". This point leads me to Gyekye's concept of metanationality by which he attempts to transcend the concept of ethnicity, and as such see the possibility of having a common good everyone dream of in a well blessed country like Nigeria.

Evaluation

In building a community, individual value and worth cannot be downplayed. In this paper, we make a study of Gyekye's notion of personhood as it relates to rights in African community. Gyekye's notion of personhood is that it can guarantee individual rights when partially defined by communal structure. He iterates that, a person rights and wishes can be granted when he/she has developed his person in the arena of ethics. So does it mean that a person who has not lived to the expectation of rights in a certain community would not be granted his/her right and wishes, even at dead? The question is, does Gyekye's own solution to the problem adequate? Does Gyekye's moderate communitarianism indeed save the individual from the control of the community or does it rather reinforce the radical communitarian stance? Indeed, Gyekye's analyses of personhood are not very different from that of radical communitarians which he criticizes. Gyekye makes the point that an individual could be denied personhood in the event that he or she fails to attain certain moral virtues. If this is the case, then Gyekye is implying that personhood of an individual is determined by the community, but radical communitarians say the same thing. Gyekye's promise to recognize individual rights in equal proportion as he does in social responsibilities, but this is unsuccessful. He ended up treating rights as secondary values just as radical communitarians do, by prioritizing the interest of the community over individual rights in cases of clashes between the individual and the community. On this, Gyekye contain of individual rights is precisely for the sake of the community at large and not for the individual himself or herself in particular as he always claimed. From our understanding of Gyekye's system of rights, it seems that rights is left largely in individual's shoulders to settle issues of his/her own well-being; and, in a communitarian settings, it is a function of the communal effort as human beings to assist each other as a moral requirement. This requirement, to secure the well-being of all is well captured by Gyekye. So if the well being of all is secured, the above statement reminds us that communitarian logic, "assumes a great concern for values, for the good of the wider society as such". It is this good of a wider society that takes priority. It is for this reason that ultimate rights will be sacrificed when they clash with duties to promote and secure the well-being of all. On this we say that a clash of individual rights and community interest by Gyekye is hanging on the air.

Conclusion

To achieve personhood, the work argues for individual rights as the sole constituents of achieving an open democratic community, where the interests of every members of the community, irrespective of his or her ethnocultural background, would be given equal moral attention. By so doing, individual persons will also be in the position to make positive contributions to the advancement, progress and well-being of the community; be it cultural, social, or political and that equal recognition of the principle of moral worth and human dignity is essential for the community. Indeed, Gyekye's idea of personhood in relation to rights requires the recognition of equal moral standing between an individual and a cultural community which results in responsibility to oneself as an individual as well as responsibility to the community.

Indeed, we can say that, the individual rights, as opposed to ‘role-structural rights’, guarantee cordial relationships among members of the community, and the various ethno-cultural structures should be transcended for the sake of building the community and the emphasis should be on individual constitutional patriotism rather than ethnic loyalty.

Despite all complexities, the work submit that, Gyekye’s idea of personhood when partially defined by the communitarian structure can guarantee individual rights in African communitarianism; with equal moral standing between an individual and a cultural community, which describes an individual as a communal-being and also as an autonomous, self determining, self-assertive being in terms of ethical principles with a capacity for evaluation, tolerance, and choice.

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