

RELATIONAL PERSONHOOD IN GABRIEL MARCEL AND IGBO COMMUNALISM: A PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISAL

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Abstract

This paper undertakes a philosophical appraisal of the concept of relational personhood as articulated in Gabriel Marcel's existential personalism and the traditional Igbo worldview of communalism. Gabriel Marcel emphasizes the human person as a mystery, not a problem, and defines personhood through presence, fidelity, availability, and especially through interpersonal relationships. Similarly, the Igbo sense of communalism conceives the individual not as an isolated entity but as a being whose identity and fulfillment are inextricably tied to the community. This study explores the convergences between Marcel's relational ontology and the Igbo communitarian ethos, highlighting how both traditions affirm the centrality of relationship, solidarity, and transcendence in defining the human person. Through a comparative analysis, it examines how both perspectives offer valuable correctives to modern individualistic and materialist conceptions of the self. This paper further suggests that integrating Marcelian and Igbo insights can enrich contemporary discussions on personhood, ethics, and social responsibility, especially in multicultural and postcolonial contexts. Ultimately, the study affirms that authentic personhood flourishes not in isolation or separation, but through meaningful participation and togetherness in relationships grounded in love, respect, and mutual recognition.

Introduction

The philosophical inquiry across cultures, religious beliefs, and epochs about what it means to be a human person has occupied a central place in human history among scholars. In contemporary human society, particularly within the Igbo society and African philosophy in general, there has been a paradigm shift from understanding the person as an autonomous, self-contained subject to viewing personhood as fundamentally relational towards community life. This relational turn challenges the Cartesian legacy of individualism, opening new paths for understanding the human being as embedded within a network of relationships, community, and transcendence.

Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973), a prominent French existentialist and Christian philosopher, is known for his critique of objectivist and reductionist views of the human person among other philosophers. In contrast to such views, Marcel (1951) posits that the person is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be lived, fundamentally characterized by presence, fidelity, availability, and communion with others. For Marcel, human existence is not constituted merely by biological or rational functions but is deeply rooted in interpersonal relationships and transcendence, through which the person discovers their authentic self. Though, Marcel's thought pattern is more of Christian principles, meaning that he was influenced heavily by Christian principles and philosophers.

Similarly, in the Igbo worldview, personhood is not seen as an isolated attribute but as something realized within the context of the community. The often-quoted Igbo maxim "*Nwa bu nwa oha*" (A child is a child of the community) or "I am because you are", encapsulates this communal philosophy because no one owes a child he or she belongs to the community and vice versa. Within this framework, individual identity and moral development are attained through communal belonging, mutual responsibility, and interdependence (Iroegbu, 1995). The community does not suppress the individual but serves as the necessary ground for the full flourishing of the person (Mbiti, 1969).

This paper undertakes a comparative and critical appraisal of Gabriel Marcel's concept of relational personhood and the Igbo communal conception of the human being. While arising from distinct cultural and philosophical contexts, Marcel from a European existential-Christian tradition and the Igbo from African communalism, both perspectives converge on a vision of personhood that is dialogical, participatory, and transcendent. The analysis aims to explore these convergences, highlight their unique contributions, and examine their relevance in improving human relations, rethinking human dignity, social ethics, and identity in a world increasingly marked by alienation, individualism, and cultural fragmentation. On the global level, it contributes and helps to reemphasize the communal relationship that co-exist among nations toward the eradication of wars between nations. In doing so, the paper argues that integrating insights from Marcel's personalism and Igbo communal thought provides a more holistic, human-centered approach to personhood that respects individual uniqueness, and social embeddedness. Such a synthesis has the potential to enrich not only philosophical anthropology but also contemporary discussions on African theology, which borders on the liberation of people from poverty and slavery, and builds up justice, social cohesion, and intercultural dialogue.

Gabriel Marcel's Notion of Person: A Being with The Capacity of Relationship

The celebrated aphorism, "no man is an island," proves to be the most suitable when one wants to delve deeply into Gabriel Marcel's practical-concrete philosophy. Contrary to Sartre (1969), who said, *L'enfer c'est les autres* (Hell is the other person), Marcel (1965) speaks of a reality which seems to have been lost in our time, the honour of being a man. Marcel's philosophy was based on the concrete human situation. In the main, he has given vent to addressing the intriguing problems facing human society. As a twentieth-century philosopher, who was well acquainted with the facts of the time, he undauntedly delved into addressing the problems that confront man in an effort to improve human condition.

Descartes (1637) and Kant in their idealistic abstraction, and extreme rationalism isolated the subject and asserted that the subject or the self is an abstract and empty center. It is this euphoria that the development of scientific thought and development of technology has intruded into and disfigured the interpersonal relationship. This resulted in what Marcel called a broken and fragmented world saturated with the spirit of abstraction, objectification, functionalism and depersonalization of the human being. The worship of technology makes man become a victim of his brainchild. The problem it creates is of course devastating. Man becomes a victim of technology, making him more a 'thing' instead of a person. Ours is indeed an age of nuclear madness which holds a fatal fascination of the modern man. This in essence is what Marcel (1951) was treating when he talked about *I-it* relationship, a relationship which is inauthentic that "The very fact that I treat the other as an amplifier, I tend to consider him merely as a means of resonance or as a sort of apparatus which I can or think I can, manipulate, or of which I can dispose at will" (p.17). This kind of inauthentic relationship which seems to enslave man is still present in our societies in its crude forms, made manifest in slavery, hatred, killings and other forms of man's inhumanity to man.

Marcel (1951) however talks about another kind of relationship, an authentic one which nurses a human heart and is humane. This is the *I-Thou* relationship which for him is a genuine one and can reasonably lead one to the 'Absolute thou', God himself:

Being man means participating in one's fellowman. Seen in this way, friendship is a compensation for my limitation. Here we can speak of a subject – subject relationship. Confronting the "I" there stands a "Thou" as a person, not a "he" as a thing or an object. (p. 68)

Marcel's philosophy is apt to the condition of the African man. In an effort to usurp the debased conception of African person as 'being-for-the-use-of-other', Marcel's notion is a voice of reason to which *mmadu* (man) can rightfully be understood as the 'beauty of life'. He, therefore, moves to emphasize man's need for friendship, fidelity and communion with others. It is within the context of the other that the true personhood of myself is made manifest. *Mmadu* then would mean the beauty of life situated within the community of others.

The Notion of Incarnate Being

Descartes (1637) in his dualistic abstractions developed a dualism of mind and body. This Cartesian dichotomy between mind and body views the body or 'matter' as useless appendage to the pure mind. Marcel (1964) on the other hand, rejects the Cartesian dualism of mind and body by his doctrine of incarnation. He extolled the primacy of existence and sought to restore the ontological weight of concrete human experience. Thus, he objects to any type of thought that would remove man from the real and concrete lived experience. Marcel emphasized that "to be incarnate"

is to present oneself as a body, as this specific body without being able to identify oneself with it, but also without being able to distinguish oneself from it. Without the corporality, that is being incarnate in a body, we do not live our experiences in this world. We confirm our existence by also confirming the existence of the world around us.

The central datum of existence according to Marcel is incarnate being, that is, the affective unity I have with my body. Marcel's approach to the nature of the incarnate being and sensation has both negative and positive aspects. First, in a negative sense, he attempts to exhibit the inadequacies of the traditional solutions to what is familiarly known as 'mind-body' problem, together with an allied conception of nature of sensation. And secondly, he attempts more positively to elucidate the nature of both by means of his 'concrete approaches' that is, the presentation of exemplary experiences which suggest the direction in which his meaning is to be sought. The indispensability of the later method is seen to rest on the incapacity of the conceptual thought to express without distorting the experience of a feeling which eludes the distinction between subject and object. Hence, incarnate being precludes the possibility of either identifying the person with a certain body (materialism), constructing the person as a mind distinct from the body (idealism), or as a related distinct entity to the body (dualism).

Incarnation in Marcel's thought is understood not in the theological sense of the word, but as a sign, of our bodylines in relation to other beings in the world. Incarnation is, according to Marcel (1964):

The infinitely mysterious act by which an essence assumes a body. It is the situation of a being who appears to himself to be bound to his or her body. It is the notion of our non-instrumental communion with our bodies. (p. 137).

Man, then, is essentially incarnate and the only way he can exist in the world and think about the world is by being incarnate, that is, to appear to himself as a body, as this particular body. My incarnation makes me a being present in the world but does not make my body an object, a tool, or an instrument for use or manipulation. It is not an object for the satisfaction of our instinctual cravings. I cannot be distinguished from my body as Descartes (1637) erroneously hold. For Marcel (1960), there does not exist any gap between myself and my body. In fact, I am my body. Marcel, therefore, warned against any objectification of this body when he says: "I am my body in so far as I succeed in recognizing that this body of mine cannot be brought down to the level of being this object, an object, a something or other" (p. 23).

It therefore, becomes evident that it is only through my incarnation that I become present to the world and to others. The awareness of my body becomes the awareness of my being with others. Thus, the incarnate being is not a self-isolated self, for according to Marcel (1960), "it is the property of my body that it does not and cannot exist alone" (p. 23). Again, Marcel affirms that my body is not to be confused with a body, that is, this particular body which is ostensibly definable. In his *Journal Metaphysique*, he notes that I have an inner awareness of my body which is not based on observation, although my body is something, one and the same thing, which can also be perceived by myself or another on that basis. The person or "I" then is at once a body-subject and a body-object, which is at once the content of an inner awareness and an object of public knowledge. An analysis of sensation, moreover, discloses that the inner experience or awareness I have of my body, my sense of embodiment or existence, so to speak, is fused with an awareness of myself as in the world, as being there for others: my existence, Marcel affirms, is "mandatory"

It is in my own body that the domains of being and having, personal act and instrumentality, are found in visible union. Unlike other things, my own body is not a possession or sheer instance of having, for it belongs to my very being and helps to constitute what I am as distinct from what I have. My body shares in my experiences of existence. I confirm the existence of things in the world through direct or indirect contact that they have with my body. For although my body may in many cases be understood as object, that does not take away the fact that I "experience" my body. And this living experience is subjective.

Marcel (1960) goes further and asks: Suppose I would deny the existence of my body? Impossible! For that would mean the end of all existence, my own included. Such a point of departure lacks all sense of reality. That is why idealism has not succeeded in its attempt to make pure consciousness, not bound by any body, confirm its own existence and that of the world. Also, the things with which I come into contact in one way or the other through my work, my hobbies and my needs, do, indeed have an objective existence. But at the same time that they exist for me, they coexist with me. Therefore, they exist in themselves, although they do not possess a conscious personality or

subjectivity. Their existence is justified for me through their relation with my corporality. Sartre (1969) reflects on this:

For us to reflect concretely on the nature of the body, it is necessary to establish an order of our reflections which conforms to the order of being: we cannot continue to confuse the ontological levels, and we must in succession examine the body first as being – for – itself and then as being – for – others. (p. 305).

Although almost all the existentialists treat the theme of my own body, Marcel (1962) does so in closest reference to our common experiences and in a more positive light. Without delving into an extended discourse on Sartre's solipsism notion, he observes that "the discovery of my body as an object is indeed a revelation of its being but the being which is thus revealed to me in its being –for-others" (p. 23).

Marcel (1962) stresses that my own body is the point of my involvement and also of exposure for the human self. Through my body, I find myself already engaged in the world of having, and thus I become a man of possessions and functions. Marcel adds that the point of embarkation for each person is his own bodily existence. This is not only a matter of peril but also of engagement. For my body is the visible pledge of the hold which reality has upon my most private reflections; it is the first taken in the direction of making myself available to others; and it opens up the possibility of my participation in the interpersonal and incarnate community of men and God.

Marcel attempts to determine the relation of my conscious "I" to my body. I ask myself how far I am my body and how far I have my body; my body, which forms the 'borderland' between being and having, my body which determines my place in this world and characterizes my attitude in it. Through my body, I am such and I have the thing with which I can maintain my existence in this world. What then does it mean to say I have 'my body'? "To have" must not be considered here as identical with "to possess". Suppose that I possess my body; then we will have to strip the "I" of its wrappings. To have the body therefore is not meant 'to possess' it, but to have it at one's disposal. So, my body is at my disposal? No. By virtue of my body I can dispose of the things of this world; for it is the basis of all possession.

The first object, the typical object with which I identify myself and which still escapes me, is my body; and it looks as if we find ourselves here, as it were, in the most hidden, the deepest hiding place of having. The body is the prototype of having. That is exactly the reason why I cannot 'dispose' of my body, unless, maybe, I commit suicide. Marcel affirms that my body is the concrete tie between my conscious "I" and the world.

The Categories of Relationship: 'I – Thou' and 'I – It'

A social instinct is implanted in all by nature. The one way to expose the principle of a being is first to contrast its reality with that of other beings. Ordinarily, the qualities associated with a person in the normative sense include the right use of reason and adjustment of individual interest to those of the community. All these qualities are established by the community. This therefore, means that normatively one cannot be fully regarded as a person without a community and that only those human beings are persons whom the community regards as such.

Marcel's philosophy has interpersonal relationship as its central focus. Copleston (1956) rightly points out this when he says that interpersonal relationships constitute a central datum for Marcel's philosophy. Marcel discussed two ways by which man can exist with his fellow man. One is inauthentic while the other is authentic. By authentic existence, Marcel means the mode of true existence. Here, 'being man' implies participating in one's fellowman. Seen in this way, friendship is a compensation for my limitation. Being therefore, for Marcel, means participation in fellowmen. Thus, participation is a subject-to-subject relationship. That is, an 'I' confronting a 'Thou' in a relationship and not as an 'it'.

Subject-object (I-it) relationship for Marcel is not an authentic way of relating, it is a relationship that conceives man as an object. The value of the 'other' subsist in the end he accomplishes. Such objectification of man exists in a functional society. This is a society where man is identified with his job. But disposability opens the door for intersubjective interaction, that is, authentic form of relationship. This relationship is enabled by the conscious awareness of the existence of the incarnate being which points to the existence of other incarnate beings with whom

relationship is possible. From the foregoing, it is clear that there are basically two categories of relationship according to Marcel, *I-thou* and *I-it*.

I-Thou (*Je-Tu*): The Subject – Subject Relationship

According to Gallagher (1962) Marcel emphasized two general ways of comporting ourselves towards others that can be used as barometers for intersubjective relationships: *disponibilité* and *indisponibilité*. These words generally translated as ‘availability’ and ‘unavailability’ or, less frequently as ‘disposability’ and ‘non-disposability’, bear meanings for Marcel that do not have perfect English equivalence. Therefore, in addition to the sense of availability and unavailability, Marcel suggests the addition of the concepts of ‘handiness’ and ‘unhandiness’ to his English readers in an attempt to clarify his meaning. Handiness and unhandiness refer to the availability of one’s resources namely material, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Thus, the term *disponibilité* refers to the measure in which I am available to someone, the state of having my resources at hand to offer; and this availability or unavailability of resources is a general state or disposition.

Indisponibilité can manifest itself in any number of ways; however, for Marcel (1995) “unavailability is invariably rooted in some measure of alienation” (p. 40). Pride is an instructive example of *indisponibilité*, although the same state of non-disposability would also exist in a person who has come to view himself in functional terms or one who is blinded by a purely technical world-view. Pride is not exaggerated opinion of oneself arising from self-love, which Marcel (1995) insists is really only vanity. Rather, pride consists in believing that one is self-sufficient. It consists in drawing one’s strength solely from oneself.

The I-thou relationship in Marcel discovered under the plane of secondary reflection and mystery is both horizontal as well as vertical. On the horizontal plane, the “thou” for Marcel is the other, who can be invoked by me. He is the being with whom I can enter into a relationship. This is the plane of authentic intersubjectivity. Here, we are no longer two isolated or self-enclosed entities, two strangers struggling to possess and objectify each other. Rather, I become present to the ‘thou’ in mutual openness and self-giving. This, I discover the thou in a genuine meeting, in love, friendship and spiritual availability.

The meeting is not an approach from the outside. It is rather a *meta-problématique*, namely, problem-solving. With this word, Marcel (1995) seeks as it were, to impress upon us that objectification is no longer possible. To be with others is in the concrete experience to be recognized as a mystery. It is obvious that the meeting thus obtains a metaphysical aspect. In opposition to a ‘communication objective’ there is a communication *ontologique*. The conscious “I” enters into the concrete experience, and from there he tries to push through the mystery of ‘being’. It is in my relationship with the other one that the process of my becoming a person takes place. I do not want to comprehend the other one methodically, but rather to re-enter into myself (*recueillement*) in the concrete experience of being with the other. Together we are involved (*engagement*) in “being” and the “I” opens itself (*disponibilité*) for the presence of the “thou” in its entirety, just as the “thou” does this for the “I”.

When I address the other as “thou” in a relationship of love, I become completely involved in all his or her affairs and whatever affects him, affects me also. Thus, I-thou relationship is an invocation, an appeal to being; a call intended to be listened to, heard and as well responded to. Through this invocation of the other, the “I” moves out to encounter the other in a meeting of love and spiritual availability. It is an address-and-response type of relationship, a dialogical relationship of the “I” to a “thou” as opposed to the dialectical, question-and-answer (information) type of relation between the subject and object. It involves a ‘witness’ of real being.

The “thou” affirms my being because, according to Marcel (1995), it is only in recognition of the other as a ‘thou’ that I realize myself as a person and as such, an ‘I’ to a ‘thou’. In other words, “it is my relationship with the other that the process of my becoming a person takes place” (p. 69). Seymour (1963) also confirms that “only as the other is truly thou for me, do I truly become I for myself, for thou discover me for myself. I am truly I only over against a thou for whom I also am a thou” (p. 38). Schutz as cited by Nnoruka (2009) buttresses this more in the concept of ‘We-relation’, “The We-relation is the reciprocal aspect of thou-relation. To show a We-relation with another, I must be conscious of his existence and presence” (p. 60). I can, therefore, share in the conscious life of another only when we encounter each other in a concrete We-relation. This would refer to the face-to-face relationship in which the partners are aware of each other and sympathetically participate in each other’s lives.

On the other hand, the love of the thou do not stem from love of certain basic qualities in the person; neither physical, physiological nor psychological. It involves 'global wholeness', the complete person of the "I" directed to the unlimited, unspecified being of the thou. Thus, Seymour (1963) confirms that "I do not love the other because he has certain good qualities or because the 'I' has judged the other to possess specific intellectual, moral and religious virtues" (p. 36). When love of the thou is based on these, it is bound to degenerate into a utility-oriented communion: the I-it relationship. I-thou therefore, is a selfless, mutual and reciprocal relation between the 'I' and the 'thou'. Both the I and thou discover their freedom by entering into loving relation and becoming available to each other as they shatter their self-enclosed egocentric prisons, to open up to others. The mutual communion of I-thou affirms my freedom as opposed to Sartre's negative intersubjectivity, where the other engulfs my freedom, and where the look and presence of the other erodes my personality.

Also on the vertical plane, I encounter God who becomes the Absolute Thou for me. I thereby enter into a mutual reciprocal and dialogical relationship with the Absolute Thou. The Absolute Thou cannot be reduced to an object, a he or it. He can only be addressed as "Thou". Thus, the I-Absolute Thou relation becomes a dialogical and responsive relation in which the I becomes a 'Thou' for God. In this case then, belief in God for Marcel becomes 'a thou-address meant to be heard' and responded to. Marcel (1952) observes: "A God whom my belief did not interest would not be God but a simple metaphysical entity" (p. 154). Therefore, the religious experiences of prayer, faith, contemplation, become dialogical relationship with the Thou, a mode of participation between finite thou and the Absolute.

This dialogical, responsive, mutual or reciprocal relationship of the I and Thou, Marcel (1995) describes as a "dyadic" relationship. It is a dyadic relation because it involves participation, presence and availability. Basically, the I-thou relationship is dyadic because it contains some measure of exclusiveness. It is exclusive of a third party beside the I and the thou, who may either try to verify or describe our experience of the communion. There is a crowd here, as in any I-thou relationship. Rather, I-thou relation is personal, a relation between me and the thou and as such defies any verification from outside, as is characteristic of all ontological participations. For Hanah (1958) "The presence of the others, who see what we see and hear what we hear, assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves" (p.58). Marcel (1964) explains what he meant by I-thou correlation in the following words:

It may also turn out that submerging oneself in the life of another and being forced to see things through his eyes, is the only way of eliminating the self-obsession from which one has sought to free oneself. Alone, one cannot succeed in this, but the presence of the other person accomplishes this miracle, provided one gives one's consent to it and does not treat it as a simple intrusion but as a reality. (p. 51).

Marcel emphasizes that for authentic intersubjectivity to be realistic some sort of meeting must be possible in which we discover in our fellowman something other than hell. And the more we stress the personality of the "I" in our being, and the special nature of our existence, the more it becomes clear that confronting the "I" there is someone else, a 'thou', for whom I must open myself, if I want to discover a little who I really am myself.

Similarities Between the Igbo Sense of Communalism and Gabriel Marcel's Relational Personhood

The Igbo sense of community, often referred to as communalism, is a core element of traditional African/Igbo thought that emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals within the community. And there are many senses of Igbo communalism which ranges from suprasensible and material. Both senses are found in Igbo community to be originally "god-made" because it transcends the people who live in it, and it is "man-made" because it cannot be culturally understood independent of those who live in it (Onwubiko, 1991). In Igbo philosophy, a person is not considered an isolated individual, but one whose identity, worth, and moral development are deeply rooted in and shaped by the community. Therefore, an authentic Igbo person is known and identified in, by and through his community. This validate the saying that no one is an island. The community serves as the foundation for self-realization, social responsibility, and moral accountability (Iroegbu, 1995; Mbiti, 1969).

In the Igbo worldview, (Okolo, 1985) contends that personhood is not automatically conferred by birth but is achieved through active participation in communal life, fulfilling social roles, and maintaining harmonious relationships with others, hence the community is the custodian of the individual. This communal ethic promotes values such as solidarity, respect for elders, mutual aid, shared identity, and responsibility to others. The individual is seen as part of a larger whole, and the community acts as both the environment and validator of personhood. This means that the Igbo idea

of security and its value depends on personal identification with and within the community, which offers the Igbo people their physical and ideological identity. In this sense, Ownwubiko (1991) concludes that the community as an entity remains while individual as a person come and go.

This Igbo communitarian understanding of the person finds a philosophical parallel in the thought of Gabriel Marcel, particularly in his relational view of the human person. Marcel critiques modern society's tendency to reduce the person to an object a thing to be used or categorized rather than a subject to be encountered in relationship. For Marcel, the human person is fundamentally a being-in-relationship, and personhood is discovered not in isolation, but through presence, availability, and fidelity in interpersonal communion in a community (Marcel, 1951). This relational character comes out vividly in Kanu (2015) idea of *igwebuike*, when different individuals come together in a community to carry out a task or discuss with each other to achieve a common goal.

Marcel's notion of "I-Thou" relationships, where one engages the other as a subject and not an object, mirrors the Igbo emphasis on interpersonal respect and community belonging. Just as the Igbo reject individualism that separate people from communal responsibility, values and ethics. Marcel (1951) resists existential isolation and calls for personal involvement, shared meaning, and openness to transcendence. Both perspectives affirm that authentic human existence requires togetherness, belonging, solidarity, mutual recognition, and love. Furthermore, Marcel's concept of "availability" (*disponibilité*) the openness and readiness to respond to others aligns with the Igbo virtue of solidarity, where individuals are expected to be present and responsive to the needs of their kin and neighbors. In both views, community is not a limiting force but the necessary space where the fullness of personhood is cultivated and it becomes a living clan where life is human and humane.

In summary, both Gabriel Marcel's existential personalism and the Igbo communal worldview converge on the idea that personhood is essentially relational. While their cultural and philosophical contexts differ, they both emphasize that a person becomes truly human through relationship, participation, and community, and that any conception of the human person detached from others is incomplete and dehumanizing. This is the reason individualism as an ideology and principle of life, is not encouraged in Igbo society, even though it is not destroyed.

Evaluation and Conclusion

The analysis of the Igbo sense of community in relation to Gabriel Marcel's notion of relational personhood reveals a profound convergence and complementarity in the understanding of what it means to be human and relational being. Both traditions challenge the modern tendency toward individualism which permeated most economic aspect of world, by affirming that **personhood is fundamentally realized in relationship**. The **Igbo communal custom** teaches that the individual exists meaningfully only within the context of the community, where identity, moral growth, and social responsibility are nurtured. Similarly, **Gabriel Marcel's personalism** emphasizes the importance of **interpersonal presence, availability, and fidelity** as the foundations of authentic personhood. Though, arising from different philosophical and cultural contexts, Igbo communalism and European existentialism share a deep **respect for human dignity, interdependence**, share deep sense of crave for each other, and the **transcendent nature of the human person**. This shared vision provides a rich philosophical framework for addressing contemporary issues such as alienation, social fragmentation, tribal or ethnic war sand ethical indifference.

The convergence and complementarity of Marcelian personalism into dialogue with Igbo communal thought, underscore the need for a **relational anthropology**, harmonious relationship that transcends the human being not as an isolated being, but as a being-in-relation, rooted in **community, solidarity, and love**. Such a vision is not only philosophically compelling but also practically urgent in a world increasingly marked by disconnection and dehumanization. Ultimately, the human person, whether in Western or African thought, finds true fulfillment not in isolation or separation, but in **communion with others and with the quest for transcendency**.

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