



# The Dialectics of Gender, Sexuality and Being: A Philosophical Analysis of the Ontological Disjunction within *Ibuanyidanda* and the Logical Rationale for an Inclusive Policy for LGBTQIA+ Individuals in Africa

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## ABSTRACT

In this essay, I explore the ontological disjunction inherent in Asouzu's philosophical framework *ibuanyidanda* – 'a philosophy of complementarity', which he uses to describe 'interconnectedness' as an essential nature within African ontology. I also examine the bitter sorrows experienced by LGBTQIA+ individuals in Africa, which have led me to raise doubts and subject African complementary ontology (and *ibuanyidanda*) into a critical inquiry. For several years, African philosophers have argued that African ontology is complementary, holistic, communitarian and that all realities are interconnected, which contrasts with the Western ontological conception which emphasizes individualism. While the core tenet of *ibuanyidanda* revolves around social cohesion and collective well-being, I argue that when evaluated within the lived experiences of the people in Africa, its limitations are paradoxically unravelled through its failure to factor-in cohesion and complementarity amongst LGBTQIA+ individuals. I use the transcendental method to examine the fundamental conditions underlying African ontology and the preconditions necessary for imbalance (disconnection) between being - specifically, the being of humans, their diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. The critical method is also employed to challenge and re-examine existing gender structures and sexual orientations in African societies to determine whether African ontology truly promotes complementarity, interconnectedness and cohesiveness. Lastly, I apply the phenomenological method to exclude biases and prejudices stemming from religion, culture and ethnicity in order to engage with the complexities of LGBTQIA+ identities and facilitate transformative thinking that not only acknowledges the diversity of identities and sexual orientations, but also work actively to dismantle the socio-cultural barriers hindering equality and justice for LGBTQIA+ individuals in Africa. I argue that emphasizing an ontological unity (U) while neglecting meaningful engagement with identity politics (P) to foster inclusivity (I) results in an ontological disjunction (D). This disjunction is exclusive (E), not inclusive (I), and undermines communal harmony (H).

$$1. U \wedge \neg P \Rightarrow D$$

$$2. D \equiv E$$

$$3. E \Rightarrow \neg H$$

Where: U = Ontological unity of beings, P = Meaningful engagement with identity politics, I = Inclusivity, D = Ontological disjunction, E = Exclusive disjunction and H = Communal harmony. An ontological disjunction, in the exclusive sense of the disjunction occurs where there is a fundamental separation or conflict in the nature of being or existence, particularly in how different identities relate to each other, marring the interconnectedness that is supposed to exist within such complementary and inclusive ontological framework. In this study, I call for a transformative thinking that not only acknowledges the complexity, diversity and richness of different identities, but works actively to dismantle the socio-cultural biases hindering recognition, equality and justice for LGBTQIA+ in Africa.

**Key Words:** Ontological Disjunction, Complementarity, *Ibuanyidanda*, LGBTQIA+, Sexuality, Being, African Ontology

## 1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The marginalization and discrimination of LGBTQIA+ individuals across Africa<sup>1</sup> reveals a tragic existential and ontological invisibility as their being is rendered invisible within the socio-cultural matrix. This perpetuates a cycle of suffering where the yearning for recognition and belonging is stifled and silenced with the weight of discriminatory structures and hegemonic normativity.

<sup>1</sup>We are referring to some countries both in "Africa South of the Sahara (Sub-Saharan Africa) and North Africa" that have placed heteronormative standards and discrimination, making it a crime to identify as LGBTQIA+.

It is important to note that for several years, after grappling with issues regarding the existence of African philosophy and successfully proving its existence, African philosophers have accepted that the ontological framework of Africa is complementary, holistic, and interconnected. Hence, it has been described with terms such as; *ubuntu*<sup>2</sup>, holism, interdependence, collectivism, mutuality and reciprocity. In similitude, *ibuanidanda* which Asouzu uses to describe African ontological framework is based on the principle of 'complementarity'. For him, complementarity is the essential nature of Africa, and within this framework; every reality is seen as missing links (Asouzu, 2011a, p. 103).

Like Asouzu, some African philosophers have accepted this ontology as that which informs the African worldview. For example, John Mbiti (1969) in explaining *ubuntu* said; "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" – "*Ego sum quia sumus; et quia sumus, ergo sum*" (106). This is quite different from Descartes (1641) representing the Western view and who famously said – "*cogito, ergo sum*" – "I think, therefore I am"<sup>3</sup> (*Meditations, II*). The implication of the Cartesian perspective on the nature of reality makes reality to be inherently subjective, as a consequence, giving emphasis to the "self" and neglecting "others". On the contrary, Mbiti's idea emphasizes reality as communal and relational because the phrase suggests that individual existence (I am), is inseparable from the existence of others (we are), "since none of us come to the world fully formed, we will always need others" (Gathogo, 2022, p. 4). This demonstrates interdependence and complementarity, meaning that reality is not constructed only through individual consciousness or action, but through the relationship and interconnectedness of individuals with the society.

Asouzu (2011b) avers that the term *ibuanidanda* means "no task is insurmountable for *danda*". Literally, *ibu* means 'load', *anyi* 'means not insurmountable for', and *danda* is 'a species of ants' (p. 11). He used the analogy of ants (*danda* – a species of tiny ants) to demonstrate that each of them is tiny and insignificant on its own, but when they come together collectively, they are able to accomplish extraordinary tasks, build massive underground tunnels and carry food many times their own body weight (Asouzu, 2011b). These tasks cannot be done by an individual ant since it would seem insurmountable for such an ant.

The central lesson he tries to communicate here is; interdependency, shared responsibility, collective wisdom and efforts, strength and unity as an aboriginal and inherent culture of Africa. In other words, what we might want to describe as an essential constituent of the "being of Africans". Sequel to this, we find it appropriate to say that for him, the heart of this message beats very clear and true, that interdependence is the thread that binds us through, a tapestry woven with shared hands and heart, where collective wisdom guides us, and collective efforts imparts strength in each stride, for as one we stand tall, and in unity's strength we rise and conquer all. This is a legacy born from Africa's soul, where mutual responsibility makes us whole.

It is indubitable that the veracity of such an ontological framework can truly be evaluated in the lived experiences of the people, and such ideals (if true) will manifest dully in an environment and cultural space where irrespective of the massive diversities amongst people, there exist an acknowledgement of the need for co-existence, mutual harmony and respect. On the contrary, evaluating these ideals within the socio-cultural framework of African society is fraught with paradoxes due to certain factors, societal ideals and norms that are marked in a way that impedes such unity, leading to a questioning of the authenticity of such ontology. For this reason, it seems to portray an ontological disjunction in an exclusive sense of a disjunction. This occurs when there is a fundamental conflict or separation in the nature of being or existence, particularly, regarding how different identities or entities relates with each other. This is triggered by heteronormative standards and marginalization over members of LGBTQIA+ in Africa, whereby the claimed complementary ontological framework is not able to factor a cohesive, integrated and interconnected perspective towards people of different identities and sexual orientation.

The lack of acceptance of people of this category in Africa is a serious problem that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century philosophers in Africa should grapple with via the lens of objectivity and rationality, devoid of bias, since such prejudice may obliterate the claimed 'inclusive' nature of African ontology. However, some African philosophers have decided to keep this area unexplored due to slants, stemming from cultural values, religious idiosyncrasies and other traditional perspectives which they hold sacrosanct. Regarding this, we deem it fit to say that only few works and thoughts have come forth, not untouched by the tinge of bias, but born of countless influences, both seen and unseen that colour the lens through which they are viewed. Even in our schools, the call to teach a gender truth where all are freed remains out of reach. Rather, we linger in this chaos where one gender vies against another; we dwell in this discord where one gender battles the other's might, and until we heed this truth that must unfold, the strife will persist and the story retold, and if we do not grasp this lesson profound the harmony of understanding will not be found in Africa.

A crucial aspect of this work delves into the marginalization of LGBTQIA+ individuals in Africa, with societal norms that impede their harmonious existence, irrespective of the persistent alarm raised regarding the unity, complementarity and interdependence underneath African ontology. This begs the question; if the very foundation of African ontology is built on the principle of complementarity and communalism, what happens to the LGBTQIA+ individuals? Here, the reality speaks for itself evidently; with so many laws in Africa having heteronormative standards. In *addendum*, Mkhize and Mthembu (2023) assert that "since 1990, out of the existing 46 regions in Africa, only ten (10) have changed their laws to allow queer people to publicly express their gender identities and sexuality" (p. 378). This means that in some regions, there are ongoing heteronormative practices that are against people who are not heterosexuals, and Nigeria is a typical example of such regions where laws traduces the support for people with LGBTQIA+ individuals.

*Ibuanidanda* only addresses the possibility of how success can be achieved through collaboration, but has not implemented strategies to address how such collaboration can be achieved and how those without the wherewithal can be supported. If collaboration can drive success, how can we collaborate to support the LGBTQIA+ individuals in Africa? Writing about collaboration without installing how theoretical perspectives can be

<sup>2</sup>Originating from the *Nguni Bantu* Languages (the *Zulu* and *Xhosa*), the word is core in South African Philosophy with emphasis on humanity towards others. It is rooted in the ideology that the well-being of an individual and identity, is interconnected with that of others and the community.

<sup>3</sup>Descartes' aphorism can be understood within the context of individualistic ontology based on his emphasis on the primacy of individual's consciousness and mental faculties in constituting their existence. He identifies the self not by external objects or social relationships, but by internal mental activities like doubting, understanding, affirming, denying, wishing, imagining and perceiving. This reflects an individualistic ontology since it centers on the self as the foundation of existence and prioritizing the subjective personal experience of the individual over external communal factors.

transformed into practical praxis may not really bring an achievement of the aim in view. Meanwhile, it is necessary to note that we have gone to the level where theoretical conjectures should be complemented by practical gestures. Thus, our thoughts should mirror reality.

Ultimately, this work posits that for African ontology to be held complementary, it must embrace the complexities and variances of human existence, so as to reaffirm the essence of inclusivity, interdependence and cooperation as demonstrated by *ibuanyidanda*, lest it yields an ontological disjunction in an exclusive sense of a disjunction, making African complementary ontology a myth.

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## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The statement of the problem is informed by the question: Is African ontology truly complementary, communitarian and inclusive? While African philosophers assert that African ontology is founded on the principles of complementarity, inclusivity and interconnectedness (a view that Asouzu upholds and demonstrates in his complementary ontological framework – *ibuanyidanda*), the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals in Africa reveal a disjunction in the form of an exclusive disjunction, rather than an inclusive one. This disjunction manifests itself in the marginalization, segregation and exclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals, which challenges the authenticity of the claims and ideals of this ontology. If African ontology is genuinely complementary and inclusive and not built on a myth or fiction, why do we continue to witness exclusion based on sexual orientation and gender identity? This work seeks to critically examine whether African ontology can truly embody its professed values of inclusivity and interconnectedness, or if it fosters an exclusive disjunction that undermines its fundamental ideals.

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## 3. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

**Being** - The word being has been defined differently by various philosophers. Etymologically, it comes from the Latin *esse*, Greek *οὐσία* (*ousia*), French *être* German *sein* which all connote 'existence or coming to be'. The word being is synonymous with existence. It is the condition, state or circumstance of existing. Being is that which exists (Sucuc, 2018, p. 1), it is that which exists or is capable of existing (Alawa, 2012, p. 235). In this work, notwithstanding the various definitions, our understanding of being is in line with the philosophical understanding of being as the state or quality of existence, encompassing all that is real or has existence. Centrally, our idea of being focuses on the being of humans – "human being". This aligns with Asouzu's perspective who writes that the infinite mutual relationship that characterizes his complementary ontology (*ibuanyidanda*) takes its most concrete form in the relationship of human beings – "the interpersonal relationship of human beings in the world" (Asouzu, 2016, p. 35). In this work, we are considering the interpersonal relation of the being of humans – "human beings" taking into consideration the complementary ontological framework of Africa.

**Ontology** – The word comes from two Greek words, *ὄντος* (*ontos*)– meaning 'being' (that which is) and *λόγος* (*logos*)– meaning a study or a discourse. Etymologically, it can be defined as the study of being. The term was coined in 1613 by a German Philosopher, Rudolf Göckel (also known as Goclenius) and he used it in his work *Lexicon Philosophicum* (Philosophical Dictionary), where he defined it as the study of being or existence (Smith, 2003, p. 155). It is one of the branches of metaphysics alongside cosmology (which studies the origins, structure and nature of the universe) and cosmogony (the study of the divine, concepts related to God, gods and the relationship between the divine and the universe).

While metaphysics is concerned about the nature and structure of reality as a whole – "that which is" (Otto, 79), studying *being qua being* – being as it is (Omogegbe, 1991, p. 23) and giving a comprehensive account of reality as a whole and not just an aspect of reality like Chemistry (Otto, 79), ontology as a branch of metaphysics studies the kinds, structures, relations and properties of reality (Smith, 2003, p. 155). "It seeks to provide definitive and exhaustive answers to the classification of entities in all spheres of being; it can serve as an answer to such questions as; what classes of entities are needed for a complete description and explanation of all the goings-on in the universe?" (Smith, 2003, p. 155). Deriving from this, ontology can be understood as the study of being or existence. The fundamental question it seeks to answer includes; what kinds of things exist? What does it mean for something to exist? It also investigates the categorization of entities including; objects, properties and nature of their relationship.

The literal definition of ontology as the study of being will too wide in this work, and philosophers had realized that "being is at once the most universal and emptiest of concepts, since everything one can think of can also be said to 'be' something in some way, including; objects, animals, people, feelings, ideas, activities, social roles or mathematical objects" (Al-Amoudi & O'Mahoney, 2015, p. 15). All of these have something in common, which is, "they are" and "they participate in being" and whenever we talk about a thing, we talk about it as existing, whether mentally or physically. Thus, thinking about an entity that has no being is impossible since non-being even exists as non-being.

For the purpose of this work, the concept of ontology will have a restrictive definition fixed on the being of humans. In other words, "human beings" and "the nature of their relationships". This restrictive and contextual definition of ontology fits well into this study by focusing on human beings, gender and sexual orientations, while also incorporating the relational aspect of being to see how it fits to the broader complementary and integrated framework of African ontology. This suits well with Asouzu's work which is primarily fixed on interconnectedness and relationality. This makes him write that: "*ibuanyidanda* concerns the harmonious mutual complementary interrelatedness of all things that exists, and this idea of being does not become evident in any discrete quantity or quality alone, neither does it get lost in a form of abstract abstruse transcendentalism. Rather, it is something given in the harmonious mutual complementary interrelatedness of all things that exist" (Asouzu, 2011b, p. 31). However, this makes his concept of being wide. Notwithstanding, he further narrowed his focus to the being of humans (human beings) when he wrote that the infinite mutual relationship that characterizes his complementary ontology (*ibuanyidanda*) takes its most concrete form in "the interpersonal relationship of human beings in the world" (Asouzu, 2016, p. 35). Thus, in this work, I am specific to the being of humans (human beings) and their relationship (human relationship).

**African Ontology** - This can be defined as the African understanding of being and life in general. It is the understanding of all beings and as being in their hierarchical order (Ekeh, 2023, p. 91). African ontology has various categories of beings with specific roles and yet having an interaction among themselves in various dimensions. Dukor (1989) gives credence to this when he writes that Africans in their ontology believe that everything is interconnected, and that nothing exists in Isolation. In African ontology, there is a hierarchical order. Flowing from the explanation of the hierarchy of being in African ontology by African philosophers like Tempels (1969), Mbiti (1969) Dukor (1989), Asouzu (2011b), Francis Etim (2013) and Obioha (2017), the hierarchy of being in African ontology can be depicted below.

This bi-directional line signifies the existence of interaction between these beings, since in African ontology; the concept of being is fundamentally relational and interconnected. It indicates movement or direction both upward and downward. In this work, we use it to demonstrate the connection between the spiritual and the physical world, implying that existence is a continuum, where the spiritual and physical world is interrelated. This reflects a mutual flow of influence between these realms.

BEING	DESCRIPTION
<b>God</b>	In African ontology, God exists at the apex. God is seen as the ultimate source of all life and power. Viewed as remote, but accessible through intermediary beings or spirits (Obioha & Okaneme, 2017).
<b>Spirits of Divinities</b>	These are territorial gods and goddesses in various cultures and traditions. They are considered lesser divine beings, acting as intermediaries between humans and supreme being (God). They can be associated with certain natural forces like rivers, mountains, trees etc. They are believed to influence human affairs, offering guidance, protection and blessings. They vary across cultures (Etim, 2013).
<b>Ancestors (Ancestor's Spirits)</b>	These are the living dead. They are the spirits of the deceased, believed to continue existing in the spiritual realm. They are revered and honoured because they are believed to watch over and protect their descendants and their presence is felt through rituals and sacrifices. They are believed to have a direct influence on the living (Cordeiro-Rodrigues & Agada, 2022).
<b>Humans</b>	Humans are considered part of the natural order with a unique position between the spiritual and physical world. They are seen to have a physical body with a spiritual essence which is the soul, with an eternal existence that continues to interact with the world after death (Ezedike, 2019).
<b>Animals</b>	Animals are regarded as interconnected with humans, nature and the divine. They share in the life force and spirit of creation and are not regarded as inferior to humans. Considered as specific symbols, powers or totem, they are seen as spiritual messengers that can guide or bring important omens (Archibong, 2023).
<b>Plants</b>	Plants are considered living beings with spiritual essence, with an important function in the natural world, providing medicine, food and also holding deeper symbolic and spiritual meanings (Mbiti, 1970).

For the purpose of this study, African ontology is the African understanding and view about the nature of being, construed as a dualism, with interdependence and interactionism where the mutual dependence of all beings paves way for interconnectedness, relationality and complementarity. As demonstrated in the diagram, the bi-directional arrows reflect the concept of community and relationality in African ontology. The bi-directional arrow depicts the reciprocal connection, exchange, and intimate connection irrespective of the hierarchy. In this ontology, there is a flow and a continuous exchange, such that one cannot exist in isolation since everything is interconnected and interdependent.

**Ontological Disjunction** – This is a combination of two words; ontology and disjunction. The usage of disjunction in this work is strictly in line with the rules of philosophical logic. *Ipsa facto* by disjunction, I am referring to the logical operation that connects two statements (propositions), resulting in the truth value of at least, one of the statements being true, or both (Hurley, 2015). It is often represented with wedge symbol ‘∨’ which translates ‘or’. For example, A: It is sunny, B: It is raining. The disjunction A ∨ B (It is sunny or it is raining) is true if either it is sunny or it is raining, or both. It is false if neither event occurs. Thus, the disjunction is correct in the following forms

- True ∨ False = True (Since one part of the disjunction is true)
- False ∨ True = True (similarly, one part is true, so the whole statement is considered true)
- True ∨ True = True (If both parts are true, the disjunction is true)
- False ∨ False = False (This is not a valid disjunction because neither part is true)

For clarity, there are two types of disjunctions, an inclusive disjunction and exclusive disjunction. While the former allows for a possibility where a statement can be true when both propositions are true at the same time, the latter holds in that a statement is true only if one of the conditions is true but not both (Chevallier et al., 2008). Hence, for an exclusive disjunction, if both are true at the same time, the statement is false.

INCLUSIVE DISJUNCTION	EXCLUSIVE DISJUNCTION
True ∨ True = True (It is both raining and sunny)	True ⊕ True = False (It is both raining and sunny, which is not allowed)
True ∨ False = True (It is raining but not sunny)	True ⊕ False = True (It is raining but not sunny)
False ∨ True = True (It is sunny but not raining)	False ⊕ True = True (It is sunny but not raining)
False ∨ False = False (It is neither raining nor sunny)	False ⊕ False = False (It is neither raining nor sunny)

sunny)	
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In this work, the specific form of disjunction which we use in qualifying an 'ontological disjunction is an exclusive form.

With this in view, my definition of ontological disjunction in the exclusive understanding of a disjunction is a situation where two or more possibilities or states of being are presented as alternatives meaning that at least, one must be true to exist and not both at the same time.

**Ibuanyidanda** – This word means no load is insurmountable for *danda* (the ant). It is a metaphor used by Asouzu (2011b) to describe the complementary nature of African ontology.

Let us examine it etymologically;

*Ibu* – load

*Anyi* – not insurmountable for

*Danda* – a species of ant

*Ibuanyidanda* – no task is insurmountable for *danda* (Asouzu, 2011, p. 10).

He uses this term to demonstrate African ontology as a mode of being where there is harmony in a mutual complementary existence (Asouzu, 2011b, p. 10). The closest synonym to this word is complementarity.

**Dialectics** – The word has a Greek origin from *dialektike techne* (διαλεκτική τέχνη) which is translated to mean the art of conversation or the art of debate. It is an argumentative exchange involving contradiction (Audi, 2015). Dialectics as used in this work depicts a method of argumentation and reasoning which involves a tension between opposites or contradiction with a focus on the process of change or resolution of these contradictions. This work is seen as a dialectics since it presents argumentation to resolve the contradiction between the African conception of being (African ontology) which is claimed to be complementary and holistic, but yet not inclusive and holistic enough to include the vast diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations.

**Gender** – The word has a Latin origin from '*genus*' meaning kind, type or class. In recent times, gender has been construed as the culturally and socially constructed differences between women and men, girls and boys which give them unequal value, life chances and opportunities (Sabates-Wheeler & Kabeer, 2003). Gender is not innate, it is not something we are born with, it is not something we have, it is something we do (West & Zimmerman, 1987), it is something we perform (Butler, 1990). It is important to note that gender is different from sex. Sex is a biological categorization which is primarily based on the reproductive potential while gender relies on the societal elaboration of the sex. While sex can be considered biological, gender is socio-cultural (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). In this work, the concept of gender refers to a societal construct shaped by the choice of an individual (without a necessary inherent essence), where one can choose or create an identity, through actions, self expressions and decisions.

**Sexuality** – The word sexuality is broad. While some definitions are narrowed in a heteronormative and genital focused way, negating the subjective experiences of people, the flaw of such definition is its vulnerability to the absence of proper inclusion, resulting in non-representation for equity seeking groups like the LGBTQIA+ (Henkelman, et al., 2023). In order to reflect adequate representation of the broad possibility, diversity and varied expressions of people (insofar as there are in existence), we will adopt the definition of Meyer (2010, p. 48) who points out that sexuality refers to a varied and wide range of behaviours, identities and inter-relationships in line with sexual orientation; who and what one is sexually attracted to, the type of sexual activity one actually engages in and sexual identity (how one chooses to describe one's self). In this work, sexuality is used to denote the broad range of sexual feelings, behaviours, orientation and identity which encompasses how individuals experience and express themselves as sexual beings. This includes their sexual attraction, desires, romantic connection and intimacy as influenced by biological, emotional, social, cultural and psychological factors.

**LGBTQIA+** – This represents Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual. The + symbolises the inclusion of other gender identities and expressions which may not be covered by this acronym and it reflects the broad range of the possibility of diversity beyond traditional heterosexual and cisgender norms.

**Complementarity** – The word has its etymology from the Latin word *compelmentum*, from the root *com* – meaning "together" or "with" and *plere* which means "to fill". In philosophy, it is used to explain the fact that two seemingly contradictory or mutually exclusive phenomenon can align with each other. It is the existence of different aspects of a system, seemingly incompatible, but needed for a complete functioning and description of the system (French & Kennedy, 1985, as cited in da Costa & D' Ecio Krause, 2001, p. 4). To complement means the ability of adding something to another to yield improvement. For anything to become complementary, it takes or demands the putting of things together though having different forms, yet are made to become attractive of each other and useful too (Oweh, 2014, p. 29). It implies mutually joining or completing (Home, 2013, p. 908). According to Asouzu (2011b), the idea of complementarity may be captured through the concept of missing links, where humans stay to each other in a relationship that has an inherent necessary mutual dependence (p. 16). Complementarity as used in this work is not different from the above. It implies a condition or state where human beings are inherently dependent on each other in a relationship involving mutual support, shared privileges and responsibilities which are essential for community growth and life enhancement.

**Afro-Communitarianism** – Derived from two words; afro and communitarianism, afro is used to refer to people of African Descent or the Black Race. It is also used when describing something associated with Africa or African identity. Communitarianism is a political theory or model that emphasizes ties, affection, kinship and common purpose (Ogunbajo & Knnapp, 2005, p. 51). Afro-communitarianism, a major ideological preference in the African literature can be defined as the theory which sees an individual as an inherently communal being, embedded within a context of interdependence and social relationships and never as an isolated individual (Gyeke, 1997, p. 44). It requires a sense of cooperation (Mbiti, 1970) with an inherent aspect of African culture, which abhors focus on the self and the competition for an individual pursuant of personal survival, but relies on the collective survival and role of the members of community (Adeate, 2023, pp. 1-2).

Communitarianism has its foundation on the values of solidarity, interdependence, cooperation, care, concern and reciprocal obligations (Obioha, 2018, p. 5) as sure foundations for human well-being, due to the lack of self-sufficiency in a single individual. We have both the radical communitarians and the moderate communitarians which mostly factors debate within the parlance of personhood and normativism in Afro-communitarianism. Radical communitarianism in African philosophy is underneath the assumption that the welfare, goals and values of community are supreme, a *sine qua non* for becoming a member of the community (Mentiki, 2004, pp. 324 - 331). It is normative in the sense that it emphasizes that the community is of prime importance, and it prioritizes conformity with norms of the community. Thus, lack of conformity with the socio-cultural norms of the society or community invalidates and terminates one's personhood in the community (Ukanga & Obioha, 2024, p. 91). For the moderate communitarians, the idea of individual right is emphasized.

The major proponent of moderate communitarianism in African philosophy is Gyekye, and his version is built on three main tenets; the social and rational nature of the individual, the recognition of individual rights and the moral supremacy of the community (Gyekye, 1997, p. 38). His version gives room for equal moral status to both the community and the individual (Gyekye, 1992, p. 107, 1997, p. 41, 2004, p. 58) and the implication of this is that though answerable to the state; one is also allowed or given room to exercise one's rights. Our understanding of communitarianism in this work is not from the radical purview, but a moderate perspective.

The reason for our adoption of Gyekye's moderate communitarian model is that it offers a balanced perspective regarding the relationship between the individual and the community, arguing that individuals are both social and rational beings, since their identities are both shaped by their social interactions with others and the theoretical importance of their rights which is a demonstration of their autonomy irrespective of the social framework. I disregard the radical communitarian perspective because it makes an individual look like an object whose being is only determined and fixed. Since it (the radical communitarian perspective) stresses the moral supremacy of the community over the human, I argue that this kind of quality cannot be applicable to humans who naturally have freedom and autonomy. I align with the moderate communitarian model because it offers a flexible pragmatic solution which drives balance, encourages personal autonomy, steer social harmony and help individuals thrive within communities without sacrificing their personal rights and autonomy.

**Afro-Communalism** – Similar to afro-communitarianism, Afro-communalism is rooted in the emphasis of collective well-being, emphasis of community and interconnectedness shaping an individual and societal life. It draws from the traditional African values and systems which prioritizes the community over individualism with emphasis on solidarity, mutual support, cooperation and shared responsibility. It is a system where individuals attain meaningfulness from the point of view of community (Menkiti, 1984, Gyekye, 1992). Obioha (2014) sees it as a theory whereby the human person is embedded in the context of social relationships and interdependence and never an isolated individual. In this system, the interest of the community is used as a parameter in defining an individual's interest (Asiegbu & Ajah, 2020, p. 31). Our perspective of afro-communalism in this work captures collective identity, solidarity, reciprocity and interdependence over individualism.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This work is approached through three philosophical methods;

**Transcendental Method:** This is a method of philosophical inquiry that investigates the fundamental presuppositions or conditions that fosters the possibility of reality, experience and knowledge, focusing on uncovering the *a priori* structures of categories that makes experience possible. Pereboom (2024) writes that the transcendental method of inquiry is one of the most influential contributions of Kant to philosophy. The transcendental method begins with the question: what is being, why is there being, why are there beings and for what is the origin and end of being? (Iroegbu, 1995, p. 26). It begins with a compelling premise about our thought, experience, or knowledge and then draws a conclusion that is substantive through the presuppositions and necessary condition of the premise.

This is exactly how Kant (1781; 1783) used the transcendental method both in the Critique and the Prolegomena. In this work, the transcendental method will be used in examining the fundamental conditions for gendered experience and knowledge in African societies, the preconditions necessary for imbalance (disconnection) between being (the existence of individuals – “human beings”) and gender identity/sexual orientations in Africa, with specific examination of how the ontological framework of Africa paves way or influences the relation between being and gender identity/sexual orientations. For example, how should foundational categories like communalism, interconnectedness, relationality, being-together etc. influence how we perceive people irrespective of their gender identity or sexual orientations?

**Critical Method:** The critical method of philosophy emphasizes a careful questioning and examination of assumptions to understand the nature of reality (Ndubisi, 2015, p. 6). The method involves some sort of a skeptical inquiry, as Kurtz (1992) notes that this kind of skepticism does not mean hopelessness, despair or unbelief, but “it is a selective or contextual skepticism where we do not doubt everything at the same time, but certain questions in a limited context of investigation to arrive at truth” (pp. 28 – 29). It provides us with a balanced and not a dogmatic approach to issues. This method is associated with philosophers who attempt to challenge existing beliefs or the *status quo* for a refined understanding through reason and logical critique. In this work, the critical method will be used to challenge and re-examine the existing gender structures in African societies to find out whether African ontology promotes complementarity, interconnectedness and cohesiveness. For example, the place of LGBTQIA+ individuals in African societies will be examined to determine whether the complementary ontology of Africa which emphasizes interconnectedness and mutual cooperation gives room for the marginalization of these people, and if it does, there will be a need to propose a renewed understanding of gender identity and sexual orientation in Africa to foster a communal existence that encourages mutual understanding and respect for diversity.

**Phenomenological Method:** This method is associated with Edmund Husserl though the term phenomenology had been used by Hegel. Hegel used it to examine the dialectical process whereby the spirit unfolds, while Husserl developed it as a method of philosophy. The fundamental prospect of the phenomenological method from the Husserlian purview is the description of reality as it is without prejudices, assumptions or presuppositions. In his work, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, he emphasized the need of bracketing or keeping aside all prejudices and preconceptions, stating that from the standpoint of a phenomenological science which is aimed at not violating the pure sense of reality, there is need for “parenthesizing” and the exclusion of all individual objectives which are formed by axiological and practical functioning from cultural formations including; technical, fine arts, state, custom, laws and religion (Husserl, 1913, p. 31). This involves the suspension of judgement and presuppositions and focusing on our experience of the phenomena. In this work, by applying the method of *epoche* which emphasizes the need of excluding bias and prejudices (bracketing) while examining or studying a phenomenon, I am committed to keeping aside all biases and prejudices stemming either from religion, culture and ethnicity so as to engage with the complexities of LGBTQIA+ and facilitate a transformative thinking that not only acknowledges the diversity of identities, but also works actively to dismantle the socio-cultural barriers hindering equality and justice for LGBTQIA+ individuals in Africa.

#### 4. ON THE NATURE OF AFRICAN ONTOLOGY, COMPLEMENTARITY AND THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF *IBUANYIDANDA* AS HELD BY INNOCENT ASOUZU

African ontology from the purview of Asouzu, encapsulated by his postulation *ibuanyidanda* provides a framework for understanding existence, different from that of the Western philosophical tradition. The core of this ontology as espoused by him places emphasis on interconnectedness and relational nature of beings, proposing an existence that is not an isolated phenomenon, but a web of interconnected relationships. His perspective belongs to the complementary trend, and it holds that the universe is constituted of units of dynamic mutual interacting forces at all levels of determination, and these units are related to themselves in an infinite complementary harmonious mode. As a corollary, he writes: "In this *ibuanyidanda* mode of understanding being, we see immediately how the mutual harmony existing between all modes of determination of being is dynamically lifted into the idea that sustains all things that exist" (Asouzu, 2011b, p. 31).

This demonstrates the fact that his perspective of being (in line with African ontology) is defined through relationships, unlike the Western perspective which prioritizes individualism. Accordingly, this idea of being does not affirm the existence of being in discrete quantity; neither does it pay attention to quality alone. "It does not get lost in a form of abstract abstruse transcendentalism; instead, it is a harmonious mutual complementary interrelatedness of all things that exists" (Asouzu, 2011b, p. 31). He maintains that the inspiration for this teaching is drawn from traditional African philosophers belonging to the complementary school of philosophy, who also allude to *ibuanyidanda* (Asouzu, 2011b, p. 10). The implication is that these philosophers hold a similar view, that all entities in nature and society are interconnected and dependent on each other. This reflects a broader understanding of life that emphasizes cooperation, unity, and the importance of relationships within the natural world.

In his inaugural lecture *Ibuanyidanda and the Philosophy of Essence (Philosophy the Science of Missing Links of Reality)*, Asouzu (2011b) states that the closest English equivalent to the word "*ibuanyidanda*" is "complementarity" (p. 102). Nwankwo (2022, p. 230) holds the view that for Asouzu, *ibuanyidanda* is the best suited metaphor for 'complementarity' utilized to demonstrate the idea of collective efforts.

The emphasis and lesson placed here in lieu of Asouzu's philosophy is the idea that being is seen on account that anything that exists, serves as a missing link of reality (Asouzu, 2011b, p. 31), and we may infer that this requires a complementary part which could be seen in "the other". Expanding further, he holds that African Ontology expressed through his concept *ibuanyidanda* (complementarity) which he captures as "missing links" involves a state of being where humans stay to each other in a relationship having an inherent necessary mutual complementary dependence in their services, privileges and responsibilities... (Asouzu, 2011b, p. 16). His argument here is that African ontology emphasizes the interconnectedness of being and not isolation of being. For this reason, people are part of this mutual relationship, relying on each other. Missing links here refers to interdependencies. Thus, instead of viewing people as separate entities, the services, responsibilities and privileges of people are intertwined. This promotes a community relationship, shaped by our connection to others. However, there are some underlying fundamental principles for an effective grasp of this ontological framework.

##### The Fundamental Principles of *Ibuanyidanda*

Let us now take a look at the fundamental principles of *ibuanyidanda* which may be divided into ten (10) categories;

- i. **Complementary Interaction:** The core of this idea is that all things exist only in relation to one another. Complementary interaction revolves around the normative guide within the true spirit of communalism which commands us to draw closely to those who belong to us intimately (the community). He terms this the 'super-maximof *ibuanyidanda*' which states that "the nearer the better and the safer" (Asouzu, 2004, pp. 69-74). Rather than being independent or self-contained, every being or phenomenon gains its meaning and value through its relationship with others.
- ii. **Dual Nature of Reality:** Asouzu posits that reality is a dualism. He criticizes Placid Tempels who said that reality is some sort of force (Vital Force). Asouzu calls this the "Tempelsian Damage" because the idea of vital force happens to be superstitious and exclusivist by making various African thinkers believe that reality is supernatural or primarily spiritual, neglecting the physical aspect of reality (Asouzu, 2011b, p. 17). Hence, he promotes non-exclusivist perspective towards reality within African ontological framework which fosters communality of the spiritual and material, rational and superstitious with ontological categories which are inherently constitutive of interconnected being. Thus, reality is not only spiritual, but also material.
- iii. **The Principle of Intersubjectivity:** An integral aspect of *ibuanyidanda* is the concept of intersubjectivity, which highlights the interdependence of human beings in the creation of meaning and identity. This is captured in his emphasis that every human action is geared towards the joy of being (Asouzu, 2011b, p. 27). This implies a worldview where the ultimate goal of human action contributes to the ongoing process of becoming and realization of one's place within the larger fabric of reality. It demonstrates the fact that our actions are not isolated, but part of a broader ontological network, geared towards unity and fulfilment.
- iv. **Unity and Diversity:** The emphasis on unity in diversity is seen as a central principle of human existence. Asouzu argues that the diversity found within cultures, communities and individuals should not be viewed negatively, but as a source of growth and strength. That is why he writes that *ibuanyidanda* insists sternly on the fact that "the world can only be validated adequately when construed in a complementary and comprehensive way in relation to all missing links of reality, with efforts to overcome all forms of artificial divide between the universal and the particular, absolute and relative, necessary and contingent, essential and accidental" (Asouzu, 2011b, p. 28). With the ultimate aim of achieving harmony through mutual respect and recognition of diversity in a pluralistic society, he avers that this idea is resilient against any abstract or abstruse transcendentalism. Instead it remains in a harmonious a mutually complementary interrelatedness of all that exists (Asouzu, 2011b).
- v. **Ethical Interdependence:** *Ibuanyidanda* stresses that ethical behaviour and moral responsibility must take into account the interconnectedness of all human beings since the interconnectedness of all would imply that one's action may have a ripple effect on the larger society and community. This promotes a deep sense of responsibility towards others since the well-being of individuals is intimately linked to the well-being of the community. The ideas of ethical interdependence also surfaces as a key element or principle within the *ibuanyidanda* ontological framework. This is drawn from his principle of integration where he states that "anything that exist serves as a missing link of reality" (Asouzu, 2004, p. 273 – 327), it also stems from the principle of progressive transformation where he states that "all human actions are geared towards the joy of being" (Asouzu, 2004, p. 27). Ethically, the former recognizes the fact that the actions and events of everyone affect the greater whole. As a consequence, recognizing interconnectedness fosters responsibilities towards others by recognizing that our actions rather than being isolated, has far-reaching consequences. This could foster an ethic of care, encouraging individuals to consider the well-being of others as integral towards the realization of a harmonious reality.

Meanwhile, from the ethical point of view, the later which emphasizes the joy of being, implies that the ultimate aim of human life should be the cultivation of happiness in a sense of fulfilment and well being not just for one's self, but also for others. This sense of fulfilment mirrors the Aristotelian *eudaimonia* often translated as "happiness" or "flourishing" though *eudaimonia* encompasses deeper meaning than mere happiness or flourishing. It represents the highest good and ultimate purpose of human life. On this note, Asouzu's "joy of being" mirrors Aristotle who maintains that *eudaimonia* is achieved by living in accordance with reason and realizing one's full potential as a human being (*Nichomachean Ethics*, Book I, 1097b). This principle encourages an ethics that is centred on the holistic development of an individual, fostering environments where people can experience joy, meaning and self-actualization. However, this also raises the moral question of how societies can raise systems or structures to support the collective joy of people given the diversity of humans, taking into cognizance the existential reality of the minority. Be that as it may, within the *ibuanyidanda* ontological framework, this can be done by encouraging cooperation over competition and compassion over indifference.

Additionally, underneath the idea of "contributing to the joy of being" is an ethical implication regarding human agency and moral responsibility. If our actions are geared to this goal (joy of being), it is necessary to consider what it means to positively contribute to the joy of others. However, an important question to consider here is whether such joy is exclusive or all all-encompassing? Within the *ibuanyidanda* framework, how can we foster this joy for the LGBTQIA+ individuals in Africa, plundered with marginalization and heteronormative policies which retard the joy of their being? Beneath their gender identity and sexual orientation lie untapped potentials, untold ambitions, silent aspirations, goals yet to grasp, dreams still out of reach and unseen by the world, yet longing to rise. Allowing biases rooting from gender makes us fail in the acknowledgement of their potentials and stifles the responsibility of fostering an inclusive environment where all can thrive. The neglect of this duty is a failure of our claimed collective responsibility.

- vi. **Ontological Relationalism:** Ontological relationalism or relational ontology is an important principle in *ibuanyidanda* which stresses that the existence of an entity is defined by its relationships with other entities rather than its inherent isolated essence. Asouzu states that in complementarity, the mind is fully conscious of its 'relativity' and from this consciousness it upholds its existence, therefore making provision for co-existence with other missing links of reality (2007a, p. 307). Furthermore, he writes that "entities confirm their existence only by entering into a relation" (Asouzu, 2007b, p. 303). With this, being is not always seen as self-contained entity, but always defined through its relationship with others.
- vii. **Radical Inclusivity (Missing Links):** Asouzu's philosophy promotes "radical inclusivity" – the understanding that everyone and everything is relevant and worthy of consideration. This inclusivity is not limited to human beings alone, but inclusive of other aspects of existence. This is premised on the fact that "*ibuanyidanda* recognizes all cultures and lifestyles as inputs and actors necessary for generating ideas and values, making reality to be conceptualized as "missing" links where human beings stay to each other in a relationship inherently mutual and complementary" (Asouzu, 2011b, p. 16). It is conceived as radical inclusivity because Asouzu uses the universal affirmative. A universal affirmative asserts that something is true for all cases, and its typical form is "All A are B". He writes; "I call the metaphysical variant of *ibuanyidanda* principle, the principle of integration" (Asouzu, 2011a, p. 105). "This principle claims: anything that exists serves as a missing link of reality" (Asouzu, 2011a, p. 105). The idea of radical inclusivity within *ibuanyidanda* when viewed as universal affirmative suggests that inclusivity should be applied to everything and indeed everyone, irrespective of race, gender, sexuality, ability or background. Hence, everyone is seen as part of the larger system and no one is excluded. It is called a radical inclusivity because it is not selective and abhors all forms of selectiveness of exclusion.
- viii. **Self-Realization through Community:** *Ibuanyidanda* holds that self-realization is not held in isolation but within the community. Stemming from his idea of complementarity, he asserts that the realization of the self is in line with communal living, with a complementary relationship fostering solidarity, togetherness, and community centeredness as a result of the fundamental insufficiency of man (Asouzu, 2016, p. 35). Hence, the realization of one's true self could only be grasped through interaction, mutual understating and dialogue within the large socio-cultural framework.
- ix. **Principle of Non-Contradiction and Dialectical Understanding of Reality:** This has its foundation on the idea of contradiction. This principle holds that contradictions and tensions can be resolved through the process of synthesis and not through exclusion or negation. Whereas, the principle of non-contradiction holds that a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time, making existence distinct and separate from each other, *ibuanyidanda* holds that the lack within these two, making one not to be the other becomes the source and foundation for complementarity (Asouzu, 2007a, p. 306). For this reason, he further states that "in an authentic complementary reflection demonstrated within *ibuanyidanda*, the mind concedes to the coexistence of opposites and tries to see how they can be related to each other in ways that they can coexist and comply with the demands of the transcendental complementary circle" (Asouzu, 2007b, p. 91). The reason why these contradictions are seen as dialectics within the *ibuanyidanda* framework is that it embraces differences and tensions as inherent productive aspects of existence, rather than seeking to eliminate them. This is very similar to the dialectical thoughts developed by philosophers like Hegel (1807) and Marx (1867) who opined that contradictions or opposites (thesis and anti-thesis) are not fixed; hence, they can lead to synthesis or transformation that results in new and higher forms of understanding being. Within *ibuanyidanda*, contradictions are not seen as negating each other, but as complementary forces, whose interaction helps in shaping a more complete reality. They are seen as productive forces that drive progressive transformation. In this way, *ibuanyidanda* seeks to reconcile differences with the aim of finding a common ground not through a binary reasoning, but through an integrated approach.
- x. **The Principle of Radical Transformation:** Similar to the thrust of dialectical understanding of the universe, this principle places emphasis on profound change through reconciliation of contradictions. That is why Asouzu writes explicitly that within *ibuanyidanda*, all ideas and their further development are geared towards a 'radical transformation' over the way we perceive the world and act upon it (Asouzu, 2011b, p. 20). *Ipsa facto*, this transformation manifests itself through our ability to embrace tensions and differences to foster continuous growth, balance and complementarity in human experience and existence.

Drawing from the above principles and exposition of *ibuanyidanda*, Asouzu's complementarity is an invitation for the re-evaluation of traditional African *weltanschauung* with critical discussions about diversity and inclusion, with a multidimensional understanding of identity and existence. As a corollary, he avers that the infinite mutual relationship that characterizes his complementary ontology - "*ibuanyidanda* takes its most concrete form in the relationship of human beings – the interpersonal relationship of human beings in the world" (Asouzu, 2016, p. 35). In summary, *ibuanyidanda* emphasizes a holistic approach, interconnectedness of humanity, community cooperation, embracing diversity and working towards a collective wellbeing.



## 5. SAME-SEX UNION IN ANCIENT AFRICA: NIANKHKNUM AND KHUMHOTEP AND SOME HISTORICAL TRACES OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN PRECOLONIAL AFRICA

The contention regarding the acceptance and rejection of LGBTQIA+ has been a lingering debate in contemporary Africa. This is a demonstration that Africa has been struggling over the issue of an “inclusive perspective towards LGBTQIA+”, and this is characterized by the various anti-gay bills that are promoted in various African countries (including Nigeria), with penalties, fines and imprisonment.

Mazzochi (2011) asserts that one of the arguments that has been given to support the discrimination and infringements of the rights of the members of the LGBTQIA+ in Africa is a religious, natural and cultural based argument whereby the proponents argue that homosexuality is unbiblical, unnatural and un-African (p. 597). The proponents hold tenaciously to the fact that it is not part of African culture for people to have same-sex union, homosexuality is a culture of the West and there is no reason African culture should be abandoned in favour of adopting Western culture. Their argument also stem from their understanding of gender and sexuality from a religious perspective and their observation of things in nature.

In 2004, BBC News reported that the former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo and other Anglican Bishops in Nigeria belonged to the school of thought positing homosexuality to be unbiblical, unnatural and un-African. This also resonates with the words of Robert Moi (former president of Kenya) who said it is against both African and Christian traditions (BBC, 2004). More so, Apine (2015) avers that homosexuality is a controversial topic and that many African scholars claim that homosexuality is un-African and inextricably linked to the West (p.140). In a later part of this work, we shall address and respond to these arguments. However, the problem with this view is that it begs the question whether there is no archaeological, anthropological or historical evidence and trace of homosexuality in ancient African culture prior to the invasion of the colonialists (the West). In other words, is it an ignorance of history?

Be that as it may, history and anthropological evidence suggests that it is certainly something that cannot be imported. Practically, we could also think about this by asking ourselves; is there no trace of homosexuality in ancient Africa before Africa became colonized by the West? If there were such, how was the reaction and treatment for such people? Examining and understanding this will be of immense assistance towards shaping our approach regarding our treatment of members of LGBTQIA+ in Africa.

Ancient archaeological evidence demonstrates that there were same-sex relationships in Ancient Egypt which is one of the earliest African cultures. This is related by Eskridge (1993) who writes that some artifacts makes it evident to tentatively assert that same-sex relationships were not prohibited or frowned at in Ancient Egypt, neither did they stigmatize them (p. 1437). This means that Egypt which is one of the aboriginal African culture, may have accepted same-sex relationships. The popular archaeological evidence to brace this perception is that of the tomb of two male courtiers who existed during the fifth dynasty, with intimate poses that are highly erotic, holding hands, embracing and nose touching (Eskridge, 1993, p. 1437).

In the archaeological world, discovering of tombs with engravings has been one of the ways of rewriting what we know about Egypt. Giving credence to this, Ikram (2015) in her work entitled *Interpreting Ancient Egyptian Material Culture* writes that the bedrock for the understanding of Egyptian culture is their artifacts, and this has given scholars an insight into the acquisition of a broader understanding of their culture, society and ideology (pp.175-182). Furthermore, she states that employing the value systems derived from anthropological and archaeological studies, tombs and cemeteries can reveal aspects of social and political organization (Ikram, 2015). The statement suggests that such anthropological and archaeological evidence of tombs and cemeteries can provide valuable insights into the history and value systems related to how social lifestyles including sexuality was viewed in Egyptian communities.

For clarity, the depiction of these two men was the most intimate pose that was allowed or that could occur in Egyptian art. In *addendum*, Ćwiek (2021) in his work *Homoseksualizm w starożytnym Egipcie (Homosexuality in Ancient Egypt)* writes that such a nose pose traditionally depicted an intimate relation which was often characterized as an erotic relationship. This tomb belonged to two men named Niankhknum and Khnumhotep. They were both manicurist (in-charge of grooming of the King) to the Pharaoh Nyuserre Ini at that time. However, their duties were considered respectable and noble duties.

Historians with good archaeological background like Hugh Ryan have revealed that such depiction in tombs was also used for couples of heterosexual character to demonstrate their conjugal relation. Ryan (2018) writes that this gesture was used to demonstrate how ancient Egypt depicted sexual and conjugal relationship, and if a man and a woman were depicted in this way, they would obviously be understood as a couple. These representations were not merely decorative, but held deeper meanings particularly in the context of funeral arts. Greenberg (1998) explains that these two men were lovers and their same-sex relationship was apparently accepted by the state (p. 130), otherwise, they would have been punished by the King or removed from their offices since their acts may have been offensive to the dictates of the state, but on the contrary, their tomb was provided by Pharaoh. This suggests that “in the early period, homosexuality may not have been stigmatized” (Greenberg, 1998, p. 130). It is indeed a further indication that ancient Africa may not have frowned at this, or may have had their own way of helping such people thrive in the society.

Another variant of historical evidence provided by Eskridge (1993) stems from the Hebrew religious scripture. While it is still a subject of debate that a greater part of the scriptural text of the Hebrew religion (Judaism) is mythical, the writers of these supposed fictions may have also incorporated aspects of Egyptian culture and tradition, such as homosexuality and same-sex marriages, as these were practiced in Egypt. Eskridge (1993) writes that Judaism was a relentless reaction to some of the Egyptian customs of which same-sex marriages is inclusive (p. 1438). This could be the reason the authors of their biblical literature, specifically Leviticus state that the Israelites should avoid most of the practices of the Egyptians, and in chapter 18, the Israelites are admonished “not to lie with mankind as with womankind for it is an abomination”. This implies that same same-sex intimacy was a common thing in Egypt.

This raises compelling points since it is true that ancient texts often reflect the cultural contexts in which they are written, as Mustofa and Hill (2018) in their work entitled *Understanding Cultural Context in Responding to Literature: Researching the Teaching of Literature in EFL Classroom Context* clearly states that the authors write with a certain purpose and are perhaps reacting to the social and cultural issues of their time. Hence, the arts, literature and burial practices indicate that various forms of sexual practices and relationships (including same-sex relationships) were acknowledged and practiced in Egypt (p. 111). For the purpose of this study, this demonstrates that Egypt, one of the most Ancient African cultures did not prohibit nor stigmatize them (Eskridge, 1993). Thus, ancient African societies may have been accepting diversity of sexual orientations. Asouzu also holds the same view when he quotes Kaboha saying that the different aspects of life and social behaviour were seen and treated as part of an integrated whole, and this idea was derived from the integration which Africans see in the diversity of nature around them (Kaboha, 1992, as cited in Asouzu, 2016).

Writing further, Asouzu also ascertains the acceptance of diversity amongst ancient Egyptians when he quotes Kamalu, that those ancient Egyptian philosophers made recourse to the principle of reciprocity as a principle of philosophical speculation, and for these ancient philosophers, they

conceived reality in accordance with how opposites co-exist and interact (Kamalu, 1990, as cited in Asouzu, 2016). Ancient Egyptian philosophers utilized the principle of reciprocity, suggesting that reality is defined by the interaction and coexistence of opposites.

Another trace of homosexuality comes from the observation of the Anthropologist, Edward Evans-Pritchard who provided fascinating facts and insights into the socio-cultural dynamics of the *Azande* people. The ‘*Azande* people’ refer to an ethnic group situated in Central Africa (mainly in Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo). Evans-Pritchard’s ideas are contained in his works entitled *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (1937) and *Sexual Invasion among the Azande* (1970). In the first work, he asserts that homosexual relationships were evident, accepted and institutionalized amongst men in certain context, and one of such was the bachelor military companies. This group of young men lived together, participated in military training together during the period of time they were not yet married. Same sex relationship amongst them was acceptable and structured in a way that does not mitigate their future roles as husbands. This form of homosexuality was seen more as a bonding and camaraderie rather than a challenge to the heterosexual status quo (Evans-Pritchard, 1937, pp. 38-42). In the second work, Evans-Pritchard gives testimonies of the existence of lesbianism in the *Azande* culture, and this was treated differently and disapproved within polygamous homes. Within this culture, women were typically married into a polygamous home where a man could have multiple wives, and within these households, same-sex relationships between these women were not uncommon though it was viewed negatively as a deviant attitude and rebellion against the traditional roles of women (Evans-Pritchard, 1970, p. 1429, 1431 – 32), since they were expected to bear children and contribute to the economic and social stability of the family. Sequel to this, same-sex relations were seen as undermining these vital functions. Meanwhile, the point drawn here is that such phenomenon existed within African culture.

The research of Simon Messing (1957, p. 550) an anthropologist who studied Coptic ‘*Amhara* people’ of Ethiopia, revealed that *Amhara* people did not conform to the traditional gender roles. They had alternative gender roles which made them to be identified most times as “God’s Mistake” and were believed to be physically defective but were generally integrated within the community due to the spiritual and cultural roles. This reveals a more tolerant and inclusive approach towards gender diversity in the community notwithstanding the prevailing perceptions.

The research of the anthropologist Donald Donham in his work, *History, Power, Ideology: Central Issues in Marxism and Anthropology* reveals that there were some people in some part of Africa (specifically, Ethiopia) who were referred to as *Ashtime*, a term used to describe a third gender role. This was because they did not fit into binary male or female categories (1990:92). Instead, they were a blend of the masculine and feminine characteristics, taking up both male and female roles in the community, and cannot exclusively be termed a male or female (man or woman) within the binary understanding.

The fieldwork of Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban in 1970 and 1972 in Khartoum (Sudan) revealed some social and sexual practices surrounding premarital homosexuality. She observed that young men who sought sexual experience prior to marriage did so through same-sex encounters which was done either by engaging with male prostitutes in specific quarters for this purpose, or seeking out temporary homosexual relationships (Fluehr-Lobban, 1977, p. 134). Moreover, her research also revealed that these temporary homosexual relationships were socially accepted as a way for young men to learn about sexuality before entering into marriage.

Although history is rich with numerous occurrences which could also serve as examples, the above findings are pointer to the fact that pre-colonial Africa may have been more fluid, less rigid and tolerating than modern Africa. A striking factor is that beyond tolerance, the social systems may have been structured in a mode that paves way for inclusion and acceptance of diverse sexualities and identities. This reveals the possibility that there is a high risk of flaw and *ad ignorantiam* fallacy (which may have its roots in ‘historical amnesia’) embedded within the argument that homosexuality is un-African and a western influence. On the contrary, pre-colonial Africa must have been more inclusive of various forms of gender and sexual expressions, fostering an understanding of diversity, coexistence, acceptance and respect for different identities within the societal fabric.

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## 6. THE ILLUSION OF UNITY: HETERONORMATIVITY AND THE REALITY FACED BY PEOPLE IDENTIFYING AS LGBTQIA+ IN AFRICA

The term heteronormativity is a blend of two words “hetero”, coming from the Greek word “*heteros*” which means “other” or “different”. Normativity comes from the Latin word “*norma*” which means “rule” or “standard”. Deriving from these words, heteronormativity could be defined as the implicit societal assumption that heterosexual relationships are the default or preferred mode of sexual orientation. Habarth (2014, p. 1) defines it as the enforced compliance with culturally determined heterosexual roles and assumptions about heterosexuality as ‘natural’ or ‘normal’. Within the context of this work, we may understand ‘heteronormativity’ as the societal expectation that heterosexuality is the default or the normal sexual orientation and the framing of other sexual identities as inferior and deviant.

The illusion of unity in Africa reflects the inability of the claimed inclusive nature of African ontology in creating a non-exclusionary paradigm in Africa, especially when the concerns of LGBTQIA+ surfaces. This is premised on the fact that so many countries in Africa have institutionalized heteronormative laws and norms that creates structural inequality and intersectional disadvantage against LGBTQIA+ individuals. The presence of heteronormative laws in Africa creates a dissonance regarding the principle of communitarianism which emphasizes collective wellbeing which is assumed to stem from African ontology. While the principle of complementarity, expressed in *ibuanidanda* advocates for social cohesion and interconnectedness, the marginalization of members of LGBTQIA+ raises the question whether African ontology which is communitarian and complementary is selective in its application, prioritizing certain identities and sexual orientation while sidelining others?

The apparent failure within the *ibuanidanda* framework is its high theoretical level without specific pragmatic and practical attempts to integrate and fully address some of the specific problems that are faced by marginalized groups, since such attitudes undermines the essence of communal existence, perpetuates exclusion and also contradicts the foundation of complementarity (which stems from a unity of contradictions) that *ibuanidanda* seeks to promote. If the problem of heteronormativity and other concepts that draws faction within Africa is not properly addressed, *ibuanidanda* could be said to be operating on a selective cohesion which does not align with the richness of communal life claimed to be founded on African ontology. Also, it is good to note that the illusion of unity is also evident on the fact that criminalizing same-sex relationships and enforcing heteronormative laws presents a flawed understating of unity, failing to understand the diversity inherent in human existence. This attitude of exclusion and marginalization of certain gender identities and sexual orientations invalidates the claimed legitimacy of philosophical frameworks like *ibuanidanda* which purports complementary ontology.

From a logical point of view, it can be seen that the dictates of African ontology via the optics of *ibuanidanda* is flawed if the LGBTQIA+ are excluded. This can be shown through the logical praxis of disjunction and dialetheism. Since we consider it is prudent that logic is the key to truth well-defined with reason’s guide, let us now test what is right, unveiling the truth in a clear light.

## 7. THE LOGICAL PRAXIS OF ONTOLOGICAL DISJUNCTION WITHIN *IBUANYIDANDA*

The aim is to express that the claimed complementarity of African ontology is thwarted by the inherent exclusionary policies over LGBTQA+ individuals. We begin by breaking the key components into logical propositions.

**The Statement:** From the lived experiences of the people in Africa, we have made the following argument.

1. African ontology (eschewed under *ibuanyidanda*) is complementary
2. African ontology is not complementary because it fails to include LGBTQA+
3. A disjunction arises within African ontology due to the exclusion of LGBTQA+

**Step 1:** We have to define the propositions, and we need to express this symbolically.

**P:** African ontology is complementary under *ibuanyidanda*

**Q:** African ontology is not complementary because it fails to include LGBTQA+

These two propositions set up two possible conditions for African ontology:

**P:** The ontology is complementary (under *ibuanyidanda*, which is about interconnectedness and unity).

**Q:** The ontology is not complementary due to exclusion of LGBTQA+ individuals, which causes marginalization.

**Step 2:** We have to express the disjunction.

The disjunction stems from the exclusion of LGBTQA+ individuals, which creates a division within African ontology. So, we express this with a disjunction between two possibilities:

$$P \vee Q$$

This disjunction can be read as: Either African ontology is complementary (P), or African ontology is not complementary because of its failure to include LGBTQA+ individuals (Q).

**Step 3:** We want to show that this disjunction is an exclusive disjunction. Making it an exclusive disjunction implies that only one of these conditions can be true at a time and not both at the same time.

If African ontology is complementary (P), it cannot also be non-complementary due to exclusion (Q).

If African ontology is not complementary due to exclusion (Q), it cannot also be complementary (P).

**Why is this Exclusive Disjunction?** We will now clarify why this disjunction is termed exclusive.

An exclusive disjunction means that only one of two propositions can be true at the same time and not both. It is always denoted as;  $P \oplus Q$

The reason why the disjunction  $P \vee Q$  is exclusive is as follows;

1. **Complementary African ontology (P):** If African ontology is complementary (as described by *Ibuanyidanda*), then it embraces unity and interconnectedness, which should include all people, including LGBTQA+ individuals. Therefore, if P is true (the ontology is complementary), then it cannot simultaneously be non-complementary (because of exclusion).
2. **Non-complementary African ontology (Q):** If African ontology is not complementary because it excludes LGBTQA+ individuals; this exclusion directly contradicts the idea of a complementary, unified ontology. Therefore, if Q is true (the ontology excludes LGBTQA+), then it cannot simultaneously be complementary (P).

Thus: One between these two statements can hold.

Either African ontology is complementary (P), or it is non-complementary due to exclusion (Q).

**But not both:** If one is true, the other must be false.

**Step 4: Clarifying the Exclusive Nature**

In formal logic, the exclusive disjunction  $P \oplus Q$  is defined as:

$$P \oplus Q = (P \vee Q) \wedge \neg (P \wedge Q)$$

This means that the disjunction  $P \vee Q$  is exclusive because:

Either P is true (complementary), or Q is true (non-complementary due to exclusion), but not both.

The condition  $(P \wedge Q)$  (both complementary and non-complementary at the same time) is not allowed.

So, the disjunction arises because the African ontology either:

- Embraces unity and interconnectedness (complementary, P), or
- Fails to be complementary because it excludes LGBTQA+ people (non-complementary, Q).

Since both cannot happen simultaneously, the disjunction is exclusive.

**Conclusion:** The disjunction  $P \vee Q$  represents an exclusive disjunction because only one of the conditions can hold true at any time. If African ontology is truly complementary (P), then it cannot exclude LGBTQA+ individuals, and if it excludes LGBTQA+ individuals (Q), it cannot be complementary. Therefore, these two possibilities are mutually exclusive, and only one can be true at any given time.

## 8. ADDRESSING THE HUMANITY OF LGBTQA+ AND OTHER POPULAR ARGUMENTS AGAINST LGBTQA+ IN AFRICA AND OBJECTIONS FOR A RENEWED UNDERSTANDING

In several discussions relating to the marginalization of LGBTQA+ individuals in Africa, little attention is paid to the humanity of people under this category. Whereas, their humanity should be the thrust for their integration into the society since they are fundamentally humans. More so, placing discriminatory laws and marginalizing people based on their gender identity or sexual orientation is akin to doing same to people based on race, colour or culture. It is important to note that in specific cases, certain aspects of this identity are deeply embedded in an individual's nature (biological makeup). Thus, there are numerous researches that gives credence to the fact that sexual and gender orientation in most cases, have biological

underpinnings that could be described as “natural”. Just as it would be improper to question a person’s cultural background or race, it is also unacceptable to demean or question one’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

As a corollary, Archbishop Desmond Tutu during the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission 2008 said the following: “I cannot but be as God has made me. And so I spoke against the injustices of apartheid, about racism, where people were penalized for something about which they could do nothing, their ethnicity. I, therefore, could not keep quiet when people were hounded for something they did not choose, their sexual orientation” (Tutu, 2008).

For so many years, Africans had been killing twins and their mothers owing to the fact that they saw the birth of twins as something strange and evil, rather than understanding it as a natural occurrence. Odey and Ogar (2019) correlate that the killing of twins was a legal practice until 1876 when Mary Slessor agitated for the ban against the killing of twins and their mothers, serving as one of the unforgettable agitation for children and women rights in history (p. 625). From a radical perspective, I see the killing of twins and their mothers as infringing their right to life; just the same way I argue that the marginalization of LGBTQIA+ individuals in Africa is an attack to their right to existence, since they have been excluded from the society with threats targeting their existential harmony. The point here is that the persecution mounted on those with unfamiliar gender identities should be cautioned because, in future, what we condemn today (LGBTQIA+) may turn out to be what is acceptable as a result of enlightenment. Let us now advance to examine some arguments that surfaces within this discussion.

### Popular Arguments against Members of the LGBTQIA+ Community in Africa and Counter Arguments/Objections

In this part, the arguments against LGBTQIA+ shall be examined. Counter arguments shall be proffered in forms of objections to foster a unified perspective that will help them thrive the African societal setting.

- i. **Homosexuality is not Natural:** Proponents of this perspective or members of this school of thought are always of the view that in natural order, genuine relationship is heterosexual and not the other way round. Most of those holding this view are influenced by their religious background, for example, Jews and Christians who believe that in the beginning, God made man and woman (Adam and Eve) with the injunction to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28). Other religions also have a similitude of such story. For example; Islam - Surah Al - Baqarah (2:223), Hinduism - Mahabharata (Anushasana Parva, 3.11.21), Buddhism - Dhammapada (Verse 184), Zoroastrianism - Avesta (Yasna 19.8) etc. However, while the Genesis story just like that of other religions of world are still under debate regarding if they are fictitious and mythical or real life stories, the argument against this perspective can be derived from the observation of nature. If homosexuality is unnatural, why do we have persons with natural and biological features that make them to be naturally attracted to the same-sex? Why would God create such people?

Some researchers have demonstrated the possibility of the natural foundation for homosexual behaviour. Research carried out by Balthazart (2011) entitled *Hormones and Human Sexual Orientation* revealed that the Clinical conditions which is associated with significant endocrine changes at the embryonic stage may result in an exposure to a high possibility of homosexuality after birth. The result of this research also aligned with that of the *Organizational/Activational Hypothesis of Steroid Hormone Action* which also alludes that the effect of sexual preferences and attractions may arise from the exposure to particular sex hormones during the embryonic development, and such are irreversible in adulthood (McCarthy et al., 2017).

A similar research carried out by Breedlove (2017) entitled *Prenatal Influences on Human Sexual Orientation: Expectations versus Data* also revealed that the variance of the response of an individual’s body may be a key factor determining one’s sexual orientation. This means that the individual differences regarding how an individual reacts or responds to hormones at the development stage could influence sexual orientation. A research carried out in 2019 revealed a genetic architecture into same-sex behaviour (Ganna et al., 2019). These studies indicate that biological factors could predispose an individual as gay, lesbian or bisexual<sup>4</sup>. Hence, sexual orientation is not merely a choice, but has a lot of influence by biological factors. Moreover, the observation of same-sex behaviours in animals gives clue to the fact that bonobos and bottlenose dolphins do express same-sex behaviours. This is revealed among juvenile bottlenose dolphins, including their young males who display her higher same-sex practices (da Silva & Spinelli, 2023). Similarly, the *Current Biology Magazine* (2020) also reveals that bonobos do engage in genitor-genital rubbing, bottlenose dolphins (both male and female) do engage in variety of same sex, Laysan albatross may form same-sex pairs in the scarcity of males These findings are compelling evidences that same-sex attraction is not just an anomaly, but could be a natural occurrence in both humans and animals and should not only be viewed from the perspective of cultural laws or tradition.

Additionally, the existence of inter-sex individuals – people who are born with both male and female genitals, challenges the binary understanding of gender and sexuality as many of those under this category are born with physical characteristics that could not fit into the typical definition that could be classed as either male or female since most of them can have Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS) – a condition where an individual has XY chromosomes (typically male) may develop female external genitalia due to the resistant of their body to male chromosomes (Mongan, Tadokoro-Cuccaro, Bunch, & Hughes, 2015). Another is Ovotesticular disorder (though considered rare) – a condition where an individual may have both testicular and ovarian tissue, leading to ambiguous genitalia or a mix of male and female characteristics (Özdemir, Kavak, Yalcinkaya, & Guresci, 2019). There are also those who are victims of Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH) – a condition where a person with XX chromosome (typical female) may have male genitalia appearing due to excess production of androgens (male hormones) from the adrenal glands (New, 2004). How can such individuals be blamed if these kinds of conditions predispose them as; gay, lesbians, and bisexuals in their later life?

- ii. **The Natural Injunction of Pro-creation:** Closely related to the first argument is another popular one which holds that it is a natural injunction to procreate. Just like the first one, this argument is most times derived from the religious background, for example the Jews and the Christians who believe that God had mandated man to be fruitful and multiply as contained in Genesis (Gen 1:28), similar to what could be found in Islam - Surah Al - Baqarah (2:223), Hinduism - Mahabharata (Anushasana Parva, 3.11.21), Buddhism - Dhammapada (Verse 184), Zoroastrianism - Avesta (Yasna 19.8) etc. Thus, same-sex union is unnatural and not proper since there is no possibility of procreation. Others without religious affiliations argue that procreation is a natural mandate, and for that reason, nature makes male and female for the continued sustenance of procreation. If we hold this argument to be true, we can also argue against this from our observation of nature. It is indubitable

<sup>4</sup>The research on *Organizational and activational effects of estrogenic endocrine disrupting chemicals* gives more insights on this, revealing how the biological factor of hormonal complications in the endocrine system can predispose one as gay, lesbian or bi-sexual. Though a research carried out in 2002, it aligns with recent findings and researches mentioned in this work. The work is authored by Ellen K. Silbergeld, Jodi A. Flaws and Ken M. Brown (2002). <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-311X2002000200014>

that there are those who “in their nature” cannot procreate as a result of infertility and whatsoever natural defect prevents them from having the ability (fecundity) to procreate. Thus, laws should also be made for such individuals not to be married since the essence of their marriage is already defeated and they will be no higher than those indulging in same-sex union, since like them (those who indulge in same-sex relationships) they are also attracted to themselves for the purpose of sexual gratification, and like them, do not have the ability to procreate. Hence, laws prohibiting them from marrying and indulging in such relationships or union should be implemented. In the absence of this kind of both in Africa and globally, of what justice and rationale does such argument from the natural injunction of procreation which prohibits same-sex marriage stand?

- iii. **Abolition of Natural Order by Transgender Individuals:** Another argument raised against LGBTQIA+ individuals is directed towards transgender individuals. According to this argument, transgender people abolish or go against the natural order and natural placement of things. In simple terms, if nature has placed or made them to be either male or female, it is an abolition of the natural order to become male (if was born female) or female (if was born male), or bisexual etc. However, if the choice of changing from one gender to another is seen as evil, the change of one’s race to another should also be abolished and condemned as a disruption of natural order.

Similar to the change of one’s gender identity from the original to another, people also change their citizenship from one country to another, from one race to another, and just as transgender individuals change their identity to become either male or female, people also change their racial identity to become European, American, and Asian etc. But why is this not also seen as a crime since it involves the change from the natural “given” identity to another?

The migration from one gender identity to another should not be seen as anything other than changing one’s race to another whereby we have African Americans, European Americans, Asian-Americans, Latino, African Europeans, African Asian and several other racial changes. Since there is no law in Africa or globally that prohibits the change of racial identity, we could also be making a mistake by criminalizing transgender people since their gender change is equivalent to a change of racial identity, founded on “choice” and a yearning to satisfy one’s life purpose (even if the purpose may be created by the individual).

## 9. THE INCLUSIVITY OF LGBTQIA+ IN AFRICA USING THE IBUANYINDANDA ONTOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK VIA THE OPTICS OF PARACONSISTENT LOGIC AND DIALETHEISM

The principle of non-contradiction which asserts that a statement cannot be both true and false at the same time (i.e.,  $A \wedge \neg A$ ) is a key feature in classical logic. However, paraconsistent logic rebels against the principle of contradiction, giving room for the existence of contradiction within a system without undermining the entire system of reasoning (Barrio, Pailos & Szmuc, 2018, p. 89). Similarly, Priest, Tanaka and Weber maintains that the orthodoxy of logical contradiction holds that contradictions cannot be coherently reasoned about, but paraconsistent logic challenges this orthodoxy as a logical consequence, that a logical relation can be derived from a contradiction without the influence of The Principle of Explosion (2022) also known as *ex falso quodlibet* a Latin word for “from falsehood, anything follow”. As a non-classical logical system, paraconsistent logic strives to avoid the Principle of Explosion and handle contradictions gracefully, allowing reasons that might contain contradictions without leading to an arbitrary conclusion.

Paraconsistent logic could be demonstrated this way in symbolic terms;

$(A \wedge \neg A) \neq \text{False}$ , instead, it can be consistently true within the context.

This property makes paraconsistent logic become useful where conflicting and multiple truths co-exist without a collapse of the system. An example of such is dialetheism or simply put dialethia. However, these two are subtle similar and related.

Dialethia comes from two Greek words; ‘*dialein*’ (διαλείπειν) which means to separate and ‘*aletheia*’ (ἀλήθεια) which means truth. From the etymology, dialetheism can be defined as two truths. In logic and metaphysics, it is the understanding that some statements can be both true and false simultaneously. Accordingly, Lacey (1996) in *A Dictionary of Philosophy* defines it as the view that some contradictions are true or that some things are both true and false. Audi (2015) in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* writes that “a *dialetheia* is a proposition  $A$ , such that both its negation  $\neg A$ , are simultaneously true. It is a key feature in the liar paradox where a statement refers to itself in a contradictory manner. It specifically refers to situations where a contradiction can be considered true, as Boccardi and Perelda (2020) notes that it is a contradiction that can be made true only by the existence of two facts, making  $p$  and  $\neg p$  true (p. 129). Dialethia and paraconsistent logic are interrelated in the sense that within dialetheism, contradictions are considered true and paraconsistent logic accommodates the possibility of such conditions. While dialetheism involves the state when contradictions is being true, paraconsistent logic permits contradictions to exist without a logical chaos.

**African Ontology as Multivocal and Diverse:** African ontology is multivocal and diverse in the sense that being is conceived as relational, dynamic and interconnected. Thus, everything is seen as an interconnected part of the whole. This perspective is essential towards understanding diversity in Africa. Since African ontology is not monolithic and it consists of diverse worldviews allowing contradictions and complexities, it can be expressed symbolically as follows;

$${}^A \text{Ontology} = \{T_1, T_2, \dots, T_n \}$$

Here,  $T$  represents the diverse and distinct philosophical, cultural and spiritual strata of being in African ontology. It represents the multiplicity of being within the African ontological framework, where being and realities are seen not contradicting each other, but co-existing even if they appear to be in conflict. Meanwhile, such contradiction gives room for their holistic existence or some sort of completeness. Hence, paraconsistent logic permits contradictory beliefs to be valid within different contexts.

For example, within African traditional and cultural setting, there are views regarding gender and sexuality which are non-binary or fluid, irrespective of the rigid heteronormative standards and norms within African cultures. Paraconsistent logic does not demand the exclusion of one in favour of the other, but allows these views to coexist.

Formally, it can be construed this way;

$$(T_1 \wedge T_2) \text{ can be consistent under paraconsistent logic even if } (T_1 \neq T_2)$$

**Contradictions as Part of the System:** Contradiction is allowed within paraconsistent logic without rendering the system incoherent. In the case of African ontology, it is indubitably possible for the existence of multiple contradictory truths to coexist. This could be represented as;

$$(T_1 = \text{fluid gender roles}) \wedge (T_2 = \text{rigid gender norms}) \rightarrow {}^A \text{Ontology}$$

*Ipso facto*, LGBTQIA+ individuals which may contradict the claimed traditional and orthodox views of gender and sexuality in Africa can still be accepted within African without the system collapsing. This is because the contradiction is not antithetically destructive, but antithetically synthesising; with a robust expansion that embraces diversity, interconnectedness and inclusivity. In other words, it serves as a catalyst for unity which should be underneath African ontology. Therefore, this answers the question of the popular argument posed against LGBTQIA+ by some critics who are of the view that LGBTQIA+ is not an African culture, thus it contradicts the traditional and aboriginal African understanding of gender and sexuality. If the very foundations of African ontology is complementary and interconnected, implying that the various inconsistencies makes the whole, then African ontology should be open to accept a wide range of diversity. Asouzu (2007b) gives credence to this when he writes that within *ibuanyidanda*, the principle of non-contradiction generates a distinction due to a lack, but *ibuanyidanda* factors in and accommodates this diversity through filling the “missing link” with a complementary understanding that makes both (p and  $\neg$  p) necessary for a holistic understanding of existence (p. 306). That is why he talks about missing link not as selective, but all encompassing and inclusive, taking into consideration “all” that is in the web of existence or broad spectrum of reality.

#### Gender Fluidity and Paraconsistent Logic:

It is true that very few African societies accept gender roles and identities that are more fluid (example, South Africa), embracing a varieties of categories and expressions. The symbol for fluid gender roles can be represented as;

${}^G \text{fluid} = \{\text{Masculine, Feminine, Non-Binary, ...}\}$ .

This is a sharp contrast with rigid gender roles denoted as;

${}^G \text{Rigid} = \{\text{Masculine, Feminine}\}$ .

With paraconsistent logic, both sets can coexist within African societies since African ontology gives room for inclusivity without conflict among contradictories. Thus;

${}^G \text{fluid} \wedge {}^G \text{Rigid} \neq \text{logical inconsistency.} \therefore {}^G \text{fluid} \wedge {}^G \text{Rigid} = {}^G \text{Inclusive.}$

Where;  ${}^G \text{Inclusive} = {}^G \text{fluid} \cup {}^G \text{Rigid}$

This shows that since the logic of African ontology (eschewed under *ibuanyidanda* can be understood as a paraconsistent logic, LGBTQIA+ individuals should not be eliminated by traditional and orthodox gender concept, but should be incorporated within the society since the African ontological framework embraces contradiction not as conflicting, but as part of the comprehensive web of realities, in other words, missing links.

**The Role of Intersectionality:** One amongst the important aspects of African ontology is the emphasis on interconnectedness of roles, spirituality, identity etc. LGBTQIA+ could be seen as part of this interconnected web of African existence. To this end, we can define intersectionality as;

${}^1 \text{Intersectionality} = \{\text{sexual identity, gender identity, roles, age, ...}\}$

LGBTQIA+ individuals represented by the set  ${}^1 \text{LGBTQIA+}$  intersect with other aspects of African identity.

${}^1 \text{Intersectionality} \cap {}^1 \text{LGBTQIA+} = \text{a harmonious coexistence, not contradiction}$

This is a signification that LGBTQIA+ individuals can be embraced within the African context without a displacement of African ontology and other cultural truths.

The application of paraconsistent logic and dialetheism demonstrates coexistence and inclusivity within African ontology. Hence, it facilitates the integration of LGBTQIA+ individuals not as opposition, since this expansive understanding of identity does not invalidate the traditional views, but leads to an expansive understanding for an inclusive and holistic grasp of existence.

## 10. COMMUNITY SUPPORT SYSTEMS, INCLUSIVE GENDER POLICIES AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE EDUCATION: LESSONS FROM WESTERN APPROACHES

The western approach towards LGBTQIA+ people can be a veritable lesson for Africa. The practices in Western nations give clue in relation to acceptance, solidarity and inclusivity (Mutua, 2011). The provision of this support is needed because most times, these individuals beyond their variance in identity are embedded with talents, innate abilities and other inventive capacities that could drive societal improvement and development. More so, the various networks of organizations in the West provide resources, services and safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ individuals. Such organizations includes; Human Right Campaigns, GLAAD and other support groups enabling these people to make friends, intermingle, pursue their talents and life goals. Contrary to this, many African societies pay less attention to the prospect of support mechanisms and those identifying as LGBTQIA+ face discrimination and violence, irrespective of the communitarian ethos that is professed.

By providing safe spaces and support systems, it will foster the reduction of isolation faced by these individuals and promote a sense of belonging and community in line with Afro-communitarianism which is founded on African Complementary Ontology. Ultimately, it is clear that despite our preferences, these people are still humans and should be treated equally without discrimination. Like the West, there should be a focus on campaigns aimed towards tackling the problem of homophobia and transphobia. These campaigns can be held in higher educational institutions, workplaces and local communities to foster a changed perception which will yield acceptance and inclusivity. These initiatives should also have an open dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity so as to eliminate stigma and stereotypes. Adopting this strategy will help in building a more inclusive environment for LGBTQIA+ individuals with social justice and equity.

## 11. CONCLUSION

This work presents a rethink over the ontological framework of Africa as captured in *ibuanyidanda* which like African Ontology, emphasizes interconnectedness, inclusivity and complementarity. This rethink is premised on the negation and the kind of disjunction operated by this ontology (an ontological disjunction in the sense of an exclusive disjunction), which mares the principle of relativity and complementarity when the complex relationship between gender and existence is put in place. This is evident when issues regarding LGBTQIA+ are raised. However, paraconsistent logic and dialetheism reveals the possibility of the diverse gender identities to exist without opposing the claimed aboriginal African idea of gender. The work has also revealed that the existence of diverse sexualities and gender identity is not just something new or a Western influence, since such had existed in pre-colonial Africa. Amongst African philosophers, it is accepted that the metaphysical and ontological dimension shapes the phenomenal existence. This is portrayed in the writings of philosophers like Udofia (2021) who alludes that the relationship between the transcendent and the immanent is basked in an interactionism and neither is there are neither dichotomized nor exclusive of each other. Similarly, Obioha and Okaneme in

their work entitled *African Humanism as a Basis for Social Cohesion and Human Well-Being in Africa* where they assert that an integral part of African humanism is socialism and communitarianism, simply understood as community based society (2017, p. 46). From an ontological purview, the usage of the word 'integral' implies 'essence'. The underlying ontological meaning is that communitarianism is not just a component that could be described as an 'add-on'. Rather, it is imbedded in African existence. From the foregoing, it means that the communitarian and the interconnectedness of all beings is in the very nature of Africa. It is an 'essence' in African existence.

Similarly, Ekeh in his work entitled *African Ontology as a Basis for African Existential Practices: Implications for African Education* writes that the African worldview is ontologically integrated (2020, p. 89), and there is no dualism that could reinforce a separation within this ontology. Also, the hierarchical nature of being in African ontology cannot cause or create such chasm that mitigates interconnectedness. That is why African ontology is also described as harmonious monism by Ijioma (2014,). These constitute an attestation to the fact why African ontology is construed as holistic.

Upon an examination of some of the works authored by these philosophers, the tone of their writing in relation to African ontology and their application to the facets of human existence seem to be like they are attempting to create, force or re-create something that is no longer in existence because, they have not seen such manifestation in the lived experiences of the people. Sometimes, their works has a creative and reminder tone. The question remains; why would they seem to force or remind people and persist that they be communitarian if it is already in their nature to be communitarian or interconnected? There is no need to remind, re-create or force it if it is already in their being. Such scenario makes it expedient to question the authenticity of African ontology because, 'being' is a given, and it is not what we would have the ability to fix. It is some sort of 'being there' like Heidegger would describe it when he talks about *Dasein*.

The classical philosophers offered a very insightful idea regarding the manifestation of 'being' where Aquinas averred "*Actus in creaturis secundum suam essentiam actus ab esse distinctus est*" interpreted as; in creatures, action is distinct from essence according to its essence, but both are inextricably linked (*Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 44, A. 4). This means that the essence of a being determines the potential for its action. Essence is the "whatness" of a thing – "what it is", on the other hand, "existence is the fact that it is". Contrary to this classical understanding of essence, if we evaluate from the perspective of existentialists like Simone de Beauvoir (1949) or Jean-Paul Sartre (1945), who argued that we create, form and fashion our own essence and it is not pre-determined, we still cannot act outside of our own created essence. For example, I cannot become a doctor if I am already an expert in mechanical engineering. If such a transformation were to occur, it would mean that I would also create for myself the essence of a mechanical engineer. In both the classical and the existentialist understanding of essence, a being ultimately acts in accordance with the essence that it has formed or by which it has been formed.

In humans, essence defines the nature of their being; shaping the kinds of actions they are capable. *Ipso facto*, action flows from being owing to the fact that the being's nature (essence) dictates what actions are possible and appropriate for it. Irrespective of the claimed African complementary ontology which emphasizes relationality and reciprocity, within the ambience of human experience, there is a high segregation and exclusive disjunction marring communal existence. I argue that African ontology may only be a story told about the feelings and emotions of people, "what they feel should be" and "not what is", and this may have been recorded on the grounds of a consensus. With the present happenings with regards to interpersonal relationship, if such an essence of complementarity and interconnectedness had existed in African ontology, we would have been amongst the nations embracing diversity. It is also important to recall that some parts in Africa where complementarity is preached (as an aboriginal culture) had once been marginalizing women shrewdly (Anunobi, 2002), denying them access to equal opportunities, and in some part of Africa (specifically Nigeria, this practice still persists). If we may ask, how do women complement men within the African political space? How about Nigeria? Does African complementary ontology permeate political activities in Africa? How can such inclusiveness be demonstrated in the political space?

Some African philosophers have argued that the problem of Africa is the imposition of western categories on African problems (Obioha, 2017; Ekeh, 2020). As a critique to this point of view, since being is "that which is", is being prone to change? Africa, for example, Nigeria has been freed from colonialism for more than sixty (60) years. If it is in the being of Africa as an essential characteristic (essence) to be united and interconnected, Nigeria should be united by now against all forms of marginalization. We should not marginalize the less privilege, LGBTQIA+ individuals, the physically challenged, etc. If we still lay blame on the western or colonial influence, we would find it worthwhile to tackle another philosophical problem; "does being change from what it is, if it does, what is the duration for its return to its given form?" Most attributions of the lack of unity in Africa due to external factors seem to fall into the logical quandary of the liar paradox since its till begs the question regarding the nature of being in Africa. If Africa operates on a complementary ontology, it should permeate all facets of existence in Africa without the need to reiterate, since doing so makes it seem like an invention and not what is already imbued naturally.

While the Western is always being blamed for the excessive individualism of Africa, it seems to be the fact that the West is practically more communitarian, inclusive, holistic and interconnected and embracing diversity than Africa. If Africa is truly influenced by the West, and if such influence still persists in Africa, then the African society should be indubitably inclusive and communalistic, building support systems for LGBTQIA+ individuals (including the physically and mentally challenged who fall under this category). In most part of the western world, there are special support systems for these categories of people. Unfortunately, some parts of Africa marginalize and discriminate against them. Since most countries in the West have massive support systems for LGBTQIA+ individuals, with an unquantifiable level of respect for identity and diversity, the question arises; what influence have we drawn from the West? If the West has all that it takes to call a society communitarian and interconnected at every facet, and we claim that the influence of the West is still lingering in Africa, it implies that we should be communalistic and communitarian just like the West is presently.

Sometimes, some African philosophers over emphasize "fundamental humanitarian gestures" as being exclusively African, whereas, these may be simple humanitarian gestures that may not be exclusively linked to any culture. A typical example is found in the writings of Udofia (2021) who avers that a deep sense of hospitality in Africa warrants the welcoming of a relation, visitor or stranger without prior announcement or notice of visitation. From a critical point of view, the problem with his position is that he makes such gesture to be exclusively African, maintaining that it is not obtainable in the West. Though drawing such conclusion may land in hasty generalization or *argumentum ad ignorantiam*, due to insufficient evidence to really yield the conclusion that some people in the West will not do this as a humane gesture, another point I will like to think of is the fact that the western model of hospitality, whereby prior notice or planning is required can also be viewed as hospitality rooted in mutual consideration, since a prearranged accommodation will deeply reflect the commitment of the host to the provision of adequate comfort for the visitor, and the visitor, reciprocally considers the comfort of the host and his ability to offer such space. In my opinion, this is indeed reciprocal and bidirectional than the African purview whereby the visitor emphasizes the "I" – "one's self" and not "the other" – the host (including the availability and possibility of the host to offer such as space). Thus, the African purview could be seen to be individualistic than the Western model which fosters a reciprocal, interpersonal and relational consideration.

The hallmark of every communitarian and interconnected society is 'equality' – that we are fundamentally humans. As Obioha rightly points out that this equality is premised on the nexus between a shared ontological identity, meaning that we belong to the same community together and in solidarity we share the resources of the community together, irrespective of our idiosyncrasies. As a consequence, anything short of this is alienation and it erodes the being and dignity of humanity (2021, p. 26). This principle of equality is very necessary and not without the 'difference principle' which is a typical feature of Rawls' political theory which ensues justice and fairness (1971, p. 68). What this means is that a truly communitarian and interconnected society must anticipate people who will eventually be different. Therefore, social and economic opportunities should be arranged in a way that suits the benefit of the least advantaged members of the society (Rawls, 1971, p. 53). Since African society sees LGBTQIA+ individuals as different, they should include policies and support systems that could help them thrive and exist just as other members of the society.

An inclusive gender education should be incorporated into our school curricula to ensure adequate cohesion, co-existence, communalism and communitarianism. The entrenchment of this system into our academic curricula is very necessary since education transforms the mind, making people to see new ways of doing things. This will bring a remarkable change over the understanding of gender to posterity in Africa. This is in line with the thoughts of Prasad and Gupta (2020) who in their work entitled *Educational Impacts on the Society* allude that education is a tool that provides people with an expanded vision about the world and a veritable tool for imbibing evolution and transformation. More so, they write that education helps to drive tolerance and recognition of diversity, helping people learn from the mistakes of the past and recognition of rights to women and other minority groups (Prasad & Gupta, 2020). This strengthens the necessity of a gender inclusive education in Africa.

Since truth and Authenticity criterion regulates to check against misuse and the elimination of error in judgment (2004) and all actions that operates within the demands of truth and authenticity is devoid of error (Udo & Bisong, 2014), how can we demonstrate the truth and authenticity criterion of African ontology? Asouzu (2004) writes that such authentication is found in the harmonious existence of realities. Thus, if any claim breaches (and not un-breach) the harmonious unity of existing realities, when it captures being in its comprehensive form and in its totality, such claim could be said to be true. Using this framework, we can evaluate that African ontology and the claims underneath it (complementarity, interconnectedness and relationality) are against the truth by excluding some aspects of human existence, namely; the LGBTQIA+ individuals. Consequently, such ontology seems to be a liar paradox.

If the problem of the exclusion and marginalization of LGBTQIA+ individuals persists, it may be necessary for African philosophers to objectively re-examine the foundations of African ontology. Like Descartes who questioned the foundation of his knowledge so as to arrive at certainty (what is indubitably true) and avoid building knowledge on a false foundation, African philosophers may need to question and seek an authentic basis of their ontology because the level of disconnect, anti-complementary gestures and antimonies to diversity in the lived experiences of people in Africa could imply that African ontology may not be a complementary ontology as we think, since such an ontology would know no distinction, bias or negation, and if such would exist, it will be a foundation for recognizing complementary and the unity of opposites.

This inquiry is really necessary so that we may not be building on a foundation which is false, trying to give to Africa what is not truly African or what we do not have. As the famous *Nemo Dat* rule resounds, "*nemo dat quod non habet*" – no one can give what they do not have. The exclusionary policy of Africa against LGBTQIA+ individuals misaligns with the African complementary ontology. Until there is a balance as demonstrated in paraconsistent logic and dialetheism with recognition and integration of the minorities, we will still have to be in search for the true ontology whereby the African society operates.

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