



### 3. “IGWEBUIKE”: Linguistic and Ontological Analysis

---

#### i. The Essential Character of *Igwebuike*

*Igwebuike*, is employed as a unifying concept of African thought, especially, that aspect concerning the human person's conception of the spiritual and material universe in which he or she lives. It is an explanatory theory or principle that interprets the puzzle of our complex relationship with the non-corporal world and human social life, that is, major social institutions that ensure social continuity and group identity, and further, underpins the epistemological manifestations of the human person's universe.

It is essentially, a transcendent complementary comprehensive systematic quest to penetrate the structure and dynamics of reality ultimately for the purpose of giving honest answers to fundamental questions or opinions to questions that arise within the arena of asking questions and questioning answers, for selfless enlightenment and furthering of human happiness. In this search for truth, *Igwebuike*, within an integrated systematic framework, strives beyond all forms of particularities, peculiarities, paradoxes and contradictions and espouses the path of complementation, therefore, showing how realities can relate to one another in a mutually harmonized non-absolutistic mode. Thus, *Igwebuike* explores methods and principles for the mediation, coalescing and comprehension of the different units of reality: ideal and real, universal and particular, progressive and conservative, necessary and contingent, transcendent and immanent, essential and inessential and other units of reality within the same framework. It treats all units, fragments or components of reality, no matter how minute as units and combinations, or missing links that are necessary for the conceptualization of reality as a whole.

#### ii. *Igwebuike* in the Theatre of Being

'To be' in Igbo ontology is *idi*. The operative word in *Idi* (to be) is *di* (be) and it comes from the word *odi* (it is), which is the third person of the singular *idi*. It means 'to exist' or 'to be'. It is an adjective and can be suffixed to anything to show that it exists. For instance, *Okwute di* (stone exists), *Nkita di* (dog exists), *Kanu di* (Kanu exists), *Uwa di* (the world exists). Although every reality has a force, not all realities have the same degree of force. The variety of the degree of forces is at the base of the categorization of being, and thus, the hierarchy of forces (Kanu 2017a). In the hierarchy of forces, those with a greater force come first, with God at the apex as the source of all force (Kanu 2017b).

In Igbo-African ontology, reality is subsumed into the following categories: *Muo* (Spirit), *Madu* (Human Being), *Anu* (Animal), *Ihe* (Thing), *Ebe* (Place), *Oge* (Time) and *Uzo* (Manner, Modality or Style of being). Everything is in relation to the other, except the creator (Kanu 2017c). As subjects in the horizon of perception and realization of their existential ends, beings depend on each other for their temporal flourishing. The dependence here is a positive dialectics resulting from their physical and spiritual limitations. Human beings are not ontologically creators of themselves, they are essentially limited, and their existence and action, in the midst of communication, are limited by time, place, perception and knowledge, their being is existentially complimentary (Kanu 2017d&e). Hence they are naturally candidates for company and co-operations. This modality of being in relation to the other is what *Igwebuike* conceptualizes.

### **iii. *Igwebuike* in Its Literal and Linguistic Setting**

*Igwe bu ike* is an Igbo proverb and also a typical Igbo name. Igbo proverbs and names are among the major traditional vessels where African philosophy, religion and culture have continued to be preserved. Mbiti (1970) writes that: “It is in proverbs that we find the remains of the oldest forms of African religious and philosophical wisdom” (p.89). They contain the wisdom and experience of the African people, usually of several ages gathered and summed up in one expression. Proverbs spring from the people and represent the voice of the people and express the interpretation of their beliefs, principles of life and conduct. It expresses the moral attitudes of a given culture, and reflects the hopes, achievements and failings of a people (Kanu 2018). This is to say that beyond the linguistic expression lies a deeper meaning, that is, the spirit of the letter. It is at the philosophical level that *Igwebuike* is understood as providing an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations (Kanu 2016c).

The expression, *Igwebuike* is a combination of three Igbo words. It can be understood as a word or a sentence: as a word, it is written as *Igwebuike*, and as a sentence, it is written as, *Igwe bu ike*, with the component words enjoying some independence in terms of space. Literally, *Igwe* is a noun which means number or multitude, usually a large number or population. The number or population in perspective are entities with ontological identities and significance, however, part of an existential order in which every entity is in relation to the other. *Bu* is a verb, which means is. *Ike* is a noun, which means strength or power (Kanu 2016a&b). *Igwe, bu* and *Ike* put together, means 'number is strength' or

'number is power' (Kanu 2017f). However, beyond the literal sense of *Igwebuiké*, it means *otu obi* (one heart and one soul) *cor unum et anima una*. Beyond the literal understanding of *Igwebuiké*, it concatenates Igbo forms, symbolism, signs, media, meaning, anthropologies, universal cosmic truths, functions, semantic powers, physics, phenomena, faculties, and Igbo environ-mentalities.

This is anchored on the fact that the universe in which the human person lives is a world of probabilities. An Igbo proverb says: “If a thing remains one, then nothing remains”. This is because the power or strength generated by a person is not strong enough to withstand the existential gamble of life, as the chances of being overcome are on the high side; thus the need for an existential backing. There is also an African proverb that says: “while going to the toilet in the morning ensure that you carry two sticks”. The sticks were used for cleaning up oneself after using the convenience. But because there is always the high probability of the stick falling into the pit, it is always advisable to take a second stick, just in case. With two sticks one has a greater assurance of cleaning oneself up after using the convenience; the higher the number, the greater the preparedness towards minimizing the casualty of life; the second stick is also necessary in case of a second coming or remainder of the output. In a metaphoric sense, it is used within the Igbo linguistic setting to refer to relational engagement in the world, accomplished in solidarity and complementarity, and the powerful and insurmountable force therein (Kanu 2017g). The closest words to *Igwebuiké* in English are complementarity, solidarity and harmony.

#### iv. Anthropological and Epistemological Foundations of *Igwebuiké*

*Igwebuiké* has anthropological and epistemological foundations. These are based on the nature of the human brain, which functions in an inclusive manner for the realization of wholistic knowledge. A cursory glance at the human brain reveals different sections which could be described as circles. Below is a diagram to explain the different sections of the human brain and what they represent.

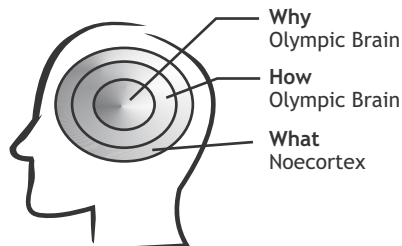


Figure 2: Dimensions of human brain

The human brain has the Olympic dimension referred to as Olympic brain and the Noecortex dimension, referred to as the Noecortex brain. The Olympic brain has two sections, which include the Inner and Outer Olympic brain. Thus, the three circles of the brain are the Inner Olympic Brain, the Outer Olympic Brain and the Noecortex Brain. These different parts of the brain concern themselves with different questions that arise in human relationships: the questions of WHY, HOW and WHAT. While the Inner Olympic Brain responds to the question of WHY, the Outer Olympic Brain responds to the question of HOW, and the Noecortex Brain responds to the question of WHAT (Kanu 2017c).

For knowledge to be wholistic and translate into action for transformation, it must be based on an understanding of the WHAT, HOW and WHY questions about reality. For a leader to be effective, the leader needs to know what they do, how to do what they do, and why they do what they do. The absence of any of these strangles followership. Inadvertent, most organizations only explain what they do, how they do what they do without explaining why they do it. This explains why many organizations fail. This is based on the fact that people patronize you because of why you do what you do and not just because of what or how you do it. The question of WHY speaks of your uniqueness and the newness you are bringing into the system. It is at the WHY Level that you find: Feelings; Loyalty; Trust; Decision making and Human behaviour. The complementary character of the brain creates an anthropological and epistemological basis for *Igwebuike*.

#### **v. Ontological Foundations of *Igwebuike***

The mutual relations and complementarity that *Igwebuike* conceptualizes is anchored on the following basic human conditions (Njoku 2015):

- A. The world in which we live is one in which we encounter several needs, however, with very little resources to take care of the needs. This limitation calls for the mobilization of other forces outside of the self, a social fellowship for the satisfaction of particular needs.
- b. Nature has placed in us the likeness for fellowship. This is based on the fact that we were created by God in His own image and likeness.
- c. Although we are equal essentially, we have different gifts and abilities. What I may be able to do another may not be able to do, meaning that my relationship with the other completes what is lacking in me.
- d. Collaboration with the other is ground for becoming, as everything takes a bit of another to make itself. It is a ground for staying alive and transforming the universe.

Human fellowship and cooperation is a reality that is rooted in the human nature and to keep away from relating is to place a limitation on our being. It is, therefore, a unit of order inscribed in the human nature for survival. The more a person relates the more he or she lives out his or her being to the full. Mutual cooperation and fellowship in the society increases protection, assistance, etc. Being in the company of the other reduces the burden that nature imposes on a person as an individual.

#### **vi. Cosmological Foundations of *Igwebuike***

*Igwebuike* is an African cosmological idea that shapes the African cultural, religious and social. It is symbolic of the African universe of particularities where every creature as an independent entity must negotiate another's existential highway for mutual survival. It is a dependent, interdependent and combinational universe. Negotiation is very important in the African universe because it is a world that one shares with the other in an atmosphere of inter-subjective relations (Kanu 2018). These inter-subjective relations only play out without chaos when the individual is able to skillfully bridge his or her interiority with the individuality of the other.

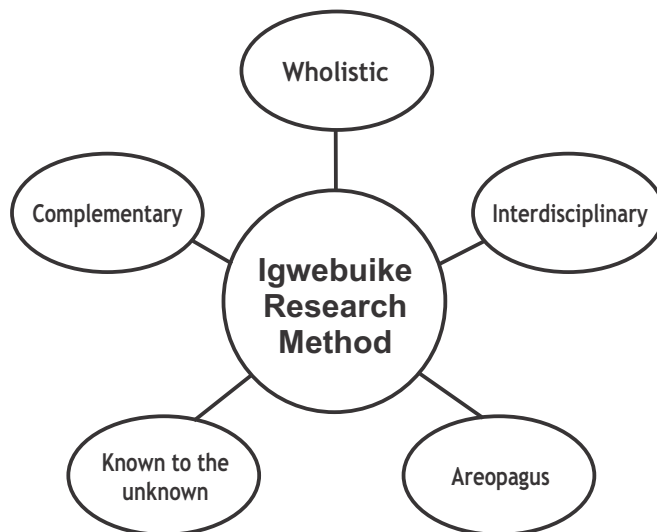
The African universe has physical and spiritual dimensions. In the spirit realm, God represents the Chief Being, and sits at the apex of power. In the physical world, human beings dominate, occupying the central position in the scheme of God's creation. The structure of the African universe can be illustrated in three levels: the sky, the earth and the underworld: the sky is where God *Chukwu* or *Chineke* and angels reside; the earth where human beings, animals, natural resources, some devils and physical observable realities abide; and the underworld where ancestors and bad spirits live (Kanu 2013). These worlds interact in spite of their peculiarities, and persist because of a healthy inter-subjective relation. There is really no wall between the physical and spiritual worlds, between the visible and invisible, the sacred and profane; as there is a cooperate existence of reality. Thus, certain elements can move from one structure to another to commune with other elements. In this interaction, human beings commune with God, the divinities, the ancestors and vice versa. In these movements, you find complimenrarity, relationships, interactions etc, which sustain the universe.

#### **vii. *Igwebuike* Research Method**

*Igwebuike* posits that life is a relationship, and it is only within this relationship that knowledge and life itself is possible. To be a human being, you must relate to your

environment- and know the things around you. “To be” and not know is not “to be” (Kanu 2019a). Every human being wants to know, meaning that every human being cannot but research in a general sense. This aspect of our humanity shows itself in the curiosity of a child who is always asking questions, becoming completely absorbed in the search for the truth, trying to make sense out of a complex world, making guesses and testing them, trying to understand his or her limits and the limits of the situations surrounding him or her. Since “to be” is to know, once this liberality to know is restricted, the human person loses something of its humanness, and begins to die intellectually and emotionally. If a person is allowed to ask questions without limit, he or she takes progressive essential steps in the process of becoming human (Kanu 2019b). Whenever the human person learns only to follow the familiar and safe way, or to ask only those questions to which the teacher knows the answer, or learns never to upset existing organizational patterns and procedures or to see defect in the existing order- he or she sacrifices some of his or her humanness (Torrance, 1970, pp. 6-7). This is the uniqueness that *Igwebuiké* adds to the concept of research. Research is not just an attempt to find solutions to problems but to reach the full potentials of our humanity.

For a research method to be *Igwebuiké* in character, it must employ one or more of the following approaches: it has to be wholistic in approach, complementary, interdisciplinary, move from the known as a bridge to the unknown, and should be non-derogatory and sympathetic, which is the Areopagus approach.



**Figure 3: Approaches of Igwebuiké Research Method**