IGWEBUIKE METAPHYSICS: A COMPLEMENTARY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

African metaphysics is a branch of African philosophy that concerns itself with the fundamental nature, structure, and position of human beings in the totality of being from an African perspective. The present inquiry focuses on a unique facet of African metaphysics, referred to as Igwebuike metaphysics, which is a concept that describes the underlying principle of metaphysics in African thought. Igwebuike is the factor that unifies the plurality of metaphysical perspectives in Africa, while also serving as the bedrock of African metaphysical expressions. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Igwebuike metaphysics in particular, and African metaphysics in general, through a methodical approach that utilizes a combination of hermeneutic, thematic, and analytic methods of inquiry. The research employs the Igwebuike theoretical framework as a means of articulating the underlying principles of Igwebuike metaphysics, and demonstrates how it contributes to the unique perspective of the African people on metaphysics. The research outcomes enrich the existing literature on African metaphysics, and confirm that the African people possess a distinct metaphysical perspective that complements and adds to the global discourse on metaphysics. Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of African metaphysics as a field that has been understudied and undervalued, and the need for further research to advance our understanding of African philosophy as a whole.

Keywords: Igwebuike, Metaphysics, African. Philosophy, Complementarity

Introduction

Metaphysics, unlike other fields of human inquiry such as chemistry, physics, political science, sociology, or other dimensions of philosophy like epistemology, logic, political philosophy, and ethics, presents a unique challenge in defining its subject matter. Its

complex subject matter has rendered the definition of metaphysics an ongoing discussion among philosophers from ancient times to the contemporary era. This debate has influenced the discourse on the subject matter of metaphysics and continues to do so.

The challenge of defining metaphysics is further compounded by recent developments in the field. The earliest definitions of metaphysics, such as Aristotle's conception of it as the study of being qua being or the science of the first causes of things, are no longer sufficient due to the expanded knowledge and more systematic discourses within this area of philosophy (Van Inwagen, Peter and Meghan Sullivan, 2021). Furthermore, what was once commonly accepted as existing may no longer be so. These changes have made the definition of metaphysics more complex than ever before, adding to the difficulty of defining this elusive field of philosophical inquiry.

The concept of metaphysics, a branch of philosophy concerned with the study of the nature and structure of the totality of being, has been the subject of discourse for millennia. The term "metaphysics" was coined by Andronicus of Rhodes, a Greek philosopher and the editor of the works of Aristotle, around 70 BC. Andronicus used the term to classify certain works of Aristotle that did not pertain to the study of physicalities, which were classified as physics. The word "metaphysics" is a combination of two Greek words, "meta" meaning "that which is after" and "physika" meaning "physics" or "nature". Consequently, the term came to be understood as the study of realities beyond the physical world. However, this understanding is incomplete, as metaphysics also encompasses the study of mundane realities.

The aim of metaphysics is to provide a comprehensive account of the totality of being, including the nature, structure, and position of human beings in the universe. According to Omoregbe (1991), this field of study attempts to provide a comprehensive account of the whole of reality. Similarly, Izu (2009) notes that … it investigates the basic principles of being as such, either according to its inner structure or according to its first, absolute origin" (p. 12-13). Aristotle writes:

> There is a science which investigates being as being and the attribute which belong to this in virtue of its nature. Now, this is not the same as any of the so-called special sciences; for none of these others treats universal being as being. They cut off a part of being and investigate the attribute of this part; this is what the mathematical sciences for instance do. Now since we are seeking the first principles and the highest causes, clearly there must be something to which these belong by their nature. If then those who sought the elements of existing things were seeking these first principles, the elements must be elements of being not by

accident but just because it is being. Therefore it is of being as being that we also must grasp the first causes. (pp.731-732).

The above understanding differentiates metaphysics from other fields of philosophy. While other fields study aspects of reality, metaphysics studies the totality of reality. Thus, Aristotle refers to metaphysics as the science of being as being (*ens qua ens*). Maritain (1981) refers to metaphysics as the foundation of all sciences, the foundation of all academic disciplines. There are two divisions in metaphysics: Ontology or general metaphysics and special metaphysics. According to Izu (2009), ontology, on the one hand, deals with the general traits of reality. Special metaphysics, on the other hand, concerns itself with the fundamentally distinct sorts of entities that bring about the universe. It studies classes of being like God, man, spirit, etc.

In view of the inherent intricacy in defining the parameters of metaphysics and ascertaining the precise subject matter that ought to be encompassed by this discipline, this study endeavors to carve out a unique epistemic niche by scrutinizing metaphysics through the prism of African philosophy. By deploying the Igwebuike concept as a heuristic tool, the paper aims to proffer an original lens through which to view the ongoing discourse in metaphysics.

Given the expansiveness of the field of metaphysics within the domain of philosophy, the scope of this study shall be delimited to a selection of themes, which shall provide a groundwork for further inquiry into Igwebuike metaphysic and the enrichening of ongoing philosophical discourse in the field.

Why Igwebuike Metaphysics and not African Metaphysics?

The African continent is characterized by its rich diversity of cultures, philosophical traditions, and religious beliefs. Consequently, it would be inaccurate to posit that the entire African populace adheres to the same set of values, standards, or expectations. Hence, the present author opts to refrain from utilizing the concept of African metaphysics, as this would imply a universal metaphysics applicable to all African peoples across the continent. Instead, the author avails themselves of the term 'Igwebuike' to qualify the present discourse on African metaphysics.

The concept of Igwebuike is employed to describe the underlying principle of African metaphysical thought. As such, Igwebuike serves as a unifying factor amidst the diversity of metaphysical perspectives across the African continent, representing the constant underlying principle that remains consistent amidst changes in metaphysical viewpoints. Furthermore, it can be regarded as the operating condition that maintains the constancy of similarity amidst the astounding diversity of African perspectives.

Thus, while this research fundamentally explores African metaphysics, the term Igwebuike connotes a shared worldview, which reveals points of convergence and similarities in African metaphysical expressions. Igwebuike encapsulates the complementarity, interconnectedness, and interrelatedness of the African reality, which has endured as a constant feature amidst the changes and differences observable in the African concept of reality.

This interconnectedness and interrelatedness of the African reality are manifested in the way the Africans think in hierarchical categories and modes rather than in a single, isolated and individualistic manner. The African's metaphysical concept of the reality around him or her is manifested in the understanding of the different elements of the world as a relationship that is interconnected in terms of cause and effect, harmony and conflict.

From Igwebuike Ontology to Igwebuike metaphysics

What we refer to as Igwebuike metaphysics is born from a worldview or an ontology that is Igwebuike in character. Igwebuike metaphysics, therefore, derives its name from the very worldview that shapes it. Worldview refers to the theory of the universe, which include the manner of conceiving the world and the place of humanity in this world in relation to other realities. It forms a 'life system' that one holds on to consciously or unconsciously, which serves as an interpretative framework for the interpretation and conception of reality. Worldview is, therefore, at the centre of our thoughts and expressions through actions and the institutions of society like education, politics, gender, sense of family, religion, arts, social interactions, health care, etc. One needs to glance at the works of eminent scholars like Achebe (1958), Arinze (1970), Nwala (1985), Wambutda (1986), Ejizu (1986), Onuoha (1987), Metuh (1987), Quarcoopome (1987), Onunwa (1994), Madu (2004), Unah (2009) and Kanu (2012) on worldview.

The concept of Igwebuike captures a worldview or ontology that is complementary, relational, interconnected, and harmonious. It is a unifying concept of African thought that pertains to the human person's conception of the spiritual and material universe in which they reside. This concept is regarded as an explanatory theory or principle that interprets the complex relationships between the non-corporal world and human social life, including significant social institutions that ensure social continuity and group identity. Additionally, it underpins the epistemological manifestations of the human person's universe.

Given the strong connection between ontology and metaphysics, it follows that metaphysics cannot be separate from the ontology that structures reality, within which it

manifests itself. In this sense, Igwebuike ontology, which is interrelated, interconnected, and complementary, shapes Igwebuike metaphysics and characterizes it as complementary in nature. The belief in the reality of force in the African universe is fundamental to the African belief in the intimate relatedness, connectedness, and interwovenness of reality. Tempels (1959) describes the African ontology as a web of forces in which no single thread can vibrate without shaking the entire network. The existence-in-relation to the other or being-with-the-other creates constancy in interaction and influence on the African universe.

Igwebuike and the Modality of Being

In African ontology, that which is, is, because it has 'force' and the quality and quantity of this force determines the nature of a being (Tempels 1959), and everything that the African does is towards the preservation of this force (Ogugua 2003). Force, therefore, is necessarily and essentially an attribute of being in African ontology. Although every reality has force, not all realities have the same amount of force. The variety of the degree of forces is at the base of the categorization of being. In the hierarchy of forces, those with greater force come first, with God at the apex as the source of all forces. Based on the degree of force, reality in the African universe can be subsumed into the following categories:

a. **Muo (Spirit):** This includes God, the divinities, and spirits. God is at the apex of the *Muo* category as the source of all forces. Tempels (1959) writes, "Above all force is God... It is he who has force, power, in himself. He gives existence, power of survival and increase, to other forces. In relation to other forces, he is he who increases force" (p. 29). He adds, "He knows all forces, their orderings, their dependence, their potential and their mutual interactions" (p. 34). His existential cause is within Himself and, He sustains resultant forces. The subsistence and annihilation of other forces are within His power alone.

After the Supreme Being are divinities. They are intermediaries and share aspects of the divine status and are responsible to God for whatever actions they perform. Awolalu and Dopamu (1978) refer to them as the executive heads of various divine departments in the Supreme Being's monarchical government. Here also belong: the benevolent spirits, known as the ancestors and the malevolent spirits, known as bad spirits.

b. *Mmadu* **(Human Being):** The human person (*Muntu*) is a vital force endowed with intelligence and will. Although God is the source of vital force, man is the sovereign vital force in the world, ruling the land and all that abides in it, however, "his fullness of being consist in his participation to a greater or lesser extent in the force of God" (p. 47).

Tempels avers that "man is the supreme force, the most powerful among created beings" (p. 46). He can renew his vital force by tapping the strength of other creatures.

c. *Anu* **(Animal, tame and wild):** This category of being comprises forces not endowed with reason. They are ruled by instincts. They are all under the force of man and exist for man. According to Tempels, "…inanimate beings and minerals, are forces which because of their nature have been put at the disposal of men, of living human forces, or of men's vital forces" (p. 31).

d. *Ife* **(things):** Edeh (1985) holds that "the Igbo word *ife* primarily means a thing, anything material or immaterial. It is used to refer to a happening, an event, or an occurrence. *Ife* can also be affixed to any adjective to mean specific things" (p. 95). It is a force that cannot act for itself, and thus can only become active when greater forces act on them.

e. *Ebe* **(Space):** Space is the relation of the distance between any two bodies or points. It responds to the question of where. According to Ijiomah (2005), space in Igbo ontology consists of three levels: they are the sky, the earth and the underworld. Ekwealor (1990), corroborated Ijiomah's perspective when he categorized the Igbo-African universe into the sky, the world and the land of the spirits.

f. *Oge* **(Time):** Time responds to questions such as: when did you see Emeka? When did you pick up Nnamdi? When was the sacrifice offered? Mbiti (1969) defines time in African perspective as the collection of events which have occurred, those now taking place and those which are immediately to occur. It is in time the human person performs or fails to perform, and that his destiny is based on the use of it.

g. **Igwebuike (Modality):** Igwebuike- in African ontology is the mode of being, *Uzo Idi*. This refers to the manner or style of being. This manner of being is referred to as Igwebuike because it is a manner of being in relation to otherness. Everything in the African world is in relation to the other: existence-in-relation to the other or being-with-the other.

Therefore, every being is by belonging. This is expressed in various Igbo African proverbs, such as, *Ngwere ghara ukwu osisi, aka akpara ya* (If a lizard stays off from the foot of a tree, it would be caught by man). This expresses the indisputable and inevitable presence of, not just the family, but the community to which the individual belongs.

Chi: The complementary Cord in Igwebuike metaphysics

There are various dimensions to the use of the concept of *Chi*. It is in this regard that Green (1947) writes that: "It is difficult to know what the real Igbo significance of the

word is" (p. 30). Achebe (1975) avers that its real meaning might never be revealed. His position points to the fact that the concept of *Chi* is as elusive as it is enigmatic. Nwodo (2004) attributes this to the fact that the concept is metaphysical.

This notwithstanding, Chi can be understood as the divine aspect of the human person (Ilogu 1974); as being in opposition to none-being *(*Abanuka 2004; Ojike 1955; Ekennia (2003); Chi as our other identity, in this case, the spark of the divine in the human person (Achebe 1975); Chi as our guardian angel (Achebe 1958); Chi as the determinator of our destiny (Okere 1971; Achebe 1958; Nwodo 2004; Okoro 2008).

The concept of Igwebuike encompasses a structure of reality that acknowledges a shared element amidst the diversity of reality. According to Kanu (2017, 2018, 2019), it perceives each individual reality as part of and the completion of the whole, thus promoting unity amid diversity. The basis of the unity of reality, despite diversity, is explained by the Chi element. Although Chi provides for the individuation, identity, and contrariety of being, it is also the foundation of the unity of being. This is possible because Chi is a 'thumbprint' of Chukwu in all that He has made, serving as a reason for the unity of being and the basis for interaction and collaboration. Therefore, the individualistic strain in the theory of personality that Chi provides does not contradict the emphasis on the overriding value of unity in diverse human situations.

In Igbo ontology, Chi serves not only as a basis for identity but also as a basis for unity- a common gift or platform for communal relations. The Igbo greeting, "Ibo Chi," reflects a rhetorical informative and questioning expectancy between individuals engaged in a relational exchange. Similarly, "Isa Chi" and "Ifo Chi" reflect the same rhetorical informative questioning expectancy from individuals in dialogue.

Universality and Particularity

The Igwebuike perspective of reality is founded upon the principle of complementarity and interconnectedness. It is a viewpoint that regards each constituent of reality as a complement to the other. Concerning the problem of universals, Igwebuike comprehends both aspects of our metaphysical universe as complementing each other, rather than two poles of reality, as exemplified in the philosophy of Plato and other Western thinkers.

Plato's perspective distinguishes between particular things and their universal ideas or essences, as well as between the knowledge obtained through experience and that obtained through reason, situating the object of true knowledge in the World of Forms, which he considers the abode of the essences of things, ideal things, or perfect nature of things. Thus, Plato presents universals as the superior aspect of reality and particulars as the inferior dimension of reality. In contrast, from the Igwebuike perspective, neither is

superior nor inferior, as both dimensions of reality are significant and necessary for comprehending the totality of reality.

The particular and universal, in this sense, are not considered parrel but as projections of the other. The two are in constant relationships with each other and complement each other. To buttress this fact, two Igbo African elements central to the Igbo-African reality would be studied as they express the complementarity of universality and particularity- the first is *Chi* which is central to Igbo religion and social life and *Madu* who is central in the African universe.

a. *Chi*-A Portion of the Universal (God) in the Particular (Human Being)

Igwebuike is based on particular principles, and one among them is the principle of identity, which states that every being is determined in itself, is one with itself and consistent in itself (Kanu 2012). The principle of identity is very important in *Igwebuike* because, before we can talk about interconnectedness or complementarity, the other must have an identity of its own (Kanu 2013). This identity is determined by the *Chi,* the divine aspect of the human or a spark of *Chukwu* in the human person. It is a spiritual being or force that every African is believed to possess within or outside of himself or herself. Ilogu (1974) avers that *Chukwu* has assigned to each human person at birth a portion of divinity referred to as *Chi*. This, according to Nwodo (2004) implies that each individual has a portion of the great God.

Achebe (1975) posits that a person's Chi is an individuating power that serves as their other identity in spirit-land, with their spirit complementing their terrestrial human being. This view is grounded on the perspective that nothing can exist alone, as there must always be another thing standing beside it. Thus, the Chi is perceived to shadow the physical aspect of our being on earth, exerting a greater influence as it operates on a higher plane. Despite the dichotomy between these two aspects of our being, they are not in opposition to each other but rather complement one another. Achebe's conceptualization of Chi as the other identity of the terrestrial human being in the spirit-land may bear some resemblance to Plato's analysis of the relationship between the world of forms and the world of individual realities. However, unlike Plato's view of the world of forms as having an independent existence from the world of individual realities, with the latter being only a shadow of the former, in the African worldview, both aspects complement each other.

The concept of Chi in Igbo ontology plays a dual role in the manifestation of reality. On the one hand, Chi serves to individuate each unique entity in the world, carving out a distinct space for each individual. However, this particularity is not antithetical to

universality. At the universal level, every entity contributes uniquely to the broader reality of the world. This interplay between universality and particularity demonstrates the complementary nature of these two dimensions of reality. It is important to note that while each entity occupies a unique space, it is not independent of the universal reality. Rather, every entity collaborates with others in sustaining the universal reality, thus achieving a harmonious relationship between particularity and universality.

b. *Madu*- Expressing the Universal (God) in the Particular (Human Being)

Madu is the Igbo-African word for a human being, both male and female. Etymologically, it is an abbreviation of the words *Mma* (which means 'the good', 'a good' or 'good') and *di* which is the operative word in *Idi* (to be), which comes from the word *odi* (it is), which is the third person of the singular *idi* ('to exist' or 'to be'). From this etymology, it means that you cannot be a human being without existing or being in existence. However, put together, *Mmadi* means 'the good that is'. The particular human person's expression of the Universal 'God' within the context of *Mmadi* begins with the understanding of the relationship between the human person and God.

Edeh (1985) posits a connection between the concept of Mma and the creation of the world by Chukwu, the source of human goodness. According to Edeh, the goodness of the human person is a reflection of the goodness of God, in whose goodness humans share. Consequently, the goodness of the human person is a participation in the goodness of God. This implies that the human person, as a particular entity, draws its goodness from the universal source of goodness, God.

Edeh (1985) offers a valuable contribution to the discussion on the participation of the human particular in the divine universal by emphasizing the need for a deeper understanding of the Igbo concept of 'participate.' Drawing from the Igbo language, Edeh notes that there are two commonly used translations of the word 'participate': *Iketa n'ife,* which implies an individual or individuals sharing in something that belongs to the group, and *Isolu n'ife,* which suggests 'to follow others in something.' This view underscores the idea that, despite being individuals, humans participate in the goodness of God together with others who make up the human community.

In the term *mmadu*, one observes an individual human being reflecting all the transcendent attributes of being realized in the highest order. *Mmadu* is a microcosm of the macrocosm, whereby the human person represents a synthesis rather than a dualism.

Freedom and determinism

The enduring query that persists on the periphery of human inquiry concerning the concepts of freedom and determinism pertains to the extent to which the human individual exerts control over their fate. From the Igwebuike perspective, how might this inquiry be addressed? In order to provide an answer, this discussion will explore three distinct dimensions: community and individual freedom, destiny and freedom, and the relationship between the nature of the universe and freedom.

a. Community and Individual Freedom

Mbiti (1970) proverbializes the community-determining role of the individual and presents it as the structure of the African reality. Achebe (1969) considers it as a value that must be priced above all. He writes, "He that has a brother must hold him to his heart, for a kinsman cannot be bought in the market, neither is a brother bought with money" (p. 123). Its value is stressed even in Igbo-African proverbs: *To live closer to the palm tree gives the eating of its nuts a special flavour*. The community, therefore, gives the individual his existence and education. It presents existence as that which is not only meaningful but possible only in a community. According to Tempels (1952):

> Bantu psychology cannot conceive of man as an individual, as a force existing by itself and apart from its ontological relationships with other living beings and from it connecting with animals or inanimate forces around it. The Bantu cannot be alone. No; he feels and knows himself to be a vital force, at this very time to be in an intimate and personal relationship with other forces acting above him and below him in the hierarchy of forces. He knows himself to be a vital force, even now influencing some forces and being influenced by others. The human being, apart from the ontological hierarchy and the interaction of forces, has no existence in the conceptions of the Bantu (p. 49-50).

The Akans of Ghana believe that "when a man descends from heaven, he descends into a community". The community rejoices and welcomes his arrival, finds out whose reincarnation he is, gives the person a name and interprets that arrival within the circumstance of the birth. As the child grows, he becomes aware of his dependence on his kin group and community. When the time comes for him to get married, the community determines where he marries from; even when the lady is married, she is married by the entire community. With his birth, man also realizes the necessity of making his contribution to the group (Uchendu, 1965). With all the involvements of the community in the life of a person, the question that arises is: is the human person free?

In the African worldview, the concept of community does not negate individual freedom. Even though an individual is given a name by the community, the name serves as an identifier of his or her unique identity, and the individual is able to make contributions to the community as an individual. Despite being defined by his or her community name, an individual's successes, and failures, which are determined by the use of his or her freedom, largely shape his or her identity. Although the community has established rules and regulations, an individual retains the right to either abide by them or not. Therefore, while the community wields considerable influence over individuals, it does not infringe upon their freedom.

b. The Nature of the Universe and Freedom

Nnamdi (2009) maintains that there are three worlds in the African universe. The first is the earth which is the visible world, *Uwa,* in which human beings, deities and other material things reside. The second is the land of the spirits, *Ani muo,* which is the invisible world. The ancestors as well as other spiritual beings inhabit the invisible world and from there, they influence the activities of human beings and other things in the world. There is a third world called *Igwe,* the sky, where *Chukwu* lives. And from there he cares for and directs things in human and ancestral worlds. These three worlds for Africans are interconnected. It is believed that the finger of God is manifested in the most rudimentary element of nature. Idowu (1962) avers that God is the absolute controller of the universe. The Igbo would refer to him as *Osebuluwa* (the sustainer of the universe). He did not just create the world but actively sustains it.

From the foregoing, Edeh (1985) inquires:

> If God has a knowing plan for all creatures and directs them to this end, does it mean that he has already determined his creatures to follow his plan? If so, how could any creature be said to be free in its actions? In other words, if God's activity embraces the height, depth and breadth of created reality, is there any place for a finite activity which belongs to the being from which it comes? Or is it God rather than man, in the case of human activity, who acts as the centre of man's being? (p. 163).

In African spirituality, God is considered to have a powerful influence on all entities, including the spiritual realm. Additionally, certain deities and spirits within the spiritual realm also possess power over the universe. These entities can be categorized as either benevolent or malevolent, and their influence can determine success or failure in the world. Occasionally, they can even possess individuals and exert their power through them. The question then arises: given the influence of God and these entities on man and his universe, is man truly free?

The response to the above question is: Yes, the African human person is free. This is evidenced by the notion that God or the divinities reward or punish individuals for actions carried out conscientiously and of their own volition. The presence of higher powers such as God, the divinities, and spirits within the human realm does not diminish human freedom. The belief in the unlimited power of God within African traditions does not preclude the creation of individuals capable of engaging in autonomous actions. As posited by Edeh (1985), the coexistence of divine causality and human freedom is not antithetical but rather embodies a paradoxical relationship of cause and effect.

c. Destiny and Freedom

Gyekye (1987) defines destiny as "that which determines the uniqueness and individuality of a person. Thus, it is your destiny ... that makes you, you, and my destiny that makes me me" (p. 107). As regards how human beings have come to the knowledge of what is referred to as destiny, he avers that human life itself provides the setting for thought on destiny. He writes:

> Patterns of individual lives, habitual or persistent traits of persons, fortunes and misfortunes, success and failures, the traumas and enigmas of life; the ways in which propensities, inclinations, capacities and talents show themselves in individuals; the observed uniqueness of the individual – all these suggests to the Akan that there is and must be some basis or reason for this individuality. That basis is destiny. (pp. 106-107).

Although human experience provides the setting for the belief in human destiny, generally, the belief in destiny is based on the belief that human beings were created by God. In the African world, it is believed that the destiny of people as regards success and failure has been apportioned to them by God before birth. Thus, when something happens in a person's life, especially among the Igbo, Gregory (2009) observes that it is traced to his *Akala aka,* his destined lot. When a person dies among the Hausa-speaking people, it is said: *Haka Allah ya kadara* (that is how God ordained it) *or haka Allah ya nufa* (that is how God intended it). This implies that God predestined it.

While we may accept the idea of destiny in a general sense in the life of the African, his life is not completely predetermined. A man can better the conditions of his life through prayers and sacrifices. In this case, a person is not changing his or her destiny but trying to do something about his human condition. In fact, even when a man has a good destiny and he does not work hard, there is no guarantee of good fortune coming his way. The Igbo would say *onye kwe chi ya ekwe* (if one says yes, his god will say yes too). The implication is that an individual's freedom is guaranteed since a person's success or

failure depends on the degree of the person's cooperation with nature's endowment. This according to Abanuka (2004), involves a person making proper use of his God-given theoretical and practical knowledge *ako na uche.* Gyekye (1987) writes further that: "Determination, therefore, does not negate the effectiveness of human beings as causal and therefore moral agents" (p. 121). The concept of destiny in the African context is that of a general destiny. The idea of general destiny, according to Gykye (1987) "determines only the broad outlines of an individual's mundane life, not the specific details. It follows that not every action a person performs or every event that occurs in one's life comes within the ambit of his destiny" (p. 114).

Cause and Effect

According to Western thought, events can happen spontaneously (Hume, 1902; Shakespeare, 1852). However, Aja (2001) argues that for Africans, the universe is an ordered system in which all events have a cause and are potentially explainable. Gyekye (1987) similarly affirms the doctrine of universal causation in the Akan-African worldview. Unlike their Western counterparts who focus on mechanical, chemical, and psychological interactions, Africans also emphasize a metaphysical kind of causality that binds the creator to the creature. In response to the Western concept of chance, which suggests that events can happen without cause, Ozumba (2004) contends that chance in the African world is attributable to ignorance of the series of actions and reactions that give rise to a given event.

Gyekye's (1987) ontological position holds that causality is universally applicable, yet he notes that in African thought, exceptional occurrences are accorded greater attention compared to natural events or routine phenomena. The latter class of events includes occurrences such as seasonal rain, drought, normal pregnancy duration, plant growth, and specific fishing seasons. The African mind is unperturbed by such happenings since they are believed to be intrinsic to the orderly workings established by the omnipotent creator (Gyekye, 1987, p. 77). These events are empirical, scientific, and non-supernatural, and they have been studied, enabling people to discern the causal connections between them. For example, Africans are aware that rivers dry up during the dry season and that gestation lasts nine months before delivery.

Extraordinary or contingent are those that engage the minds of Africans, and such events would include, a woman being pregnant for more than nine months, drought during the rainy season and a tree falling and killing a man. These events according to Gyekye (1987) have particular traits that make them mind-disturbing, "They are infrequent and hence are considered abnormal; they are discrete and isolated; they appear to be puzzling, bizarre, and incomprehensible; they are not considered subsumable under any immediate

known law of nature" (p. 78). The events are deemed insufficient to explain their causes, thus, the ultimate cause of the event is sought. The interest is not in what has happened but in why it happened.

Iroegbu (1995) distinguishes between two kinds of causes in African ontology: the ontological cause and the functional cause. The ontological cause produces the being of the effect. It is such that without the ontological cause, the being which is the effect would not be. An example is the relationship between God and the human person. God is the ontological cause of the human person. While God is the mediate (indirect) ontological cause of all that the human person causes, the human person is the immediate ontological cause of his or her actions. Describing God as the immediate ontological cause of man, God is understood as the creator. the human person could also be the ontological cause of another person by producing his kind. The second cause, which is the functional cause, explains the reason for the operations of being in relation to other beings, as regards the force they exert on other beings, for instance, when an elder curses a younger person.

Thus Tempels (1952) avers that in the created force, a causal force emanates from the very nature of that created force to influence other forces. Through this interaction, a force could weaken or re-enforce another force. Each force has an activating principle or vital force which allows it to function in a specific manner. The idea of a created force excludes God, who is the creator of the created force. Taking from Aristotle, God is the UNCAUSED CAUSE and the ultimate cause of all things. The hierarchy of being could be arranged as follows: God, Divinities, Spirits, Man, Animate realities, and Inanimate realities.

The Africans believe that events are determined by the wills of spiritual beings. And spiritual beings from the hierarchy of being are God, divinities and spirits. At the occurrence of an event, causality raises the dual but complementary inquiries: how? and why? The *how* question requires a description of the event that has occurred. Having understood how it happened, the Africans begins to assess the why. The how will include the place, time, and situation. At this level, it is an empirical question in the domain of African empirical science. The question of the *why* comes after an understanding of the *How.* Here, the African moves beyond empirical analysis and goes deep down and all-round. The reason why it happened is what is investigated here. It is at this point those sacred scientists are consulted to investigate the spiritual world for a deeper understanding of the event. Profound inquiries such as these, are based on the African belief that nothing happens by chance. Amid all these the question that arises is if the human person still has freedom. And the answer is Yes, the human person is free and responsible for his actions.

Life as Belongingness

To be in the African world is to belong. The African communal spirit expresses the indisputable and inevitable presence of, not just the family, but the community to which the individual belongs. There is a connection between the community and the life of the person. During one of the feasts organized by Okonkwo in the work, *The Things Fall Apart*, his uncle Uchendu expressed the African philosophy of belongingness:

> We do not ask for wealth because he that has health and children will also have wealth. We do not pray to have more money but to have more kinsmen. We are better than animals because we have kinsmen. An animal rubs its itching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him (Achebe, 1958, p. 132).

After the feast, when one of the oldest men from among the *umunna* rose to thank Okonkwo, he expressed further the African philosophy of belongingness with a different shade of insight:

> A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their own homes. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Everyman can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so (Achebe, 1958, p. 133).

It is the community that gives the individual his existence, and this existence is not only meaningful but also possible only in a community. It is in this sense that to be is to belong and to belong is to be (Kanu 2012; Anah 2005).

Personhood as a Coherent Pluralism

In African ontology, the human person is made up of three principal distinctive but coherent elements: the spirit, the body, and the heart. These constituent elements that make up the person, according to Ejizu (2017), also provide the basis for the relatedness of the total personality. Thomas (1971) describes the African personality in this regard:

> Similar to modern chemistry, it is a veritable epistemological revolution which is in operation if one wishes to comprehend the coherent pluralism of the self which seems to have characterized the complex structure and dynamism of the Black African Personality. (p. 387).

The focus of this study would be the Igbo-African worldview. And within this context, the three elements include, the spirit (Muo), the Heart (Obi) and the Body (Ahu). These elements are in the self, defining the distinctive character of the self. Without all these elements, the self would lose the power of context, and thus the strength of visibility and relevance.

a. *The Spirit (Muo)*

Muo in Igbo is a concept that describes whatever is immaterial, like God, the deities, and ancestors, however, it is also used to describe the immaterial part of the human person. This introduces the idea that the human person is not completely a material reality, he has a spiritual dimension which must be considered in every discussion about him. Okere (2015) avers that: "Muo is therefore conceived as the intangible, invisible element in man, the seat of will and emotions, the principle of life and point of connection, similarity and sharing with the world of the spirit" (p. 164).

This spirit in the human person is the principle of life; such that the absence of the spirit would mean the absence of life. This explains why for many Africans, the death of a person is seen as the departure of the spirit of the person. Okere posits that the Muo carries out the following activities in the human person:

1. *Uche,* which means thinking, considering, reflecting, etc.
2. *Iru eruru,* which refers to a deep reflection, usually over something sad or tragic.
3. *Ncheta,* which means to fetch out from the past through thinking, that is, to remember, to recall, to think out.
4. *Nghota,* which means to understand, comprehend, grasp, or get the full implications of something.
5. *Izu,* deliberation, consensus, or the information that is the result of consensus and deliberation.
6. *Ako,* means prudence, cleverness, wise.
7. *Ngenge,* imagining, surmising.
8. *Atutu,* means to plan, to project and to order the execution of some plan.

This notwithstanding, the spirit of a person, which derives directly from the Supreme Being and the ancestral world also links him or her ontologically to God and the ancestral spirits. It is the point of connection between the person and the spiritual world.

b. *The Heart (Obi)*

When the missionaries came, for want of word and due to ignorance of the local language and culture of the Igbo, they foisted the foreign concept of the soul on the native word: Mkpuru Obi (the seed of the heart), to mean the spiritual element that is in man that is destined for eternal life. The obi is the psychological centre of emotions, sensations and sympathy. It is the seat and centre of virtue and vice, of conscience and morality as well. The quality of a person's heart determines the quality of the person's way of life. The life that a man lives mirrors the kind of heart that the person has. When an Igbo wants to

describe a person concerning his attitude, the heart is used to present a picture of him (Okere 2015). For instance:

a. *Obi kara ka*: a brave heart

b. *Obi mgbawa*: heart brake

c. *Onye obi miri*: weakly or sentimental person

d. *Obi kporo nku*: a wicked person

e. *Oni nwayo*: a gentle or kind person

f. *Obi ike*: a strong person

g. *Obi ojo*: a bad person

h. *Obi oma*: a kind and happy person

i. *Obi ebere*: a merciful person

c. *The Body (Ahu)*

The body in the Igbo language is *ahu.* Etymologically, it can be traced to the Igbo word- *hu,* which means 'to see'. Concerning *ahu,* it means that the body is that part of the self which can be seen, it is visible, seeable, and tangible. Thus, Ejizu (2017) refers to the body as the centre of the manifestation of a living person. When a child is born, his *ahu* helps people around him to identify him. When a person has polio, the sight of him and the nature of his *ahu* helps a person to identify him. The *ahu* also expresses the state of the human person. This is why the Igbo would ask the other: *Ahu gi kwanu,* meaning, how is your body? The body is thought of as the indicator of the health of the person. This explains why when the Igbo says *Ahu ojoo* or *ahu njo,* meaning bad body, is used to mean ill health.

When an ancestor reincarnates, sometimes the *ahu* helps the family into which the child has been born to identify the ancestor who has returned. For instance, in cases of an ancestor who lost his five fingers while he lived, and when a child is born after his death and the child is born without five fingers, even before divination, it is believed that it is the ancestor that has returned. And in most cases the divination confirms it. In a situation of this kind, the child could be named *Ahunna,* that is, the father's body, if it is the father who has reincarnated in him. Thus, the *ahu* helps in identifying a person as an individual who is different from the other. While the spirit relates a person to the spiritual world, God and ancestral spirits, the body relates a person to the parents, the lineage and the physic-social order, that is, animate, inanimate and social environment.

It must be noted that, although the *ahu* occupies a very important place in identifying a person, the *ahu* is not the self, but an outward expression of the self. It is through the *ahu* that the self is known and expressed. Concerning the individuality of each person,

every *ahu* is unique. No two ahu are the same (Okere 2015). Each person has his or her *ahu* which differentiates him or her from the others.

Conclusion

The present work introduces an African metaphysics grounded on the Igwebuike principle of complementarity, inter-connectedness, and interwovenness of reality. This paper aims to establish a connection between ontology and metaphysics, highlighting that ontology is an integral aspect of metaphysics. Furthermore, it presents Igwebuike metaphysics as closely tied to its ontology, emphasizing that a metaphysical system cannot be different from its ontological structure.

The interrelatedness of reality within the context of Igwebuike metaphysics is a product of the modality of being within the categories of being. The Igwebuike modality of being portrays reality as existing solely in relation to the other and suffering self-alienation when it fails to relate with the other. This inter-relatedness is bound by the cord referred to as the Chi.

In contrast to Western metaphysics, where universals and particulars, cause and effect, and freedom and determinism are commonly discussed as violent opposing realities, Igwebuike metaphysics considers them complementary to each other and different parts of the same reality. What distinguishes Igwebuike metaphysics and gives it its unique character is the incorporation of complementarity and interrelationships, which are central to the African ontology.

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