

ONEBUNNE: QUESTIONING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IDENTITY BELONGINGNESS IN IGBO WELTANSCHAUNG

Jude I. Onebunne, PhD
Department of Philosophy
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
juno,anyi@gmail, +2348112118464
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-89956097

Abstract

The Igbo worldview is very peculiar because of the way the Igbo people and nation comprehend the world and its surroundings, life, and life beyond, that is, existence and essence in general. The tapestry of Igbo worldview is seen more in the cobwebbed Igbo idea of their belonging in consonance with their concept of indentialness. Identity, therefore, spells and necessitates belongingness. Onebunne, as a concept, verifies and tries to question this nexus of identity and belongingness. Through critical analysis and appreciation, the researcher finds out that the idea of Onebunne is deeply rooted and swallowed up in the union of identity that compels belongingness. Against the physical law that like charges repel and unlike charges; however, in human interaction, to be identified as such, or to have a likely identity, gives one the opportunity to belong. One's identity, therefore, leads to one's belongingness.

Keywords: Onebunne, identity, belongingness, Igbo Weltanschauung.

Introduction

The name Onebunne, which can be interpreted as “how many are true?”, encapsulates a philosophical inquiry into the authenticity of identity and the nature of belongingness within Igbo metaphysics and cultural understanding. In the context of the Igbo Weltanschauung, a German term meaning worldview, this inquiry is not merely intellectual but deeply existential and spiritual. The Igbo conception of the self is intrinsically communal, where personhood is realized through interaction with one's lineage, land, ancestors, and moral order. Within this framework, Onebunne becomes both a challenge and an affirmation. It challenges superficial, performative, or imposed identities while affirming those grounded in communal truth and ancestral legitimacy. In traditional Igbo society, identity is not understood as a static, individualized attribute. Instead, it is shaped by one's relationship with family (*umunna/umunne*), village (*obodo*), land (*ala*), and spiritual heritage. As Tempels (1959) and later Mbiti (1969) noted, African philosophies of being prioritize communal existence, emphasizing that the individual exists only in relation to the group. Mbiti's axiom, “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am,” speaks directly to Igbo ontological assumptions. For the Igbo, belongingness is not merely geographical; it is a lived spiritual and social reality that defines one's identity and moral standing.

The philosophical weight of Onebunne becomes particularly relevant in the face of globalization, migration, postcoloniality, and identity fragmentation. As Igbo individuals increasingly live and negotiate identities across social, cultural, and metaphysical borders, the question posed by Onebunne gains urgency: Which of these multiple selves remains authentic? Which ones align with the ancestral order, and which of them have been shaped by alienation, erasure, or assimilation? In this sense, Onebunne becomes a moral and metaphysical compass for navigating the complexity of modern Igbo identity. Igbo metaphysics provides tools for this discernment. The concepts of *chi* (personal spiritual guide), *ndu* (life essence), and *ike* (inner strength or will) reveal an ontology that balances individuality and communal integration. One's *chi*, for example, determines personal destiny, but its fulfillment is only possible within a framework of societal

values and divine order (Kalu, 2003). Therefore, to belong is to be aligned, not only with one's people but with one's divine path. Onebunne, then, calls for an interrogation of whether our current identities are aligned with our *chi* or destiny and our communal obligations.

This work delves into the symbolic and existential weight of Onebunne as it relates to identity and belongingness within the Igbo Weltanschauung, drawing from oral traditions, proverbs, cosmology and contemporary Igbo thought. It seeks to articulate how Onebunne not only questions but also affirms, guiding individuals and communities toward a more grounded, truthful and integrated self within the larger Igbo world of meaning. The aim is to offer a culturally grounded exploration of what it means to be truly oneself in a world where identities are constantly shifting, and belonging is both a gift and a demand. Onebunne offers a framework to re-center Igbo metaphysical principles in the face of modern identity crises.

On Igbo Weltanschauung

Igbo people are people of South East Nigeria with a resilient and entrepreneurial spirit who speak Igbo or the Ibo language. Their worldview is always unique as they are known to be a kind of ubiquitous people living virtually on all continents of the world. A saying has it that anywhere you go and you fail to see an Igbo man, leave the place as it may not be suitable for foreigners. Igbos, one of the largest tribes in Nigeria, are mainly located in the southeastern part of Nigeria. They have a complex cultural, religious and philosophical heritage that influences their ideals and views of the world. Central to the Igbo cosmology is their religious consciousnesses which has translated into their concept of Chukwu, the supreme God, upon whom the entire creation is dependent and whose will is the final authority. Nevertheless, the Igbo know of lesser gods (*arusi*) that are intercessors, each having jurisdiction over certain natural phenomena like fertility, justice and the environment (Uchendu, 1965).

A significant aspect of Igbo worldview is the dualism of the world: the physical world (*uwa*) and the spiritual world (*uwa-ndi-mmụọ*) (Iroegbu, 1994). These two realms are interconnected, with ancestral spirits playing a vital role in guiding and protecting the living. The ancestors (*ndichie*) are venerated and regularly honoured through rituals and festivals. The Igbo believe in reincarnation (*ilo uwa*), where the dead return to life through their descendants, reinforcing the cyclical nature of existence (Metuh, 1981). Morality and ethics are deeply rooted in communal life and the concept of Culture-tradition (*omenala*), which refers to traditional customs and laws handed down through generations. These customs govern social behaviour, conflict resolution, marriage, and rites of passage. The Igbo value hard work, respect for elders, justice, and communal solidarity. Their political systems are traditionally decentralized, with decision-making carried out by councils of elders and titleholders rather than monarchs (Isichei, 1976).

The Igbo believe equally that you have your *chi*, and that we all have a *chi*, and that *chi* is what leads and directs our existence. It is based on the principle of will and effort of the individual. However, destiny is conceived not as a fixed structure but as a road, one can walk off it or, reinforced by the community, walk straight down it (Onwuejeogwu, 1981). In sum, the Igbo worldview combines religion with communalistic ethics, personal achievement and the arts. It is a close relation to the spiritual and material world, symbolizing balance, continuity and social harmony.

Appreciation of the Concept of Onebunne

In the Igbo nation and worldview, Onebunne is someone's first name. Later, it became some people's official last name. Generations after the first user adopted it as their official last name. Onebunne is a proper name that has garnered over a decade of status as a family name. The actual meaning of Onebunne borders much on the concept of critical questioning of truth. Onebunne is a name-word question. Onebunne, therefore, is not just a mere nomenclature; rather, it is a concept that is better described as a name turned into a question, that is, a word-name-question. It is a name and a question. It is a name that questions every reality that comes across it. In this regard,

Onebunne critically questioned my grandfather as a reality that was there.

Onebunne, (2024), maintains that, Onebunne in questioning truth of reality as such is simply at the heart of philosophy as well as at the core of reality as that which is. However, the main branches of philosophy, taking cognizance of the fact that Onebunne is at the heart of philosophy and the core of reality, respond to the *word-name-question* Onebunne as it concerns it within its subject matter. *Epistemologically*, Onebunne implies the study of knowledge, which literally means the *study of truth*. In response to *the word-name-question*, *Onebunne* is all about the truth about the existential realities that can be known. *Logically*, Onebunne tasks the art of correct reasoning as such for a correct response to whichever fact or reality is questionable. *Ethically*, Onebunne rhetorically appreciates the looming reality and places value on every subject matter it doubtfully questions. *Aesthetically*, Onebunne quizzically acknowledges the beauty of life and in living. However, it was a result of the series of deaths of my great-grandfather's children that made him question my grandfather with a name-question: One-bu-nne (is it true), and it turns out to be actually *o-nne* (is it true?). *Ontically*, Onebunne interrogates the being-there and any existential reality at hand while acknowledging the realism that truth is the property of being in accord with fact or reality. *Metaphysically*, all reality is subjected to critical scrutiny in the *word-name-question* of Onebunne. Hence, Onebunne in this level of wonder often ask the fundamental question of questions: *how many are true* with all the realities and possibilities, forgetfulness and lookalike, as well as the seeming age-long fundamental problems of ontology and or metaphysics around us thus: one and many, reality and appearance, essence and existence, empirical and meta-empirical, act and potency, singularity and plurality, change and permanence, matter and form as well as freedom and determinism. Beyond the referential appreciation of Onebunne within the limits of philosophy of truth and other related philosophies, it relates to the word-name-question Onebunne as such. The whole idea of Onebunne remains a beautiful one as it encompasses the theological and philosophical, while wonderingly accommodating the whole of realities, spiritual and temporal (Onebunne, 2024).

Onebunne is a concept of three words (*One-bu-nne*) directly questioning the veracity of a reality before the questioner (interrogator). However, *Onebunne* literally asks: *one bu eziokwu?* That is, which one is true? Through hermeneutics, the concept Onebunne is seen as an effort to question and, at the same time, to appreciate reality as accurate. From history, within the birth circumstance of a child whose parents have a grievous fear that he might die as the other six siblings before him, the question comes: *One-bu-nne?* Nevertheless, *Onebunne* survived, apt and true to his name. *Onebunne's* survival was a positive response to the positive and or doubtful question of *nkea o ga-abu nne?* *Onebunne* is a kind of expression of doubt as a result of experience. So, *Onebunne* was like questioning *a reality before them*, probably with every doubtful possibility as a result of their experience, of course. As a mere wish and curious expression, reality unfolds in the name. Reality is questioned in the name (Onebunne, 2024). Hence, *Onebunne* is a name question. Truth as such is the unfolding of this reality. Questioning doubtfully and appreciating at the same time, the continued existence and, rightly put, the survival of the little boy *Onebunne* is an action that will gradually unfold. The future determines the answer to the name-question, *Onebunne*. His survival or his continued growth is the unfolding, gradually developing, or revealing. So, the word *Onebunne* was like questioning *the unfolding reality before them as truth*, probably with every doubtful possibility as a result of their past experiences, of course. The truth or reality on the ground is that the child before them, that is, the reality before them, is being questioned about his existence, of his actual reality, that is, to be or not to be. Implicitly, *Onebunne as a concept questions truth as reality, not in utter ignorance, but as an appreciation of a reality that has*

dawned on them, that is, a reality that has unfolded and continues to unfold in the one, that is, is it true! Truth as reality in an unfolding manner. It simply means that truth is reality. The truth being questioned *opens out, spreads out, stretches out, unwinds*, extends. This is reality as it should be. Thus, truth as reality, which, nevertheless, unfolds with a benchmark that truth is reality. *Truth is semantic, as the word Onebunne is assigned a name for a linguistic question.* This reality, of course, is the cumulative of all that is factual or existent within a system. This is in contrast to that which is simply a fantasy. The term is also used to refer to the ontological status of things, indicating their existence. Reality is the totality of an arrangement. *Onebunne is a name-question that questions the reality of truth as something there* (Onebunne, 2024).

Understanding Identity

Identity is a very unique issue. Identity is profoundly all about who we are. Nature extols it right from creation, God carefully created them, male and female, all the fauna and for a (Gen. 1:1ff). From the chequered history of human realization as *homo rationale* and interaction with other as *animal socialis*. Identity is so unique that in the nature of human beings, though created male and or female, they are very personal. Today the society tries to identify every one with civic status as socioeconomic cum political entity, hence we talk of ID cards.

Identity is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses personal, social, and cultural dimensions. This definitional response highlights the complexity and multidimensionality of identity in its personal, social, and cultural aspects. This is a term that refers to aspects of individual or group identity, such as characteristics, behaviours, beliefs, values, and experience. Identity formation is a process that occurs through the combination of the things within (how we see ourselves) and outside of us (society, culture, history) (Erikson, 1968). Thematically and critically, identity is tied to questions of selfhood and the persistence of consciousness across time. Moreover, John Locke (1690) claimed that personal identity consists of consciousness and memory, as well as matters of psychological continuity. Addressing this fixed self, David Hume (1739) criticized the idea of identity, arguing that it is an illusion mistaken as reality based on the mind's perception of a string of experiences over time.

Identity is formed through sociological interactions with others. George Herbert Mead (1934), in particular, argued that self-identity derives from social processes, most fundamentally language and role-taking. Drawing upon Erving Goffman's (1959) work, keep in mind that identity is ultimately performative (pg. 239). Stuart Hall (1996) speaks about cultural identity in a way that puts forth their dynamic and constructed quality. Hall contends that identity is not a static fact; instead it changes according to historical and cultural contexts. This understanding is central to postcolonial identity, as Frantz Fanon (1961) argues, colonialism causes an identity break and strangeness, necessitating a new identity reconstruction.

Identity is a formative process when the authentic self tries and struggles to meet the ideal self. This is a formative process — a tug-of-war between the real self and the ideal self. Nevertheless, the statement “identity is when my real self meets my ideal self” expresses the psychology and philosophy of identity construction. It means that you can realize your identity when you can be accepted for who you are in actuality and how you want to look. This concept is deeply anchored in the self-concept theories in psychology, especially when looking at theories from Carl Rogers or Erik Erikson. An Understanding of the Real self and the Ideal self is really required. When the ideal self tries to meet the real self, self-identity is achieved. Therefore, identity is a process.

difference but to ensuring that all people are welcomed and feel that they belong in the society. We call this idea the “circle of human concern.” Widening the circle of human concern involves “humanizing the other,” where negative representations and stereotypes are challenged and rejected. It is a process by which the most marginalized outgroups are brought into the centre of our concern. To reduce the ongoing rural-urban drift and international exodus, basic infrastructural developments must be considered, and there must be an equitable distribution of power and resources, as well as encouragement of an inclusive government of both the young and the old. There are ingredients of belongingness: knowledge, hope, care, patience, and strategy. To understand being as belongingness, it must be understood in its relation to others. Belongingness, however, overshadows these existential facts of operations. Belongingness—one’s embeddedness in a community, culture, and relational network—underpins individual and communal flourishing through various philosophical, psychological, and sociological analyses of African being and thought—belongingness—the human demand to be an accepted member of a group.

Complementarity in Identity and Belongingness

Identity and belongingness are strongly intertwined psychological and philosophical social constructs that are mutually complementary in terms of guiding the individual and collective human experience. By identity, I mean how subjects conceive their existence and who they are, with what elements they connect (gender, belonging to a particular ethnic group, religion, their feelings of reference, etc.) (Erikson, 1968). Belongingness, on the other hand, is the affective need to be accepted as a part of a group or community (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Combined, these are the foundational lenses through which people navigate the world, create meanings, and establish connections.

The complementarity is that identity also frequently influences how/where individuals seek belonging, and that experience of belonging can validate and affirm identity. For instance, an individual who strongly identifies with a culture will likely want to look for communities that match the culture. If they fit in, their identity is validated and reinforced. On the other hand, not belonging may create identity confusion or crisis, as postulated in Erikson’s psychosocial development models (Erikson, 1968). As a social mirror, community identity serves to shape and negotiate identity. Who we are is also determined by social relationships, as aspects of identification are emphasized, repressed, or altered in relation to social context and group dynamics? Tajfel and Turner’s (1986) Social Identity Theory posits that individuals base part of their identity on group memberships, which determine self-esteem and behaviour. As such, identity is not only internal but also socially created through ‘belongingness’.

Moreover, a solid sense of belongingness can foster critical and psychological health, confidence, and resilience, which can enable people to feel freer to explore and express their personal identities. In contrast, marginalisation or rejection may lead to suppression of identity or the formation of defensive identities (Phinney et al., 2001). This interaction is evident in multicultural or diasporic contexts, with the negotiation of multiple identities frequently occurring in overlapping spaces of belongingness. Indeed, identity and belongingness are not permanent or set apart from other issues. They are in constant interplay. Belongingness fuels the development of identity; similarly, identity anchors the search for belongingness. This duality is important for individual development, social peace, and cultural unity. It is through identifiable realities that belongingness is possible.

The Idea of Onebunne Questioning and Complementing Belongingness

Onebunne (translated from the original tone and sounds in the native Ibo language to “how many are true”) is a rich and deep Igbo name and rhetorical question of profound philosophical significance. Drawing on Igbo metaphysical and communitarian thought, Onebunne poses the question of what it means to exist and what is real. Of the countless ones that are or exist, it asks

Perceptions of Belongingness

Belongingness remains the *kpim*, the vital essence, of African Metaphysics of *being* and *to be*, establishing a person's identity within the fabrics of communal existence. Belongingness, as the relational ontology of African thought, is rooted in indigenous philosophical constructs like *ohazurume*, *egbebereugobere*, *ubuntu*, *igwebuike*, and hitherto, the emerging idea of Afromodals. Onebunne (2025) maintains that belongingness is a principle of existence in the sense of being and sharing membership in reality or with a being. Belongingness has been a fundamental aspect of African philosophical and communalist engagement. Belongingness, we must note, has been a fundamental cultural trait within the exigencies of African philosophy. In the African world-view, belongingness touches virtually every aspect of human life, especially as a being in a community setting characterized by communal living, having and sharing. Ejenam (2007) opines that belongingness is a principle of membership applied to a given political community. It is what moulds a community's cultural, historical, and traditional values. It is a principle of membership. Being, in order to actualize itself, makes an effort to belong; it must flow out. Moreover, this is what belongingness is all about. It is a principle that makes one a member of a given community. It is, therefore, a synthesis of the reality and experience of belonging. To belong is to be a part of being. According to Iroegbu (1995), belongingness is derived from the basic sense of unity (community) that exists among the members of the given political community.

Belongingness is a fundamental quality in understanding being. No being can be understood in terms of its completeness, but in its relation to other beings. Every being is defined by a relation to something or with an attribute of engaging in something. This fact of '*beingness*', which is a form of relation, is a form of belonging to, belonging with, and belonging in. Relation, therefore, becomes a kind of state by which being realizes itself among others and others within it. This relation spells out a place-place where being realizes itself, a place of social reality, a kind of integrated universe, in Donne's words: "...a piece of the continent, a part of the main..." This relational form or way of belonging as an integral universe is not a differential one but a fundamental or ontological integration. Furthermore, for this particular being in itself, it is through this fact of belongingness that it integrates itself in reality. Being belongs. Belongingness is a fundamental condition for a thing to be considered a reality. Being's identity, therefore, is in belongingness.

This is why belongingness has the character of identification with and within a community, especially with regard to African communalism. It is a principle of membership. Therefore, in order to actualize itself, it makes an effort to belong; it flows out, it goes on. Belongingness to this extent is a continuum, an ongoing process. It is the synthesis of the reality and experiences of belonging. Being no doubt is the foundation of belongingness. Being expresses itself through belongingness. This being is a human being. Belongingness is a fundamental fact of being. Once a thing is, it belongs to a being, group, or community. There are ingredients of belongingness such as knowledge, hope, care, and patience. Equally, solidarity is a definitive property of belongingness. Iroegbu (2005) reiterates his basic stands on belongingness when he writes that on the "Political Significance of Belongingness" thus: "Belongingness holds that our existence as human beings, as well as our integral participation in the society in which we find ourselves, are to be defined by our being given sense and substance of belonging. There should be solidarity of belonging in the way and manner in which we live and relate to one another as fellow citizens of the world. This sense of belonging or belongingness has two basic aspects: Being tuned-on...Being "on-going" ... Thus, if we belong, we are. If we do not belong, then we are not". Belongingness entails an unwavering commitment to not simply tolerating and respecting

how many are real, genuine, or significant? This ambivalent faculty of doubting and valuing reality, I suspect, is at the core of the feeling of rooted connection. In African philosophy, especially the Igbo conceptions, inclusion or belongingness is not about fitting into the physical or social spaces. It is an act of theological, moral, and existential bonding with the community and universe (Mbiti, 1969). It is this alignment that Onebunne questions, but it also suggests a question about authenticity. It does not depend on the assumption that everywhere we look for members, we will actually find them. It makes me think instead reflexively: how many of the ones present in a space, system, or relation are actually really there or genuine instances of being there?

This inquiry serves to refine the quality of community life. As Iroegbu (1995) notes, African belongingness is relational and dynamic—it requires mutual recognition, participation, and sincerity. Onebunne complements this by stressing the importance of inner truth in communal identity. In other words, true belonging is not only a matter of being counted but of being true—true to oneself, to others, and to the shared values that sustain the group. Onebunne contributes a complementary argument to this, which focuses on the need for inner truth as the foundation of a community's self-definition. In other words, true belonging is as much about who we are as one as it is about who we are not as one: it is who we are willing to “count in” and who we are “counting on” in ways that are consistent with our values and idealized selves, so that we can let it all hang out.

Moreover, Onebunne is not a rhetorical question. Really, it acknowledges the reality that not all presences are full presences and not all connections are whole. Moreover, that kind of gratitude requires wisdom and much integrity in the community. It reflects the African communalist sensibility, such as that of the Ubuntu philosophy – “I am because we are” – that enjoins that a sense of one's self through the understanding of belonging should be lived with trust and justice (Tutu, 1999). It is in this way that Onebunne helps communities to distinguish between thin inclusion and thick belonging. It grapples with passive and active presence and celebrates being, there in the moment. As Okolo (1993) argues, it is not just the togetherness but the truth of such togetherness that is significant in African communalism.

In sum, Onebunne adds to the qualitative sense of belonging through reflection and ethics. There is a lot it can tell us about how at home you are in the progressive mainstream, too, and about how authentic you are in your engagement with that stream. In doing so, it is becoming a force for making communities that are not just big, but alive and real.

The Idea of Onebunne Interrogating and Reinforcing Identity

The Igbo name Onebunne, meaning “how many are true,” is both a philosophical inquiry and a reflective appreciation of reality. It carries an ontological weight, questioning not just presence, but the authenticity of being. In the context of identity, Onebunne challenges the superficial and performative layers of the self and seeks to uncover which aspects of identity are genuine, grounded, and truthful. Onebunne is a critical demand and a reflexive interpretation of the real. It has an ontology to it, not of the presence, but of an authenticity of being. Regarding identity, Onebunne is critical of the superficial display and performance of self, but one that is looking to find out what is real, what is firm, and finally what is true.

In Igbo philosophy, identity is communal, fluid, and spiritual. It is not made alone but in relation to others, the land, the ancestors, and the divine (Mbiti, 1969). Thus, Onebunne queries the authenticity and nature of these identities. It asks: Out of all the identities that people claim, or try on like clothes, how many are real? What fraction is grounded in authenticity, belongingness, and purpose? This is a wrenching question in a world in which identity can be so shaped by outside pressures, demands, and roles. As Iroegbu (1995) has argued, there can be no African self as long as one continues to be preoccupied with sorting out the African. African identity is not a

label; it is not something; it is something you are, with an ontologico-participatory existence that requires sincerity. Onebunne adds to that by suggesting that people look at their identity to see if it is projecting their true self or idle wishes. It encourages self-awareness, integrity, and moral grounding.

Moreover, Onebunne operates as a philosophical checkpoint in communal life. In traditional Igbo society, identity was tied to truthfulness (*eziokwu*), responsibility, and contribution to the common good. A name like Onebunne serves as a living question—a reminder that not all that glitters is gold. It encourages a continuous search for truth in personal and collective identity (Okolo, 1993). Also, in the life of the village, Onebunne serves as a philosophical crossroads. The model of volunteerism was rooted in the traditional Igbo society, where identity was based on honesty (*eziokwu*), responsibility, and care for the public good. A name like Onebunne is an embodiment of a question that accosts me alive: all that glitters is not necessarily gold. It advocates the perpetuation of the quest for truth in personal and social identity (Okolo, 1993).

However, at the same time, Onebunne is not pure critique. It acknowledges that there is such a thing as truth, even if one of many. It is saying that in the crowd, there are some true identities, and those deserve acknowledgment. Moreover, this results in a connection as identity emphasized as its capacity for truth and coherence. It is conducive for creating an identity that is coherent, ethically proud, and grounded in facts and community validation. In summary, Onebunne is both a question and a compass. It interrogates false identities and uplifts authentic ones. It pushes individuals and communities to seek integrity in who they are and how they are known. Thus, it plays a vital role in shaping identity in ways that are both critical and constructive.

Onebunne Questions Identity for Belongingness

The Igbo philosophical concept of Onebunne—literally translated as “how many are true?”—represents a profound interrogation of being, truth, and belonging. It is a metaphysical inquiry rooted in the communal worldview of the Igbo people, where identity is not just a personal or internal construct but a relational and communal phenomenon. In questioning “how many are true,” Onebunne challenges the authenticity of one's identity in relation to one's community, heritage, and lived reality (Iroegbu, 1995). This philosophical lens requires that identity be tested for its truthfulness, coherence, and contribution to communal belonging. Identity, within the Igbo *Weltanschauung*, is not static or individualistic. Instead, it is dynamic and formed through interaction with others, through family, lineage, age grades, religious practices, and cultural norms. To belong is to be recognized and affirmed within these systems. Onebunne becomes a tool of verification—a question posed to ensure that one's identity aligns with the collective ethical and existential truths of the group (Okolo, 1983). In this way, Onebunne is both epistemological and ethical: it probes whether a person's claims to identity reflect the shared values and truths that sustain belongingness.

Onebunne also functions as a philosophical safeguard against inauthenticity and alienation. In a world where modernity and globalization threaten indigenous identities, Onebunne invites individuals and communities to reaffirm the truth of who they are, rooted in their ontological and cultural groundings (Asouzu, 2007). The question implies that false or borrowed identities may hinder true belonging, as they fail the communal test of truth. Thus, Onebunne is a mechanism for self-examination and cultural continuity. Furthermore, in the context of postcolonial identity struggles, the question of Onebunne speaks to the necessity of reclaiming indigenous ways of knowing and being. It insists that belongingness must be tied to a truthful, lived identity that respects the values of one's people. This pursuit helps resist fragmentation and disconnection that often result from colonially-imposed identities (Nwoga, 1984). Ultimately, Onebunne encourages a return to authenticity—a truth-tested self that is deeply embedded in the collective spirit of the community.

Conclusion

The exploration of Onebunne as both a philosophical prompt and cultural symbol has revealed its centrality to the Igbo understanding of identity and belongingness. Rooted in a communal worldview where personhood is defined in relation to others, the concept of Onebunne challenges individuals to discern which aspects of their identity are authentic, grounded, and aligned with ancestral truth. It interrogates the multiplicity of selves that modernity has produced, especially in the face of colonial disruption, globalization, and digital life. As such, Onebunne offers a distinctly Igbo framework for navigating the complexities of the contemporary self while remaining anchored in tradition. Within the Igbo Weltanschauung, identity is inseparable from belongingness. One is not fully human outside the web of kinship, cosmology, and land. As Mbiti (1969) posits, African identity is deeply relational, "I am because we are", a view echoed in Igbo proverbs and oral literature, especially among Afromodals. The community affirms the individual, and the individual contributes to the moral and spiritual health of the community. This reciprocal relationship forms the basis for true belongingness, which is not merely physical presence but a moral and spiritual integration. Onebunne thus calls for critical self-reflection: which identities serve truth, and which merely serve survival or mimicry? It reminds the Igbo, and indeed all postcolonial subjects, that authenticity is not a return to a static past but a continuous negotiation of self within the values of the collective and the guidance of destiny.

In sum, the Igbo worldview is unique in the way that the Igbo people understand their world, their lives, and their existence as a whole. This perspective is closely tied to their notions of identity and belonging. In this context, identity is essential for a sense of belonging. The concept of Onebunne explores the relationship between identity and belonging. Unlike the physical law that states like charges repel while unlike charges attract, in human interactions, having a distinct identity often provides the opportunity to belong. Therefore, one's identity directly influences one's sense of belonging. In other words, a distinct identity enhances one's opportunity to belong, meaning that identity directly influences belonging. As this study has shown, reclaiming identity and belongingness through the lens of Onebunne is not only a philosophical task but a cultural imperative.

References

- Asouzu, I. I. (2007). *Ibanyidanda: New Complementary Ontology Beyond World Immanence*. Zurich: LIT Verlag.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497–529.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Iroegbu, P. (1995). *Metaphysics: The Kpim of Philosophy*. Owerri: International Universities Press.
- Isichei, E. (1976). *A History of the Igbo People*. Macmillan.
- Kalu, O. U. (2003). *African Christianity: An African Story*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Okolo, C. B. (1983). *African Social and Political Philosophy: Selected Essays*. Enugu: Cecta Nigeria Limited.

Okolo, C. B. (1993). African Social and Political Philosophy. Fulladu Publishing.

Metuh, E. I. (1981). God and Man in African Religion: A Case Study of the Igbo of Nigeria. Geoffrey Chapman.

Mbiti, J. S. (1969). African Religions and Philosophy. London: Heinemann.

Nwoga, D. I. (1984). The Igbo World and Its Art. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press.

Onebunne, J. I. (2024). "Onebunne: Appreciating Reality as Truth". In Onebunne, J. I. (Ed) (2024) *ONEBUNNE: An Exercise in Afrocentric Hermeneutics of Truth*. ISBN: 978- 978-8565-10-6. Awka: Fab Educational Books, pp. 1-26.

Onwuejeogwu, M. A. (1981). An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom & Hegemony. Ethnographica.

Phinney, J. S., Horenczyk, G., Liebkind, K., & Vedder, P. (2001). Ethnic identity, immigration, and well-being: An interactional perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(3), 493–510.

Tempels, P. (1959). Bantu Philosophy. Paris: Présence Africaine.

Tutu, D. (1999). No Future Without Forgiveness. Random House.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Uchendu, V. C. (1965). The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.