On the Origin and Principles of Igwebuike Philosophy

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Abstract
Every philosophical position has an origin and the principles that guide or gives value to the pattern of thought in question. The origin is usually the result of a reaction to a particular circumstance that is either real or conceptual. This work is a response to the questions of the origin and principles of Igwebuike philosophy, and more so, the question of its peculiarity: is it a philosophy that is common only to the Igbo or is it a philosophy that has a universal relevance? This work has argued that Igwebuike is a philosophy that is described with an Igbo word, however, with a universal relevance and appeal. Reacting to the question of the basic principles on which Igwebuike philosophy stands, this work discussed the four basic principles of Igwebuike philosophy. These principles include: the principle of identity, the principle of contrariety, the principle of hierarchy and the principle of unity. For the purpose of this research, the indigenous wholistic method of inquiry was employed.

Introduction

Recent questions that have emerged from the various papers written on Igwebuike philosophy is: "What is the origin of Igwebuike philosophy?"How did it begin as a pattern of thought in African ontology? Is it a philosophy that is exclusive to the Igbo or Africa? My response has always been that although Igwebuike is an Igbo word (Igwe (number), Bu (Is), Ike (strength), literally meaning that there is strength in unity- however, philosophically pointing to the complementary nature of reality. It confronts

discontinuity and the compartmentalization of reality (Kanu 2017a,b&c)), Igwebuike is not a philosophy that is limited to the Igbo world, it is a universal philosophy that is the incarnation and confirmation of the universal relevance of solidarity and complementarity. Although, a philosophy captured in an Igbo word, it has a universal taste and obvious in universal experience. Igwebuike emphasis on the complementary nature of reality was at the heart of the discovery of the Ionian philosophers who observed that there was permanence in the midst of change, and also that there was unity in the midst of the plurality of reality. In their wonder, they concluded that there must be a primary element that would explain the unity in diversity and permanence in change. In this, they acknowledged the complementarity of the diverse departments of reality.

When Thales pointed to water as the fundamental unity underlying the diversity of reality, he was expressing the interconnectedness of reality. When Anaximander referred to a neutral element, that is infinite, eternal and indeterminate he expressed the complementary nature of reality. Anaximander observed that conflict in nature begins as a result of injustice in nature, which has got to do with a being invading the domain of another, thus tampering with the free and joyful existence of the other. In this observation, he expressed the relevance of a fundamental principle of being in Igwebuike philosophy: Egbe beru Ugo beru (Let the kite perch, let the eagle perch). In the work of Empedocles, the ancient philosopher from Akragas, south coast of Sicily, his thought was Igwebuike in structure. He observed that there are four elements in the universe: earth, air, fire, water; when they come together according to the principle of unification, which is love, something comes into existence, and when they separate according to the principle of division, which is hatred, something

goes out of existence (Omoregbe, 1997). In his philosophy, he was pointing out the importance of solidarity and the relevance of a humanity that is bent towards the other. This was Igwebuike philosophy in operation beyond the walls of the Igbo traditional society. And so to the question, is Igwebuike a philosophy that is exclusive to the Igbo or African people, the answer is No. Igwebuike is a universal philosophy, described in Igbo-African language by Igbo traditional African philosophers.

Having responded to the question of the peculiarity of Igwebuike philosophy, another question looming at the horizon of this work is: How did Igwebuike philosophy come about?

Wonder, the Origin of Igwebuike Philosophy
Igwebuike philosophy began with wonder as African traditional thinkers began to wonder at the very nature of their immediate universe. It began from the understanding of their immediate universe which is not detached from the whole universe. As they wondered about the nature of their immediately universe, it began to shape their thoughts, therefore, establishing a connection between philosophy and the cosmos. As these African traditional thinkers began to wonder, their wondering led to the development of their philosophy, which was Igwebuike in structure. Thus, Aristotle writes that "It is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophize" (p. 10). This wonder was the first step, which was followed by questions as a second step and then the third being proffering answers to these questions. First these African traditional thinkers reflected on their experiences in the world, which arouses the feeling of wonder, as regards why reality is the way it is: its beauties and the negative vicissitudes the human person must face in life. Realities such as the nature of life, its

brevity, human suffering, successes, failures, sorrows, joys, death, the after-life, the nature of the human person, disease, decay, etc.
The Traditional African thinker, just like every other human person was by nature curious. He wanted to know everything around him. He wants to know why he is intelligent and yet with many things yet unknown, why he is strong and yet fragile, why he has so much control over the universe but can hardly exercise control over himself, why he is immortal and yet dies, why he came into existence, etc. He asks himself if there is a particular way in which he ought to behave and a way he ought not to behave. He wonders at the origin of the universe, the age of the universe, was it created or is it eternal? If it was created, who created the universe? Is this the only world that there is? If there are other worlds, who lives there and what are these worlds? What laws governs the universe? He wonders at the order in the universe, why the raining season is succeeded by the dry season, the day, the night, the seasons, the birds of the air, the fish that makes their way through the waters, the animals in the fields; he wonders at how they are sustained. He wonders at the possibility of a Supreme Being, and if He does exist, what is the nature of that Supreme Being? Does He exist in Himself or does He need other beings to exist? The human person raises so many questions within his mind, and yet finds it difficult to respond to them. He, therefore, becomes the source of his own anxiety. They wondered at the system of the universe which is a conflict of opposites: good and evil, life and death, light and darkness, hot and cold, wet and dry, love and hate, fortune and misfortune, male and female, etc. As he continued to reflect and to find answers to these fundamental questions, then he began to philosophize within the structure of his perceived universe.

This, therefore, establishes a very strong link between Igwebuike philosophy and the structure of the African universe. It

is a universe of particularities that, however, exist in a thermodynamic system- where every creature as an independent but interacting entity, negotiates another's existential highway for mutual survival (Kanu 2019). 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. This inter-subjective relations only plays out without chaos when the individual is able to skillfully bridge his or her interiority with the individuality of the other.

The idea of wonder is not exclusive to the emergence of Igwebuike philosophy. A cursory glance at the beginning of Western philosophy, precisely, the Ionian or Miletian School of philosophy, reveals how wonder led to the evolution of philosophy. These philosophers, Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, etc., had curious minds which impelled them to seek rational explanations for the nature of the universe. They were first filled with wonder and curiosity about the nature of the cosmos. Their wonder led to raising questions about the nature of reality (Omoregbe, 1997). Having raised this question among others, they began to find answers to these fundamental questions. At this level of finding answers to these questions, they began to philosophize. From the wonder experience of African traditional philosophers, they began to philosophize about the African cosmology, reflecting on its physical and spiritual dimensions. They observed that 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 that came into existence as responses to the questions that emerged from their wonder 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 some physical observable realities abide; and the underworld where ancestors and some bad spirits live" (Ijiomah, 2005).

The African traditional thinkers observed that the universe persists because of a healthy inter-subjective relation. The spiritual and physical realms, although they have separate existence, interact. The spiritual worlds of (God), the spirits and the physical world of human beings overlap and, therefore, interact. There is really no demarcation between the physical and spiritual worlds, between the visible and invisible, the sacred and profane; as there is a cooperate existence of reality in the universe. This is seen in the fact of the possibility of certain elements to 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.

It is from these observations that traditional African thinkers began to develop the oldest forms of African religious and philosophical wisdom. These are proverbs, parables, songs, prayers, etc., which contain the wisdom and experience of the African people of several ages gathered and summed up in one expression. They are the interpretation of their beliefs, principles of life and conduct. It is from these observations that such proverbs began t o emerge:

a. A person is a person because of other people
b. Sticks in a bundle cannot be broken
c. When spiders unite they can tie up a lion
d. If one finger tries to pick up something from the ground, it cannot
e. Behind an able man there are always other able men
f. It takes a village to raise a child

g. If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together
h. I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am
i. If a lizard stays off from the foot of a tree, it would be caught
j. A tree does not make a forest
k. If two or more people urinate in the same place at the same time, it would produce more foam
l. When a bird builds its nest it uses the feathers of other birds
m. One person is not the whole world
n. It is by taking a goat around that you are able to sell it

From these observations also emerged mythologies as a response to several questions that emerged from the heart of man. From this emerged African parables and wise sayings.

The Principles of Igwebuike Philosophy
The principles of Igwebuike philosophy refers to the values or framework that shapes Igwebuike philosophy. These principles are the values or frameworks on which the philosophy stands. While these principles guide Igwebuike philosophy, it also justifies Igwebuike philosophy. These principles include: the principle of identity, the principle of contrariety, the principle of hierarchy and the principle of unity.

a. **The principle of Identity**
The principle of identity is the first principle of Igwebuike philosophy. It states that every being is determined in itself, is one with itself and is consistent in itself. Thus, every being is one with itself and divided from others. The qualities of matter, referred to in traditional metaphysics as accidents, such as size, colour, shape,

etc., distinguish one being from the other. If reality does not have an identity, then everything would be everything, giving birth to one thing since nothing can be differentiated from the other. In this case, there would be no subject and object relationship (Kanu, 2012 & 2013). This would create a causal traffic in the order of being and knowledge. Writing on identity, Locke 1999 avers that:

> When we see anything to be in any place in any instant of time, we are sure that it is that very thing, and not another which at that same time exists in another place, how like and undistinguishable so ever it may be in all other respects: and in this consists identity, when the ideas it is attributed vary not at all from what they were that moment wherein we consider their former existence, and to which we compare the present... when therefore we demand whether anything be the same or not, it refers always to something that existed such a time in such a place, which it was certain, at that instant, was the same with itself, and no other. (p. 311).

On the one hand, a thing's qualitative identity comprises its defining properties: these are properties that one must mention in a full answer to the question "Who am I?" or "What is it?" Some authors refer to this identity as a synchronic identity. On the other hand, the problem of identity is taken to mean a question of numerical identity over time: what makes X at one time the same person as Y at another? Philosophers like Oliver (2011) would also refer to it as diachronic identity: what makes a being the same person across time.

This notwithstanding, the principle of identity is very important in Igwebuike philosophy because, before we can talk about inter-subjectivity, interconnectedness, complementarity, that

which interconnects with the other or complements the other must have an identity of its own which distinguishes it from the other to which it connects or complements.

b. The Principle of Hierarchy

Every reality in the universe have a force, however, not all realities have the same force. The variety of the degree of forces is at the base of the categorization of being. In the hierarchy of forces, those with a greater force come first, with God at the apex as the source of all force. In Igbo-African ontology, reality can be subsumed the following categories according to the hierarchy of their force: Spirit**.** Spirit as a force has categories of forces. It includes God, the divinities and spirits. God is at the apex of the Muo category as the source of all force, Tempels (1959) wrote, "Above all force is God... It is he who has force, power, in himself. He gives existence, power of survival and of increase, to other forces. In relation to other forces, he is he who increases force" (p. 29). He wrote further, "He knows all forces, their orderings, their dependence, their potential and their mutual interactions" (p. 34). His existential cause is within himself and sustains resultant forces the subsistence and annihilation of other forces are within his power alone. While other creatures can paralyse, diminish or stop the operation of another being's vital force, they cannot stop it to exist entirely, only God can. After the Supreme Being are divinities. They are intermediaries and share aspects of the divine status. Awolalu and Dopamu (1978) refer to them as the executive heads of various divine departments in the Supreme Being's monarchical government. They are a lesser force compared to the Supreme Being, but generally, they are a great force.

The next on the ladder of forces is the human person. Human beings are 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 less extent in the force of God" (p. 47) who possess the supreme force. He also shares an ontological relationship with his patrimony, relations and land. Man is the centre of the universe, including the world of the dead. Tempels wrote 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. He wrote, "Each being has been endowed by God with a certain force, capable of strengthening the vital energy of the strongest being of all creation: man" (p. 22). After human beings are lower animals. 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, "In fact even inferior beings, such as inanimate beings and minerals, are forces which by reason of their nature have been put at the disposal of men, of living human forces, or of men's vital forces" (p. 31). In another text, he wrote, "These lower beings exist, by Divine decree, only for the assistance of the higher created being" (p. 46). They are used feed human beings and also for offering sacrifices to God, divinities and the ancestors.

The next on the hierarchy are things. These refer to a happening, an event, an occurrence. *It* can also be affixed to any adjective to mean specific things" (p. 95). For instance, *ife obuna* (anything), *ife ebube* (thing of wonder), *ife ojoo* (bad thing), *ife oma* (good thing). Ife as a force cannot act for itself, and thus can only become active when a greater force like God, divinities, spirits and man act on them. They have no will of their own and thus depend on the will of a greater force. The next in the hieracrchy is space (Ebe). Space talks about place. It is the relation

of distance between any two bodies or points. It responds to the question of where. The next is Time. Time responds to questions such as: when did you see Emeka? When did you pick-up Nnamdi? When was the sacrifice offered? The last on the hierarchy is Modality, manner or style**.** Modality of being talks about the manner of being (Kanu 2012 & 2014). Thus, in relation to Igwebuike, the degree of forces determines the level or degree of complementarity or connectedness between beings.

c.   **The Principle of Contrariety**

The principle of contrariety speaks of the otherness of reality. The word contrariety is from the word contrary. Aristotle defines contrariety thus: "For contrariety is a kind of difference, and difference is a kind of otherness" (p.681-926). Aristotle writes that:

> The term contrary is applied to those attributes differing in genius, which cannot belong at the same time to the same subject, to the most different of the things in the same genius, to the most different of the attributes in the same recipient subject, to the most different of things that fall under the same faculty, to the things whose difference is greatest either absolutely or in genius or in species. The other things that are called contrary are so called, some because they possess of the above kind, some because they are receptive of such, some because they are productive of or susceptible to such, or are producing or suffering them, or are losses or acquisitions, or possessions of privations of such (p. 763).

Aristotle writes further:

> And nearly all thinkers agree that being and substance are composed of contraries; at least all name contraries as their first principle; some name odd and even, some hot and

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cold, some limit and the unlimited, some love and strife. And all the others as well are evidently reducible to unity and plurality (this reduction we must take for granted), and the principle stated by their thinkers fall entirely under these as their genera... For all things are either contraries or composed of contraries, and unity and plurality are the starting points of all contraries (p. 735).

Igwebuike accepts contrariety as part of the natural universe. For instance, in the same universe, we find both good and evil, life and death, light and darkness, hot and cold, wet and dry, love and hate, unity and diversity, short and long, substance and accidents, act and potency, fortune and misfortune, male and female. These are contraries to each other, and are indispensable realities of the universe. When the relationships between these contraries are well managed, reality is enhanced and stronger. The world is a world of contraries, and to imagine a universe without contraries is to live in a fool's paradise. The responsibility of the human person is to daily seek ways to negotiate his path in the midst of these contraries of nature.

The question of the 'Other' is a term with a rich and lengthy philosophical history dating at least from the Sophists through Socrates' dialogues to Hegel's dialectics, in which the 'stranger' participates in a dialogue on the ontological problems of being and non-being, of the 'one' and the 'other'. Otherness points to the state of being different, shifting emphasis from Descartes philosophical concerns with the other which was struck in abstraction to a concrete other that is located in social and cultural institutions. The question of the otherness of reality has continued to emerge in the various epochs of the history of philosophy fascinating philosophy and giving rise to questions such as: What

does it mean to be other than the self? How do I and must I relate to the other? (Kanu, 2018).

d. **The Principle of Unity**

In spite of the contrariety of reality, in spite of the singular identity of each reality, there is something common to everything. Igwebuike understands every individual reality as part of and the completion of the whole, and thus there is a unity in the midst of diversity. Igwebuike presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations. Thus, 'to be' is to live in solidarity and complementarity, and to live outside the parameters of solidarity and complementarity is to suffer alienation. 'To be' is 'to be with the other', in a community of beings. Mbiti (1970) classically proverbializes this relationship thus: "I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am" (p. 108). The African worldview, therefore, is governed by the principle of complementarity, which seeks the conglomeration, the unification, the summation of fragmented thoughts, opinions and other individualized and fragmented thoughts and ideas.

Igwebuike strongly holds that the whole is greater than the corresponding parts. It is also a view that maintains that by the coming together of the individual or parts, a viable and sustainable whole will emerge, and by this, the parts will get to the brim purpose of their existence (Asouzu 2004). This sense of unity, harmony, community, Complementarity and solidarity among the community of beings finds expression in the philosophy of Tempels (1959):

> 'Beings forces' of the universe are not a multiple of independent forces placed in juxtaposition from being to being. All creatures are found in relationship according to the law of hierarchy... Nothing moves in this universe of

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forces without influencing other forces by its movement. The world of forces is held like a spider's web of which no single thread can be caused to vibrate without shaking the whole network. (p. 29).

Mbiti (1970) in his work on African religion and philosophy also speaks of African ontology in terms of unity, solidarity and complementary:

> The anthropocentric ontology is a complete unity or solidarity which nothing can break up or destroy. To destroy or remove one of these categories is to destroy the whole existence including the destruction of the creator, which is impossible. One mode of existence presupposes all the others, and a balance must be maintained so that these modes neither drift too far apart from one another nor get too close to one another. (p. 16).

Edeh (1983) reflecting on Igbo Metaphysics emphasizes that the African universe emphasizes the closeness of reality through which reality attains its fulfillment in existence.

> Accordingly the Igbo way of life emphasizes 'closeness' but not closed-ness'. There is a closeness in living because each person 'belongs to' others and in turn, 'is belonged to' by others. By adopting this life of 'closeness' or 'belongingness', an Igbo becomes immersed in the culture's spiritual substance, love; and by love, he acquires a fulfillment as a person beyond mere individuality. (p. 105).

The idea of the unity of reality is not unique to Igwebuike philosophy. It is evident in western though. Heraclitus avers that there is one from everything, there is everything from one. According to Anaxagoras, there is a part of all in everything.

Parmenides taught that the space and human being are isomorphic structures, diametrically reflecting each other. Plato avers that the single is not the being, it is the superbeing. In the contention of Aristotle, the single is uninterrupted, the whole having a certain form, general and solitary. Plotin taught that the single is the supreme origin of the essential, higher than the reason and knowledge, incomprehensible. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite observed that the single is an apophatical subject of Theology, the super-essential, the being itself. Augustine believed that the single is God as the highest being; the Trinity is the logical completion of the single. In the contention of Boethius, what is not single, in general, can't exist because the being and the single are opposite and everything, that is single, exists. Thomas Aquinas taught that the single is the indivisibility of the essential and its being, the pre-condition of the thought. Nicolaus Cusanus opined that the single and the unfinished are identical, the single is everything, nothing is opposite to the single. Rene Descartes observed that the unity is the high perfection, characteristic of God. Descartes distinguishes the two types of the unity: physical and spiritual. Spinoza held that God is the single in the nature of things, only one substance exists and this substance is absolutely unfinished. According to Kant, the Unity is "Me" of the transcendental apperception.

Conclusion
In response to the fundamental questions that have arisen as a result of the wider reading of Igwebuike philosophy, this work has been written to address the issue of the origin of Igwebuike philosophy, and more so, the question of its peculiarity: is it a philosophy that is common only to the Igbo or is it a philosophy that has a universal relevance? To these questions, the answer has been simple. Igwebuike is a philosophy that is described with an

Igbo word, however, with a universal relevance an appeal. There has also been the question of the basic principle son which Igwebuike philosophy stands. In response to this, this work discussed the four basic principles of Igwebuike philosophy. These principles include: the principle of identity, the principle of contrariety, the principle of hierarchy and the principle of unity. These principles are very important for the purity and clarity of interconnectedness or complementarity.

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