

## **Interculturality and the African Philosophical Heritage**

Ikechukwu Anthony KANU

Veritas University

### **Introduction**

Philosophy across time, particularly in the modern and contemporary periods, shows that, from a historiographical perspective, shifts have emerged in the idea of what constitutes philosophy. Previously, especially between the 1970s and 1830s, the body of literature known as philosophy consisted of works written by European authors, with the notion that philosophy originated in Europe, specifically in Greece.<sup>1</sup> Some of the proponents of this viewpoint include Hegel, G. W. F., Immanuel Kant, and Gotthold Lessing in Germany, A. R. T. Turgot, Voltaire in France, John Locke, and David Hume in England. These thinkers have expressed perspectives that hold that European philosophy serves as the standard against which all other perspectives are measured.<sup>2</sup>

In his writings, Hegel argued that philosophy exists exclusively as a European heritage and classifies any other philosophy as non-philosophical.<sup>3</sup> He specifically rejected Indian thinkers as mere philosophical forerunners, and described their thought as arbitrary and fantastical ideas, abstract oppositions, and shallow depictions.<sup>4</sup> Since there was little to no contact or mutual knowledge among different civilizations at the time, such comparisons were frequently made from a position of less knowledge regarding the worldviews or structures of reality of other cultures.

However, with the emergence of globalization, greater cultural exchange, rethinking of what philosophy is, and emphasis on the need

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<sup>1</sup> Kanu 2023, 1–14.

<sup>2</sup> Kanu 2023, 1–14.

<sup>3</sup> Hegel 1959, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Hegel 1967, 170–203.

for the decolonization of philosophy, there is an increased appreciation of the wisdom of peoples outside of Europe. While scholars like Arthur Schopenhauer and Paul Deussen expanded the scope of philosophical discourse by including non-European traditions such as Indian, Chinese, and Japanese philosophies,<sup>5</sup> scholars like Placid Tempels, focusing on the Bantu people, argued that Africans were capable of doing philosophy, contrary to the dominating racial perspectives.<sup>6</sup> Pointing to the general belief in Europe, Placid Tempels writes:

It has been claimed that the African reasons half as we do... and that he then abandons all reasoning and gives himself up to magic.<sup>7</sup>

Working with his personal experience rather than with an armchair understanding, he argued further:

Need we, then, be astonished that we find among the Bantu, and more generally among all primitive peoples, as the foundation upon which their intellectual conception of the universe rests, certain basic principles and even a system of philosophy- though it is relatively simple and primitive- derived from a logical coherent ontology.<sup>8</sup>

The emergence of the idea of interculturality in philosophy, which allows for a broad, and pluralistic mindset, and promotes a philosophical culture that emphasizes the significance of the attitude that no one culture can claim an absolute priority or status as the culture of the whole of humanity, has ignited a new phase in the historical evolution of philosophy. George Edwin refers to this new attitude as one of 'believe and let believe', 'live and let live', 'read and let read'.<sup>9</sup> It is within the context of this sacred space created for the interaction of philosophical

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<sup>5</sup> Kanu 2023, 1–14.

<sup>6</sup> Tempels 1959, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Tempels 1959, 42.

<sup>8</sup> Tempels 1959, 10.

<sup>9</sup> George 2014, 51–66.

traditions that this paper studies the ontological capacity of the African philosophical heritage for the promotion of intercultural philosophy.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theories are developed to comprehend, forecast, and explain phenomena. They extend and question current knowledge in a variety of ways, while staying within crucial border assumptions. The Igwebuiké philosophical theory, which is complementary and hence makes room for the interaction of many parts, will be used for this work on the interculturality of philosophy. And even more important is the understanding that the Igwebuiké African philosophical perspective captures the spirit of the African philosophical enterprise, and, therefore, speaks not only for a part but for the whole.

Igwebuiké is a combination of three words: *igwe*, a noun which means number or population; *bu*, a verb, which means *is*; *ike*, a noun, which means *strength* or *power*. Put together, it means ‘number is strength’ or ‘number is power’.<sup>10</sup> This means that when human beings come together in solidarity and complementarity, they are powerful and can constitute an insurmountable force. At this level, no task is beyond their collective capability.<sup>11</sup> This provides an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character. As an ideology, *Igwebuiké* rests on the African principles of solidarity and complementarity.<sup>12</sup> It holds that ‘to be’ is to live in solidarity, relationality, and complementarity, and to live outside the parameters of solidarity and complementarity is to suffer alienation.

Operationally, Igwebuiké serves as a unifying concept and an explanatory principle that interprets the puzzle of the complex relationships in reality. It captures a transcendent, complementary, comprehensive, and systematic quest to penetrate the structure and dynamics of reality and ultimately to give honest answers to fundamental questions. In the search for truth, it strives beyond all forms of particularities, peculiarities, paradoxes, and contradictions and

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<sup>10</sup> Kanu 2017, 113–140; Kanu 2017, 1–23.

<sup>11</sup> Kanu 2016, 97–101; Kanu 2017, 165–183.

<sup>12</sup> Kanu 2017, 16–50; Kanu 2015, 20.

espouses the path of complementation, therefore, showing how beings can relate to one another in a mutually harmonized non-absolutistic mode.<sup>13</sup> It is this complementary character of Igwebuiké that creates the space for interculturality.

The Igwebuiké philosophical framework will make a significant contribution towards the decolonization of philosophy, which has been historically Eurocentric and exclusionary, by prioritizing the authenticity of local contributions. This is significant given that the conversation on interculturality hardly avoids references to colonialism. The colonization of philosophy refers to the marginalization and neglect of the philosophical traditions of colonized peoples, while the philosophical traditions of the colonizers are deemed as the only valid form of philosophy.<sup>14</sup> The Igwebuiké framework opposes this pattern of hegemony and exclusion and seeks to enrich the understanding of philosophy by questioning the European canon as the normative center of philosophy. Decolonizing philosophy within this context involves expanding the discipline beyond the colonial paradigm and enriching it with diversity and universality. This does not necessitate the rejection of canonical figures in philosophy but entails a philosophical practice that makes room for alterity.<sup>15</sup>

### **Interculturality as the Attitude of Philosophy**

Franz Martin Wimmer observes that even though philosophy claims to be universal, it has always been embedded in the Eurocentric culture, which is only a certain means of expression and questioning.<sup>16</sup> so that the philosophical traditions of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa are relegated to the background. The effort towards genuine universalization and overcoming of the eurocentricism of philosophy led to the emergence of intercultural philosophy.<sup>17</sup>

The concept was created by Ram Adhar Mall, a professor at the University of Munich. He defines interculturality as “the encounter of

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<sup>13</sup> Kanu 2016, 61–66.

<sup>14</sup> Zavala 2023, 1–14.

<sup>15</sup> Dreyer 2017, 1–7; Kanu 2023, 1–14.

<sup>16</sup> Wimmer 2002, 34.

<sup>17</sup> Kanu 2023, 1–14.

various cultures in the mutual recognition of their differences and similarities.”<sup>18</sup> Relating the concept to philosophy, he writes:

Intercultural philosophy stands for a process of emancipation from all types of centrisms, whether European or non-European,...a philosophical attitude, a philosophical conviction that no one philosophy is the philosophy for the whole of humankind.<sup>19</sup>

Wimmer, in agreement with Ram Adhar Mall, defines intercultural philosophy within the context of creating space for marginalized voices:

The endeavour to give expression to the many and often marginalized voices of philosophy in their respective cultural contexts and thereby to generate a shared, fruitful discussion granting equal rights to all,...to facilitate and develop a new and timely culture of a plurality of philosophical dialogues between thinkers from around the world.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, intercultural philosophy is understood as an approach in philosophy for overcoming eurocentrism, a kind of decolonization of philosophy, and as a method of thinking differently from the colonial pattern so as to open the door for dialogue with other philosophical traditions.<sup>21</sup>

As a new approach in philosophy, the intercultural approach emphasizes the need for the integration of influences from different cultures and traditions in the doing of philosophy. It is in this regard that it is defined as philosophy being intercultural, therefore, allowing the spirit of philosophy to be realized in different traditions. For some philosophers it means relating to, involving, or representing different cultures; for some thinkers, it implies contact or social intercourse taking place between cultures, as in intercultural communication; and for some others, it denotes a contact among cultures which exemplifies, or leads

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<sup>18</sup> Mall et al. 1989, 89.

<sup>19</sup> Mall et al. 1989, xii.

<sup>20</sup> Wimmer 2002, 23.

<sup>21</sup> Kanu 2023, 1–14; Schepen 2022, 63.

to, comprehensive mutuality, reciprocity, and equality. It is from this background that Sweet William holds that:

Genuine interculturality.... designates contact among cultures which exemplifies or leads to comprehensive mutuality, reciprocity and equality, arguably it is this sense of interculturality that many of those who see themselves as engaged in intercultural philosophy aspires....is it to be a field or subject area of philosophy? or is it more of an attitude, method, or approach or plurality of approaches to doing philosophy? Does it provide a positive direction or agenda, or does it focus more on avoiding certain problems in (traditional) philosophy?<sup>22</sup>

Scholars like Heeson Bai and her colleagues, therefore, assume interculturality as a basic function of philosophy, implying that there cannot be philosophy without interculturality.<sup>23</sup> This concept of intercultural philosophy is not in any way an understanding of it as comparative philosophy. While comparative philosophy creates a round table for dialogue among various sources of thought across cultural, linguistic, and philosophical currents, in the case of intercultural philosophy, the round table leads to the generation of a thought system that is global.<sup>24</sup>

### **African Philosophy and the Culture of Interculturality**

The culture of interculturality is evident in the development of African philosophy, and this culture is anchored on the complementary and relational elements of the philosophy of the African people. An attempt will be made to present this as evident in the thoughts of major African philosophers such as Placid Tempels, Alexis Kagame, Janheinz Jahn, John Mbiti, Emmanuel Edeh, Pantaleon Iroegbu, Innocent Asouzu, .

### ***“Vital Force” in Placid Tempels***

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<sup>22</sup> Sweet 2014, 1–19.

<sup>23</sup> Kanu 2023, 1–14.

<sup>24</sup> Kaltenbach 2014, 39–50; Chini 2004, 120–131.

Tempels was a Catholic Missionary who is widely acknowledged as the father of ethno-philosophy. He analyzed the Bantu thought system in which the notion of Being or 'Vital force' is easily noticed. In his work, *La Philosophie Bantou* of 1945, Placide Tempels sets out to assert that people have a concrete concept of being and the universe. The work aimed to help European missionaries understand the thought pattern or worldview of the Bantu people, which he described as "a logical coherent ontology".<sup>25</sup>

Tempels posits that Bantu behaviour is centred on a single value: vital force. He wrote that "...the philosophy of forces strictly governs in fact the whole of Bantu life".<sup>26</sup> The vital force he call by various names, such as life, force, and to live strongly. The vital force in Tempels is not just a value or an inseparable element of being, but being itself. He avers that: "Force is the nature of being, force is being, being is force".<sup>27</sup>

His work on Bantu Philosophy is a foundational text for the concept of Ubuntu, which focuses on the relationship between people and includes ideas of fairness, justice, and interdependence. It emphasizes that people grow and thrive in a community and that the individual finds itself in the community and benefits from it. He introduced a new way of thinking about African beliefs and thought, and questioned the universality of Western philosophy, establishing paradigms that are still relevant today.<sup>28</sup> His development of the concept of Ubuntu, which emphasizes the importance of all parts, and his questioning of the universality of Western philosophy, was an early pointer to the significant place that African philosophy gives to interculturality.

### ***"Ntu" in Alexis Kagame***

Alexis Kagame was a Catholic priest who worked among the people of Kinyarwanda, Rwanda. In his work *La Philosophie Bantou-Rwandaise de L'Etre*, he further developed Tempels' philosophy of force.

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<sup>25</sup> Tempels 1959, 10.

<sup>26</sup> Tempels 1959, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Tempels 1959, 24.

<sup>28</sup> Tempels 1959, 11.

His preoccupation was to show that Bantu metaphysical categories are based on the grammatical categories of the Bantu language. According to Francis Njoku, Kagame discovered that *Ntu* is the category of being or the generic meaning of something.<sup>29</sup> This he classified into four: *Muntu* (human beings); *Kintu* (non-human beings/thing); *Hantu* (place and time); and *Kuntu* (modality).<sup>30</sup>

Kagame holds that *Ntu* is the unifying notion amid the plurality of being, meaning that there is the possibility of interaction between all beings, given that *Ntu* is the cosmic universal force, which manifests itself in the different categories of being. *Ntu* is the central point from which creation flows. Since all forces are in constant movement, it would be difficult to see the *Ntu*. However, if all the forces of the universe were put to a halt, then *Ntu* would be revealed.<sup>31</sup> The unity of being, despite its plurality, creates a space for the interaction of thought at the intercultural level.

### ***“Muntu” in Janheinz Jahn***

On the interaction between the African culture and the West, Janheinz Jahn presents a systematic exposition of the new African culture, which he referred to as neo-African culture, a culture born out of the encounter between European and African cultures.<sup>32</sup> Focusing on the Voodoo religion in Brazil and Haiti, Jahn sees the possibility of the interaction of cultures. Adding to this, he holds that the voodoo religion, just like every other African religion, encompasses every dimension of African life, making it possible for the interaction of the African culture with diverse levels of cultural perspectives, either Western or Asian.

Taking from the works of five famous authors: Placid Tempels, Marcel Griaule, Germaine Dieterlen, Maya Daren, and Alexis Kagame, who reflected on the Bantu people, Jahn argues that all being, all essence, regardless of the form in which they are conceived, must not be

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<sup>29</sup> Njoku 2010, 22.

<sup>30</sup> Kagame 1951, 10–40.

<sup>31</sup> Kagame 1951, 23–35.

<sup>32</sup> Jahn 1958, 23–40.



conceived as substance but as force<sup>33</sup>. Thus, everything is a force that is dependent on the other, and therefore, in a relationship. This relationship is seen when we remove the determinative from Ubuntu: there remains the stem NTU, which is the same in all.<sup>34</sup> He holds that “Ntu is being itself, the cosmic universal force... that force in which being and beings coalesce”.<sup>35</sup> He further writes, “NTU expresses, not the effect of these forces, but their being. But the forces act continually and are constantly effective. Only if one could call a halt to the whole universe, if life suddenly stood still, would NTU be revealed”.<sup>36</sup> His emphasis on NTU points to a space, not only for the interaction of being, but also for the interaction of diversity, which is significant for the conversation on interculturality.

### ***The Relationality of Being in John Mbiti***

John Mbiti, in his work on *African Religions and Philosophy*, speaks of African ontology as an anthropocentric ontology, given that the human person is at the center of other fundamental realities like God, spirits, animals, plants, and objects without biological life. He argues that the nature of being in this world is that of unity and solidarity.<sup>37</sup>

The anthropocentric ontology is a complete unity or solidarity that 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.<sup>38</sup>

Mbiti's understanding of being within the context of unity and solidarity provides a space for intercultural discourse in African philosophy.

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<sup>33</sup> Jahn 1958, 100.

<sup>34</sup> Anderson 1970, 76–79; Oguejiofor 2008, 21–35.

<sup>35</sup> Jahn 1958, 101.

<sup>36</sup> Jahn 1958, 101.

<sup>37</sup> Mbiti 1970, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Mbiti 1970, 16.

### ***Emmanuel Edeh's Manner of Being***

Emmanuel Edeh, in his work on *Igbo Metaphysics*, emphasized the relationality of reality in the world in such a manner that it does not subtract from the personal identities of individualities and peculiarities:

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.<sup>39</sup>

Edeh established a very strong connection between African culture and the African community: "A traditional culture cannot exist without a community. My concept of community here must be characterized as a life community, that is, a social set-up in which there is an intimate face-to-face interaction".<sup>40</sup> His concept of the relationality of reality is significant in the conversation on intercultural philosophy.

### ***Belongingness in Pantaleon Ireogbu***

In his work *Metaphysics: The Kpim of Philosophy*, Pantaleon Ireogbu dedicated the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter to the development of his *uwa ontology*, which is a synthesis of his perception of reality. For him, "Uwa defines being. It summarizes being and beings for me- it englobes all beings in the bosom of Uwa- being-... Whatever is, in so far as it is, is Uwa. Uwa is reality and reality is Uwa".<sup>41</sup> Going further, he avers that: "The entirety of existence, from God the highest being to inanimate beings of our cosmos, can be summarized in the englobing concept of the Igbo term *Uwa*. *Uwa* is all-inclusive. It mirrors being, existence, entity, and all reality. It englobes all that is animate and inanimate, visible and invisible".<sup>42</sup> Once a child is born, it is confronted by the *uw*;

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<sup>39</sup> Edeh 1983, 105.

<sup>40</sup> Edeh 1983, 56.

<sup>41</sup> Ireogbu 1995, 338.

<sup>42</sup> Ireogbu 1995, 339.

moving from the security of the mother's womb into a crude world, it begins to cry. The cry is a reaction to the new reality of the *uwa*.

When a child is born, he or she is welcomed by the mini-community that represents the larger community where the child will live for the rest of its life. The Igbo-African world into which the child is born is made up of common origin, common world-view, common language, shared culture, race, colour, habit, common historical experience and common destiny. It is to this world that the child's being, performance and destiny is enshrined and construed, even without his or her consent. The community is the centre of existence. According to Iroegbu, "Without the community, there is no remaining in existence".<sup>43</sup>

In response to the questions, 'what makes being, being?', 'What does it mean to be in the Uwa?' Iroegbu argues that it is belongingness; thus, *Being* is *Belongingness*. What then is belongingness? He defines belongingness as 'the synthesis of the reality and experience of belongingness'.<sup>44</sup> In this case, the recipient-subject of belonging is involved: something belongs and it belongs to something. Belongingness is a special noun from the verb 'to belong'. It means to be part of: Dasein-with or to be a member of a group.

Iroegbu argues that the Igbo principle of *Egbe bere Ugo bere* (let the kite perch, let the eagle perch) re-enacts the contents and significance of belongingness as the essence of reality. What a being is, is its activity of perching (belonging). To perch is to be. To be is to perch. To be is to belong, and to belong is to be. When *Egbe* perches and *Ugo* perches, they come face to face with each other. They are with each other. They are present to each other. They relate to each other deeply and directly, as well as have relationships with other inhabitants of *Uwa* (world). To relate is to share something: to give and take. They have common projects, needs, and desires. Together, they struggle to overcome their difficulties and share their joy.<sup>45</sup> This philosophy of co-existence (let the kite perch, let the eagle perch) presents a strong

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<sup>43</sup> Iroegbu 1995, 345.

<sup>44</sup> Iroegbu 1995, 374.

<sup>45</sup> Iroegbu 1995, 376.

ground for the development of intercultural philosophy from an African perspective.

### ***“Ibuanyidanda” in Innocent Asouzu***

Asouzu developed the notion of being within the new ontological horizon of *ibuanyidanda*.<sup>46</sup> It is an approach to ontology that aims at overcoming all forms of bifurcation which the human mind imposes on the relationship between substance and accidents.<sup>47</sup> According to Asouzu, the philosophy of *Ibuanyidanda* “explores a method and principles for coalescing the real and the ideal, the essential and the accidental into system of mutual complementing units”.<sup>48</sup> It is, therefore, not surprising that Asouzu defines being as “that on account of which anything that exists serves a missing link of reality”.<sup>49</sup> He presents reality as “an all-embracing whole, in which all units form together a dynamic play of forces, which are in harmony with each other, by completing and supporting the other”,<sup>50</sup> and as that which “exist only in relations”.<sup>51</sup> And he speaks of reality as “necessary complements of each other”.<sup>52</sup> Thus, being is located within the context of mutual complementarity of all possible relations in the sense of an existent reality. This questioning of bifurcations is significant for the decolonization dimension of intercultural philosophy.

### **Igwebuike Framework and Implications for Interculturality**

The underlying principle of African philosophy is the Igwebuike framework or principle. Despite the differences among African philosophers, Igwebuike points to the presence of complementarity and the sharedness of being as major thread in African thought. From the Igwebuike framework, several implications emerge regarding the relevance of African philosophy in the philosophical conversation on

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<sup>46</sup> Asouzu 2007, 20; Asouzu 2007, 7; Asouzu 2013, 13.

<sup>47</sup> Ogbonnaya 2013, 461–482.

<sup>48</sup> Asouzu 2011, 101.

<sup>49</sup> Asouzu 2011, 103.

<sup>50</sup> Asouzu 2007, 14.

<sup>51</sup> Asouzu 2007, 74.

<sup>52</sup> Asouzu 2004, 10–15.

interculturality. Metaphysical, ontological, anthropological, and cosmological implications of Igwebuiké indigenous framework for intercultural philosophy will be drawn below.

### ***African Ontology and Interculturality: Ontological Implications***

The mutual relations and complementarity in the African worldhood that *Igwebuiké* philosophy conceptualizes are anchored on the following basic human conditions:

1. The world we live in is one in which we encounter several needs, but with very few resources to take care of said needs. This limitation calls for the mobilization of other forces outside of the self, a social fellowship for the satisfaction of particular needs.<sup>53</sup>
2. Nature has placed in us the likeness for fellowship.<sup>54</sup>
3. Although humans are equal essentially, we have different gifts and abilities. What I may be able to do, another may not be able to do, meaning that my relationship with the other completes what is lacking in him or her, and vice versa.<sup>55</sup>
4. Collaboration with the other is a ground for becoming, as everything takes a bit of another to make itself. It is a ground for staying alive and transforming the universe.<sup>56</sup>

These ontological factors in the Igwebuiké worldhood create a space for interculturality and presents interculturality as a path towards the being of philosophy and the enrichment of the discipline.

### ***“Mmadu” and Interculturality: Anthropological Implications***

Descartes had understood the human person in terms of self-consciousness and, through his methodical doubt, discovered that something resisted the doubt: the fact that he was the one who doubted and who could be deceived. *Cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore, I am) was his famous statement. He answered the question of “Who am I?” by

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<sup>53</sup> Kanu 2023, 1–14.

<sup>54</sup> Kanu 2023, 1–14.

<sup>55</sup> Kanu 2023, 1–14.

<sup>56</sup> Njoku 2015, 15.

stating that he was a “thinking thing”.<sup>57</sup> In the wake of Descartes, individual consciousness became the privileged center of identity, and ‘the other’ was often regarded as either an epistemological problem or an inferior, diminished, or negated form of the self.<sup>58</sup>

However, contrary to the influence of Descartes, the Igwebuiké framework provides a horizon that presents *Mmadu* (the human person) as a being that possesses a relational character.<sup>59</sup> ‘To be’ is ‘to be with the other’ in a community of being.<sup>60</sup> Igwebuiké understands life as a shared reality. And it is only within the context of complementarity that life makes meaning. Life is a life of *sharedness*; one in which another is part thereof. A relationship, though of separate and separated entities or individuals, but with a joining of the same whole. It is a relationship in which two or more come together to make each other a complete whole; it is a diversity of being one with each other. The self is, therefore, not only complete in relating with the other but also attains self-realization through the other. This has great implications for the philosophical enterprise. It provides an anthropological basis for interculturality and recognizes interculturality as the level where philosophy achieves self-realization.<sup>61</sup>

### ***Uzo (Modality) of Being and Interculturality: Metaphysical Implications***

Igwebuiké is an expression of the way of being in Igbo-African ontology. The reason for this is that everything in the Uwa (world) is related to everything else. All beings belong. It also conveys the undeniable and unavoidable existence of the individual’s community. “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am,” is how Mbiti has traditionally expressed this.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, Iroegbu Pantaleon asserts that society provides the individual with his or her existence and education.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Kanu 2013, 34–42.

<sup>58</sup> Kanu 2015, 15.

<sup>59</sup> Kanu 2016, 61–66.

<sup>60</sup> Kanu 2023, 1–14.

<sup>61</sup> Kanu 2023, 1–14.

<sup>62</sup> Mbiti 1970, 108.

<sup>63</sup> Iroegbu 1995, 338.

The world of forces is held like a spider's web, according to Placid Tempels, "where no single thread can be made to vibrate without shaking the entire network".<sup>64</sup>

It is from this understanding of the modality of being that the Igwebuiké viewpoint posits that interaction and communication are fundamental to philosophy. Stated differently, philosophy is inherently intercultural. Philosophy supports rationality, which is the level at which this interculturality exists and is understood. The philosophical space needs to transcend regional loyalties and allow for a variety of viewpoints. Self-alienation occurs when interculturality in philosophy is not upheld.

### ***Uwa and Interculturality: Cosmological Implications***

Igwebuiké manifests the African cosmology, in which each creature must traverse the existential highway of another to survive.<sup>65</sup> The universe is combinational, interdependent, and dependent. It is a world that people share in an environment of inter-subjective relations. It is only when the individual effectively bridges his or her interiority with the personality of the other that inter-subjective exchanges unfold without chaos.<sup>66</sup>

There are both spiritual and physical aspects to the African cosmos. God is the highest authority and the Chief Being in the spirit world. Humans are the dominant species in the physical universe and hold a vital place in God's creation scheme. Three levels make up the African universe's structure: the sky, home to God (Chukwu) and angels; the earth, home to people, animals, natural resources, some devils, and physically observable realities; and the underworld, home to the ancestors and evil spirits.<sup>67</sup>

Despite their quirks, these material and spiritual realms in the African cosmos connect and endure due to a positive inter-subjective relationship. Since reality exists cooperatively, there is no barrier

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<sup>64</sup> Tempels 1959, 60.

<sup>65</sup> Kanu 2012, 75–103; Ijiomah 2005, 81–90.

<sup>66</sup> Kanu 2017, 14–22.

<sup>67</sup> Ekwealor 1990, 29–33; Kanu 2015, 15.

between the material and spiritual realms, the visible and invisible, or the holy and profane.<sup>68</sup> As a result, some elements can commune with other elements by moving between structures. An intercultural approach to philosophy is cosmologically supported by African philosophy.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has studied intercultural philosophy not from a general perspective, but with an African lens. It adopted an African philosophical framework- the Igwebuike theoretical framework- for the interpretation and understanding of the peculiar African perspective and contribution to the pool of knowledge on intercultural philosophy. A study of the perspectives of major African thinkers was undertaken, and flowing from these perspectives is the underlying spirit of the African philosophical heritage, which centres around the complementarity and relationality of reality, adequately captured by the Igwebuike philosophical principle. This indigenous philosophical principle provided the metaphysical, cosmological, ontological, and anthropological foundations for the development of an African philosophy of interculturality.

Given that the earlier perspectives that denied the philosophicality of other traditions, were partly the outcome of colonial culture, further steps towards interculturality must be guided by the search for truth rather than sentiments; openness to the cultural or philosophical traditions of other people without an air of pride or a feeling of superiority of one's tradition over that of others is necessary; translation of texts of particular philosophical traditions into languages that people from other life-worlds can read and understand is important for the interaction of thought, and opens the door for real encounters with philosophical traditions.

More so, there is a need to create a shared conceptual space for the understanding of differences; where concepts fail in conveying a message, familiar concepts from such a space can be introduced for

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<sup>68</sup> Kanu 2014, 164–168; Kanu 2014, 98–102; Kanu 2014, 475–489; Kanu 2014, 27–38; Kanu 2014, 8–13.



better understanding. In this case, one must ensure that such a conceptual space does not end up creating a global philosophical tradition against particular traditions. There is also a need for a sympathetic and non-dominant approach towards the philosophical traditions of other peoples. Added to these is the need for broadening the horizon of what is considered today as the history of philosophy to include the history of other historical traditions like Asian philosophy, African philosophy, Indian philosophy, and Chinese philosophy.

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