

## IGWEBUIKE PHILOSOPHY AND HUMAN SUFFERING

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### Abstract

*At the mention of the word suffering, our minds virtualize some sort of painful feelings and conditions, unbearable situations, poverty and even a kind of evil. No wonder then that it is hard to seemingly set a demarcation between the problem of human suffering and the problem of evil. The University of human suffering lays its burdensome weight on every man in one way or the other. The people of Umuaga are therefore not exempted from this critical situation. The researcher employs the African philosophy of solidarity and complementarily, Igwebuiké, which means 'crowd is power', or 'crowd/people is strength' to view this problem. This research therefore seeks to show that though a perennial problem, human suffering can be gradually brought to a minimal level and eventually eradicated in Umuaga land, through the practical use of Igwebuiké. This work is expository, interpretative and analytic in nature to show the need for igwebuiké in Umuaga community. The primary source of this research is drawn from oral interviews and interactions as well as personal reflection on the topic. The secondary source is basically drawn from relevant books, magazines and articles.*

**Keywords:** Igwebuiké, Philosophy, Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony, Human, Suffering

### Introduction

It is always said that poverty knows no colour or race. Suffering also knows no gender or profession. No man can ever boast of not experiencing suffering in life, experiences from the time of his birth, his growing up, down to the time of death. Man finds his life filled with anguish, anger, loss of a beloved one, hunger, discrimination, marginalization, lack of essential needs for living, accident, and so the unending list of heartbreaking experiences. It is then not surprising that Pope St. John Paul II noted in his book "go in peace" that the reality of this suffering is ever before our eyes and often in the body, soul and heart of each of us (133). The reality of suffering is very evident among the people of Umuaga ever since the time of their ancestors. Today, this problem still exists and can be found among the people. Many pass through bodily pains, physical disabilities, poverty, depression, hopelessness, anxiety and even clan

discrimination, while some get to the level of destitution. The people of Umuaga are predominantly Christians and in fact Catholics, so it is no surprise to see them asking god questions when faced with these perennial problems. Some feel that God has forsaken them, while other traditionally oriented ones turn to traditional god (*chi*), or their destiny (*akala aka*) as being responsible for the misfortunes and suffering in life.

These questions and problem of the people of Umuaga is closely related to that of the problem of evil, where according to Celestine Chukwuemeka, suffering and evil are close to each other in expressing a disquieting absence of the good that ought to be (31). The New Dictionary of Theology in this same light sees suffering as the deprivation of human good, though it went further to stress that God is not the cause of evil and suffering but rather the source of all good (Mary 990).

It is this problem that the researcher feels that in as much as the people of Umuaga attributes to God or the influence of some spirits in the universe, also the action of the human person has a major role to play in the cause and existence of suffering among them. Hence, if they curtail some of their activities and also improve their relationship with the other members of the community, having in mind the view of helping each other and improving the level of living for the less privileged, then the researcher believes that there will be rapid reduction of suffering among the people of Umuaga.

There is no doubt that there exists a high rate of suffering among the people of Umuaga. This is to say that to deny the existence of this problem is to deny an empirical reality. Since this problem affects every member of the community directly or indirectly, there is therefore a serious need to provide means of reducing it.

When faced with this problem, many people feel weak, reluctant to find lasting solutions to these problems and so end up in miserable, hopeless and anguish.

The great need for togetherness and real sense of belonging is important to be stressed. The spirit of solidarity is going down so it is not surprising to find in a community some being over rich while some living in destitution.

In Nigerian dailies and magazines, one will find that Nigerians are blessed with different ideas and theories concerning politics and man related issues. The area of suffering is not left out in this theory-making on how to reduce it, but it is also true that most of these ideas seemingly have not been able to fulfill their aims

owing to the fact as many Nigerians are still languishing under this problem. The researcher feels that one of the reasons why there has been little success in this sector is due to the inability of the effort to be practical. Most are very theoretical and lack the practical and empirical dimensions.

One of the aims and objectives of this work is to enlighten the good people of Umuaga of the need to reduce this problem using *Igwebuike* as an institutional means of reducing human suffering. Also, the researcher wants to bring the mind of the people to the need of true sense of solidarity. Another objectives of this work is to show that *Igwebuike* can be a pragmatic concept.

### **The Nature of Man**

Daniel J. Sullivan in *an introduction to philosophy* is of the opinion that the most widely held view of man today is of a superior animal. And just as animals in general are creatures of instinct, with no real control over their instinctive drives or the pull over their senses from the outside, so too man is impelled purely by the attractions of the sense goods and by the blind drive of instinct (63). He further argues that besides being an animal, man has a power- the power to reason- which in itself makes him different in kind from the rest of the animals. Hence, the researcher agrees with him since man is an animal with a body, sense power, feelings and emotions just as any other animals.

In *philosophical anthropology*, Batista Mondin sees man as a living being. He is essentially alive. His life is specifically different from that of animals and plant (49-50). Batista also argues that the body is the first and most obvious dimension of man, yet, it is also obvious that the body, by itself, does not constitute the entire human reality, but it does so only with the soul (231). St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theological* sees the soul as the life principle of a living body. The human soul is a non-bodily substance endowed with intellect and will. In this life the human soul has an extinctive dependence on the body, but not an intrinsic dependence. It can exist and operate per se even if it be severed from the body. And this means that it is truly a subsistent substance. It is subsistent, yet, while it is a complete soul, it is not a complete human being. The complete human being is a compound of body and soul (60).

Man according to Batista is also a cultural being. This means that at the moment of birth, nature gave man the necessary minimum, the essentials, to be man and assigns him the task of making himself and forming himself so as to fully realize his being through culture (146). He further argues that man is a cultural

being in two senses he is the artifice of culture, and he is also the prime receiver and the greatest effect of culture (148)

The article '*the person and society*' in the *Opus Dei* argues that god did not create man as a solitary being', but wanted him to be a 'social being' (1) Aristotle also in an affirmative form says that a man is a social animal. It thus that the social nature of the human being finds expression in the setting up of a variety of associations aimed at attaining distinct goals. The article further sees the society as a group of persons bound together organically by a principle of unity that goes beyond each one of them (2).

The social nature of man has been argued by many philosophers especially in regard to his forming of society. The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 16799) envisaged man in the state of nature as living solely according to his passions and instinct. Man is a predatory animal, and the natural state of man is of war. However, among his instinct is that of survival. To keep from being exterminated, primitive man chose to sacrifice his natural freedom in order to secure the benefit of peace. Accordingly, he surrendered his liberty forever to a single strong man or group of men who are guaranteed to keep order (Sullivan 187).

Unlike Hobbies, the famous French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778) argues that the natural state of man is a state of total, unrestricted liberty, he is naturally good. For Rousseau too, the origin of the state is in a 'social contact'. Primitive man surrendered his private liberty to the collective will of the community, which Rousseau termed the general will (Sullivan 187).

### **Igwebuike**

Okanu in *Igwebuike as the consummate foundation of African bioethical principles* views Igwebuike as the study of modality of being for the realization of the being. It is from the Igbo word Igwebuike. It is understood as a word and as a sentence as a word, it is written as Igwebuike, and as a sentence, it is written as Igwebuike, with the component word enjoying some independence in terms of space. *Igwe* is a noun which means number or population, usually a huge number of population. *Bu* is a verb, which means is, *Ike* is another verb which means strength or power. Thus, put together, it means 'number is strength' or 'number is power' (97).

Kanu in *Igwebuike as an Igbo-African Philosophy of education* avers that *Igwebuike* rests on the philosophy of solidarity and complementarity; thus, to be is to live in solidarity and complementarity, and to live outside the parameters of solidarity and complementarity is to suffer alienation. Kanu quoted Iroegbu that *Igwebuike* is based on the African cosmology which is characterized by a common origin, common world view, common language, shared culture, shared race, colour and habits, common historical experience and a common destiny (96).

The researcher feels that the concept of *Igwebuike* covers and embodies a lot of things. It is a basic whole. This can be seen in the different wholes that *Igwebuike* is used. Kanu opines that *Igwebuike* is the substratum of African traditional values, philosophy and religion. Because of its centrality in African philosophy, the development of a philosophy of education that is hinged on it is aimed at developing a philosophy of education that is in tandem with the African ontology. As a philosophy of education, it stands for a dialogical pedagogy that gives proportionate places to the teacher and the student. It is inculturated to fit into the African category which is realistically oriented to qualitative humanism (97).

Kanu also argues that *Igwebuike* is the underlining principle of African bioethics. Here, solidarity, respect for persons, together with the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence principle are all dimensions and parts of principles of *Igwebuike* and basic principle in African bioethics. In African ontology, life is not a personal thing. It is community after involving both the physical and spiritual world. The researcher agrees with this, for one's life is made complete in the life of others, and since *Igwebuike* calls for people to come together, and as one attain a common wrongdoings that will affect the life of other (98).

Life is life when it is of sharedness; it is 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. Thus, *Igwebuike* provides an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations. It represents the perspective that 'to be' is to in solidarity and complementarity, and to live outside this parameter is to suffer alienation. 'To be', is 'to be with the other', in a community of beings ([Igwebuikepedia.org](http://Igwebuikepedia.org)).

## **Man and Suffering**

Human suffering, its nature, causes and consequence as well as the possible solutions, have occupied the mind of the human person for ages. It is not an experience reserved for a group of peasants or a theoretical problem that occupies the speculative intellect of some specific scholars. All people of all times and places have had a taste of this venom, if there is any difference, it is not in its universality, inevitability and the nauseating feelings that characterize it, rather, it concerns the different degrees and colourings it has taken in different people at different times and circumstances (Umeh) I.). it such asserts that suffering weighs on the shoulders of every human. Each person is thus uniquely able to identify those at hand-events that have unraveled the order that one had vainly hoped to find in life. The experience of suffering has so weighed every shoulder that we find ourselves to be no longer agile, many are not longer able to direct life toward their authentic chosen goals. Each individual without any assistance can identify the specific evils that he or she has encountered in life. Because each person bears one's own suffering upon one's own shoulders each is the unique seer who alone can address the question of the meaning of that burden of suffering which he or she bears (Liderbach 7-8).

## **The Problem of Evil**

The problem of evil is one of the major arguments against the existence of God. The substance of this arguments goes thus, if God is all – powerful and all-good, why is there so much gratuitous and unnecessary evil in the world? If he is all-powerful, he should be able to remove “unnecessary” evil, and if he I all-good he should want to remove it; but he does not, why? Must we assume that he is either not all –powerful or all-good?

Edward insisted that theists want to avoid such conclusion at all costs; they see the problem as one of logical compatibility; they must have an answer which squares God's all-powerfulness and all-goodness (Schedler 361), this shows how atheists tried to discredit the goodness and powerfulness of God. Edward thus, listed theistic solutions to the problem of evil. Firstly, “contrast” and the “nonintervention” solutions; Evil according to the first argument is necessary as a contrast so that we shall properly be able to understand and appreciate the good life. The second argument, is a by-product of the operation of the law of the universe. Evil events like earthquakes, famines, etc. are simply natural events in a world which is overall, a good one. Thirdly, for a better understanding to the problem of evil, there is a cluster of related scriptural views. To the question

what does God have in mind by allowing gratuitous evil in his world? Students of Christian scripture have replied variously, (1) evil is punishment for sin; (2) evil tests man's faith (3) evil is God's warning to man. The fourth solution is the character-building theory, on this view evil is a necessary part of our world because experience of it yields such virtues as courage, endurance, charity and sympathy. The fifth solution is that, the philosophical optimist claims that this is the best of all possible world even though evil is a necessary ingredient of it (Schedler 362,363). Optimists like Leibniz, did not claim that evil was only an appearance or an illusion, as he is so often interpreted. He readily admitted that the world contains evil in a positive and real way, but his point was that it contained just exactly the right amount of evil. Hence it is the best of all possible worlds. Lawhead have this to say about Leibniz understanding of evil when he categorized evil into three; firstly, metaphysical evil which is imperfection, the unavoidable imperfection present in any being that is finite. Since Leibniz thinks it obvious that existence is better than non-existence, it follows that an imperfect world is better than no world at all. Since evil is a privation or the negative quality of lacking perfection. It cannot be said that evil is a positive reality created by God. Secondly, physical evil; Leibniz handles the problem of physical evil with an apriori argument. Since he has argued that this must be the best world, then even the suffering of its creatures must somehow contribute to the overall good of the total system. Finally, Leibniz explains why moral evil exists. Moral evil is caused by the free choices of people who lack a rightly ordered will. Thus, God cannot be blamed for the existence of moral evil (Lawhead 263-264). That is to say Leibniz believed that this world is the best of all possible worlds and as such, the existence of evil is compactable with the existence of God.

Lawhead insists that theists use different arguments to answer the problem of evil. Firstly, John Hick's greater good defense; the claim that God allows some evil to exist because it is necessary to the achievement of a greater good. Hick's developed what he calls the "minority report" in the history of theology. This view is that when God initially created humanity, there was still some work to be done in making a complete product. However, this remaining work could not be accomplished by God alone; we have to contribute to the process. Using the greater good defense Hick's argues that even God himself could not achieve certain results without allowing us to struggle against evil and to ensure suffering. This goes to say that God allows some evil to exist because it is necessary to the achievement of a greater good. Secondly, the free will defense; this is the claim that God could not create creatures (such as us) who have the freedom of will and who are incapable of doing evil. Furthermore, the third

argument is the natural order defense; in this argument, free choice can be used. One way in which a free will defense can account for natural evil is to say that in order for there to be free choice, whether these choices are evil or good ones, there has to be a fixed, reliable order of natural cause and effects (Lawhead 357-364).

From the Hindu's perspective according to Lawhead, Hinduism believed that everything is an aspect of God. As such how does Hinduism account for the existence of evil in the world? One answer is that the law of karma implies that all sufferings are just and are the outcomes of choices that we make in this life or a previous life (Lawhead 376). That is to say Hinduism did not have problem with the existence of evil because they see evil as punishment of an offence committed.

From the Buddhists' perspective, the problem of evil and the existence of suffering is the main theme of Buddha's teachings. According to Buddhism, the cause of suffering is twofold. First, most of our sufferings are the result of our own desires and our preoccupation with the illusion of the self. Second, suffering is simply a fact of life that we must face; no divine purpose is being achieved by suffering (Lawhead 382).

### **St Augustine on the Problem of Evil**

St. Augustine a theistic philosopher in trying to find answer to the problem of evil was faced with the dualistic method of the Manichaeans. Augustine thought that the only way to absolve God of blame if the God of light is limited in power and is caught in an eternal struggle with the competing power of darkness, then no one can suppose God is responsible for evil in creation (Omoregbe 103). However, Sheed has this to say, in the words of St. Augustine:

Whatever that cause might be, I saw that no explanation would do which would force me believe that the immutable God is mutable; for if I did that I should have being the very thing that I was trying to find (namely a cause of evil). From now it was with no anxiety that I sought it, for I am sure that what the Manichees said was not true. With all my heart I rejected them, because I saw that while they inquired as to the source of evil, they were full of evil themselves, in that they preferred rather to hold that your substance committed it (sheed 134).



Furthermore, Williams dwelling on St. Augustine, started by classifying freedom into three: (i) physical freedom which involves the absence of restraints, (ii) Metaphysical freedom which is the freedom to choose in a way that is not determined by anything outside my control, (iii) Autonomy freedom which is the sort of freedom that people have in mind when they think they are free because they have no human masters (Williams 1). St. Augustine in his argument with Evodius, was asked is not God the cause of evil? Augustine's answer is that human beings have metaphysical freedom, and so the blame for any evil action rests on the person who performs the action. But Evodius further asked "if metaphysical freedom can lead to evil, then should not God be blamed for giving it to us in the first place?" Augustine agreed that without metaphysical freedom, there would be no evil, but he also thinks that there would be no genuine good either. Without metaphysical freedom, the universe is just a divine puppet show (Williams 2, 3). If there is to be any new and creative act of love rather than the merely mechanical uncoiling of a wind-up universe, if there are to be any real decisions other than those made in the divine will, then there must be metaphysical freedom, and such freedom brings with it the possibility of evil as well as the promise of goodness. Kanu posits that for Augustine, everything, including matter is good. With the understanding of evil as non-being, Augustine sees no need of asking the question as to who created evil, since it is not a thing that can be created. Since evil is not a being, it then means that it needs a being to exist, since it cannot exist on its own (Chidili, 292).

### **Suffering in Umuaga Land**

The people of Umuaga as earlier pointed out in chapter one, dwell in the Umuaga town of the Udi local government area of Enugu state. They are predominantly farmers, though they also engage in other lucrative businesses. They are industrious in various phases of life, and this can be seen as they are known for palm wine tapping (Charles).

The researcher while interacting with some of the youths of the town realized that most of them experience despair at the lack of opportunities to put down a concrete living. With the cost of living rising by the day, the lack of financial ground has become very frustrating owing to the opinion that there are little good paying jobs around (Ebuka). Other forms of suffering experienced in the town consists mostly of social sufferings, inquiring from the experiences of some women, widows, orphans and even poor farmers to place down good living to the inability of those who are sick to fully access good medical treatment.

The concepts and worldview of the Igbos are the same across their different locations, as such, while the researcher will be using the general Igbo concepts, he is in turn referring to those among the Umuaga people.

As far back as the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, answers to fundamental questions about reality, man and cosmos were asked and answers to them were sought through mythology. It is not different when it comes to questions bothering on evil and human suffering. According to Obi, the anthropo-phenomenological reality of suffering have posed questions that have attracted responses from diverse cultures and epochs with the aim of finding out its origin and instructing people on how best to confront it. Like other cultures, the Igbo people have tried to understand the source or origin of human suffering. This is well explained in an Igbo myth narrated by Mbaegbu, he wrote that

There was a time the sky lay just above the earth. Thus, human beings could reach Chukwu (God) through a rope which hung down from the sky. There was no death at the time Chukwu created the world and human beings. Human beings never lacked anything, as Chukwu was involved in their affairs: associated with them and provided for all their needs. In that world, the spirits and human beings were one. However, it happened one day that a woman spit into the eyes of Chukwu. He picked offence and thus withdrew into the sky where he now dwells. This result led to the punishment of human beings and to their death. Since then suffering came into the world, and evil and sin spread throughout the world. The association of God with the sky has earned Him names in this direction. He is called *Eze Igwe* (King of the Sky) or *Igwe ka Ala* (the sky greater than the earth) (Kanu 9).

### **The Igbo-African Concept of Human Suffering**

Obiezu observes that suffering and evil are so interchangeably used in discussions that one is often assumed when the other is used. However, Griffin asserts that suffering is only a dimension or evil connected to and experienced by human beings and other creatures. It is indeed the relation of cause and effect. However, suffering as defined by Stoeber, is "the experience of emotional pain, a mode of consciousness that can arise from sensation of intense physical pain, but which need not at all be associated with it ... A painful state of consciousness that we wish we do not have to experience" (20). The definition agrees with those of Hick and Cassell who identified suffering with an emotional consciousness that one would not ordinarily want to desire.

From the Igbo perspective, suffering is expressed in the Igbo word *ahuhu*, which means an unfavorably situation which ought not to be. The word can be applied in a strict sense and in a broad sense. In a strict sense, *ahuhu* connotes a gravely difficult, painful and dishonorable situation which a person undergoes I punishment for offences committed against the deities, humanity or the created order. The definition agrees with the Igbo unified view of reality, which sees the world as having an ontological link. It is in this regard that Madu avers that “There is an ontological link of the different spheres of the cosmic order, to the extent that what affects one sphere invariably will affect the other” (21).

Thus, from the Igbo perspective, suffering is retributive and proportionate to the abomination committed. It is in this regard that the Igbo would say *Isi kote ebu ogbaa ya* (the head that pushes the beehive receives the sting) and *ihe onye metara, no n’isi ya* (whatever a man sows that he would reap). Thus, Ezeanya avers that “Suffering of every kind of epidemic, sickness of all Sorts, accidents, fire outbreak, natural disasters like flood, and earthquakes were all attributed to the influence of the powers above man, both good and evil showing their displeasure at human offence” (19). This explains why the Igbo would say *awo anaghi agba oso ehizie na nkiti* ( a toad does not run in the day time for nothing, for either it is pursuing something or something is pursuing it). Suffering is believed to be perpetrated by bad spirits *ndi ajo nmuo* and sometimes the ancestors could also inflict suffering. There were also human collaborators known as *ndi ajo nmadu*. They collaborated with bad spirits to inflict suffering on fellow human beings.

In a loose sense, the Igbos understands suffering as any kind of painful or difficult experience resulting from situations or painstaking efforts to achieve difficult objectives. It is in this regard that suffering is understood in terms of *opipia*, that is, penance, usually done to achieve special heights, or *olu ike* or *olu sisi ike*, that is hard work, as in the case of a man who works at a cement industry, daily carrying about 500 bags of cement from one point to another. It is considered *ahuhu*, but for the purpose of raising money to take care of his family. In this case it also refers to *igba mbo* (making serious effort). This kind of suffering brings hope and does not lead to despair or destruction. The Igbo would say; *nmiri mmadu kwosara onwe ya adighi atu ya oyi*, (the water a person pours upon himself does not bring him or her cold). Hard work is at the center of the Igbo spirit. Thus the Igbo would say; *onye obula choro ihe mara mma ga adi nkwardobe ikuchara ya okpofu n’ihu na o dighi ije oma na-adi ne’lu* (one who desires great things must be ready to work hard for them), in another proverb, the Igbo would say; *o*

*bu naani ukwu gbara apiti na eri ihe guru ya* (It is only the leg that is soiled with mud that enjoys whatever it likes). This kind of suffering is not a curse but attracts blessings from the gods. Greatness is achieved through hard work (Kanu 9).

### **The Igbo-African Broadview's of Suffering**

Mbaegbu in his discourse on the problem of evil from the Igbo perspective brought out three approaches towards the understanding of evil and human suffering the Igbo cosmological optimistic view, the personal god and destiny view, and the middle-course view (Kanu 10).

#### ***Cosmological Optimistic Perspective***

Mbaegbu avers that this perspective regarding human suffering believes that it is traceable to human beings, that is some moral evil committed by human beings. It asserts that God is a creative principle is good in Himself and that his creation is intrinsically good. Support for this view is built upon the Igbo myth as regards the separation of God from human beings and the subsequent coming of evil into the world, and sometimes proverbs such as *Madu bu njo ala* (man makes the world evil) and *Uwa ezu oke* which means that it is the insatiability of human wants is the cause of imperfection. It is in this regard Nwala opines that "There is belief in the unity among beings, belief in original cosmic (universal) harmony and order which unfortunately the action of the human being upsets" (29).

This understanding of evil and human suffering places the human person at the center of it. Since man is finite and limited in perfection and can never be otherwise, he continues to cause suffering in the world. This suffering may not be caused by the human person existing in the present, but by a person's ancestors, those who have lived before one. Thus, in Igbo traditional thought, the evil that men and women do live after them, in the sense that it has effect on their kit and kin. That is why divination is very significant in the Igbo world, because it helps the living to know the source of their problems (Kanu 10).

#### **Human Destiny Perspective**

The perspective links the suffering of human beings to a person's personal god who determines the person's destiny at the time he or she is coming into the world. In the African world, it is believed that the destiny of people as regards success and failure has been apportioned to them by God before birth. Thus, their life course has been charted and fixed by God. When something happens in

a person's life, especially among the Igbos, it is traced to his *Akala aka*: his destined lot. The Igbos belief in what is called the Chi, which each human being derives from the great Chukwu, who is the creator of all. This explains why the Igbo would say *Chukwu-new-ike* (all power belongs to God); *ife oma nine di Chukwu na aka* (all good things are in the hand of God; *madu nwaa oke ya, ndiozo dili Chukwu* (when a man has done his best, the rest is left to God).

At the point of creation, Ilogu avers that Chukwu gives the human person the Chi, which is a part of this divine nature. From this perspective, whatever abilities, good or bad fortune, success, failure, weakness etc., possessed by a person is attributed to the person's Chi. Every individual in a family has his or her own Chi, explaining why there are differences among people, and when a person dies, his or her personal god goes back to God to give an account of his life. A lucky person is said to be *one chi oma* (a person with a god personal god) and an unlucky person is said to be *onye chi ojoo* (a person with bad personal god) Explaining this perspective further, Mbaegbu wrote:

The summary point of it all is that the concept of personal God and destiny help to impute personal accountability in ethical behaviours as well as furnishing explanations for underserved and unavoidable evils, namely why are some people intelligent, rich, gifted, enjoy life, healthy and have good fortune while others may be born blind, deformed, become orphans, die young and end up barren (317).

While this perspective move the blame from human beings to divinities, thus sparing God again from having any involvement with evil, it still leaves questions as regards God's goodness, justice and power unanswered.

Criticizing this perspective, Gregory avers that the African has sold his freedom to act to supernatural forces. If man is not free, it means that he should not be blamed for any failure or mishap in the course of his life journey. Equally, guilt of crimes committed should also not be punished as man would not be responsible for his actions (Kanu 11).

### **Eclectic Perspective**

The eclectic perspective is a synthesis of the above views. According to Mbaegbu, this perspective holds that man and his personal god or some other known or unknown spirits, particularly those that specialize in mischief are the sources of evil and human suffering in the world. Thus, evil and suffering are not intrinsic

to the world but rather emerge through the negation of the cosmic order by human beings and spirits. Edeh holds on this perspective, and wrote, "... judging from our treatment of the cause of evil... the three proximate causes of evil are the evil spirits, the element gods and human beings" (109). In this analysis, Chukwu is still exempted from being part of the causes of evil. Although this perspective is born out of common sense and has little objections, it still does not adequately answer the question of the problem of evil and human suffering in the world. Like the other perspectives, it still leaves God out of the problem of evil with an attempt not to detract from his goodness and omnipotence. But again, if we really understand element gods or divinities as the deans of God and carry out his instructions, it then really means that indirectly, God is involved in the problem of evil and human suffering.

### **The Missing Link and the Mystery Perspective as the Bridge**

Having studied these different perspectives, and seeing their limitations or inadequacies as regards answering the question of the problem of evil and human suffering in the world, Kanu proposed a fourth perspective which he called the Mystery Perspective. Of all the above three perspectives, it is observable that scholars from the camps of Igbo traditional religionists and scholars of modern Igbo traditional thought have left God out of all their analysis of evil. A strong contributing factor is the fact God is a mystery to the Igbo human person.

This explains why the Igbo would say: *Onyema Chukwu* (who knows God). *Onyema uche chi* (who knows the mind of God). One cannot know him let alone to arrogate faults to him. He is further and fundamentally referred to as *Amama-amasi-amasi* (known but not fully known).

Since God cannot be fully known, he is a mystery and human suffering is associated with the mysteriousness of God, this is because through suffering the incomprehensibility of God is revealed. It is because he cannot be known that human suffering cannot be fully explained. Thus human suffering is a mystery. And what is a mystery? It is a hidden reality or secret. The Chambers' Twentieth Century Dictionary defines it as "that which is beyond human knowledge to explain." Etymologically, the word mystery comes from the Greek word *Mysterion* which has its root in the Aramaic *raz* that means a 'secret thing', and corresponds to the classical Hebrew word *sod* (Xavier 19).

Thus, suffering is a mystery - a hidden reality that goes beyond human comprehension, and intimately connected to the mystery of God. It is in this regard that Rahner wrote:

The incomprehensibility of suffering is part of the incomprehensibility of God. Not in the sense that we could deduce it as necessary and thus inevitable as clarified from something else that we already know of God. If this were so it would not be at all incomprehensible. But the very fact that it is really and eternally incomprehensible means that suffering is truly a manifestation of God's incomprehensibility in his nature and in his freedom. In his nature because, despite what might be described as the terrible amorality of suffering (at least on the part of children and innocent people), we have to acknowledge the pure goodness of God, which needs no acquittal before our tribunal. In his freedom, because this too, if it wills the suffering of the creature, is incomprehensible, since it could achieve without suffering the sacred aims of the freedom that wills suffering. Suffering then is the form ... in which he incomprehensibility of God himself appears (206).

Thus, to accept that God is the intractable mystery is to accept too the inexplicability and un-answerability of suffering, since they are one and the same event (Kanu 12).

### **Igwebuiké Philosophy**

As an ideology, *Igwebuiké* argues that '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. This is based on the African sense of community, which is the underlying principle and unity of African philosophy *Igwebuiké* is anchored on the African worldview, which Iroegbu describes as being characterized by a common origin, common world - view, common language, shared culture, shared race, colour and habits, common historical experience and a common destiny.

As a philosophy, *Igwebuiké* was founded by Rev. Fr. Ikehukwu Kanu OSA. *Igwebuiké* is a philosophy of complementarity which is based on the nature of African cosmology. This is simply the way Africans perceive, conceive and contemplate their universe; the lens through which they see reality, which affect their value systems and attitudinal orientations

## **Igwebuike as a Pragmatic Response to Human Suffering**

*Igwebuike* as an African philosophical principle, provides ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations. It rests on the African principles of solidarity and complementarity and argues that '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. Thus, Asouzu in his complementary philosophy of *Ibuanyidanda*, presents the African 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" (14). Asouzu further speaks of reality as "necessary complements of each other" (46). While describing the human society, Asouzu advanced that, "Human beings and societies exist only in relations" (74).

Pragmatism is a philosophical movement that has its root in America. Pragmatism According to William Lawhead is America's distinctive contribution to the world of philosophy (460). It stresses the intimate relationship between thought and action. It claims, for example, that the meaning of a concept is identical in the practical effects of the object of our conception (Lawhead 577). Pragmatism views ideas as tools for getting a job done and values them if they are successful when put to work. The main pragmatist philosophers are; Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey.

*Igwebuike*, when addressing the problem of human suffering, sees it as an experience that can actually be taken care of if the human persons understand that they are meant to complement each other in the society. Life is actually well lived, when lived in complementarity and solidarity. It is in the light of this complementary living that an Igbo will say; *onye-ahana nwaneya*, (one should not leave his brother), it thus goes on to ask, *onye ha nwaneya? Ikuku eburu ya* (what if one leaves his brother? The storm/wind will carry him away). The idea of brotherhood thus goes beyond the shore of merely living together in a community, but extends to holding each other's hand. This statement should thus be understood in terms of helping each other achieve their set out goals in life. It is no surprise then that the word *onyinyeaka* (help), can be literally translated as the act of giving of hand. This goes thus to mean that one cannot claim to help another person without giving the person a hand or adding his own hand to the task the other is undertaking. The need for tangible and practical assistance is thus very important, for the act of *inyeaka* (giving of



hand/helping) is one that ought to be practically carried out towards ones neighbor, relation or any fellow in the community.

*Igwebuike* in this light will see suffering as a result of living in isolation, irrespective of whichever manner one suffers. One suffers then if he embarks on the journey of life alone. The aforementioned Igbo proverbs clearly puts it that if one walks alone or leaves the hand of his brother, the different storms of life which includes that of suffering will blow him away. *Igwebuike* therefore, based on relationships and the experiences of interrelationship, will hold that life is fully lived when lived in complementing and the solving the needs of others. If this is carried out, then the pains of another will be well shared and even solved. Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* gives a superb state of such complementarity when he said, “an animal rubs its itching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him” (132). Again, even if one suffers as a result of his ill destined lot at the time of his or her coming into the world, through complementary living, those with good lots should not see themselves as highly favored, but should use their good fortunes to help the less favored ones. Such practical involvement will definitely reduce the heights of suffering the other brothers undergoes

### **Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion**

Man, a superior being that is full of rationality and drives is basically a living being. The life of man is especially different from that of plants and animals (Mondin 49) because of his intellectual soul which ought to guide his instincts and drives. He is also a cultural, political and social being. It is the social nature of man that defines him not as a solitary being, but a being in participation with other beings in the world.

The act of participation, relationship and communality of man in his society is really emphasized in African cosmology, which sees man as occupying the third section of the African cosmology which has God or the supreme being occupying the first, while the other deities and spirits occupy the second (Kanu). This relationship thus goes on to give more accounts of why man experiences suffering. Man finds himself in the midst of this phenomenon in one way or the other throughout his lifetime. The African cosmology thus sees suffering as traceable to human beings or moral evil, it also links suffering to one’s personal god who determines the persons destiny at the time he or she is coming to the world. The Africans also see suffering as being caused by some unknown spirits, particularly those that specializes in mischief (Mbaegbu 109). Finally, suffering

can be seen as a mystery. This can be deduced from the fact that God or the being that created the universe cannot be fully understood, and is thus a mystery. Human suffering can also be associated with the mysteriousness of God. It is because he cannot be understood that suffering cannot be understood (Kanu 12).

From the above therefore, it is not a surprise that *Igwebuiké* the African philosophy of complementarity and solidarity avers that through complementary living, man discovers that his humanity is wholistic in the sense that it encompasses the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical that the elements of being. It also expresses the capacity of reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community. *Igwebuiké* goes beyond the self so as the pain of others is thought as my pain, the redemption of other is as thought it were my redemption, the sufferings that the other passes through is as though I am the one that passes through it (Ethics, [Igwebuiképedia.org](http://Igwebuiképedia.org)).

### **Recommendations**

The researcher recommends that the people of Umuaga should be enlightened about the relevance of complementary living. For example, the act of helping our people that do not have the strength to farm in the village, most especially the aged and do not have enough energy to carry out this function, should be revitalized earnestly. The people of Umuaga should also try to avoid doing things that will endanger their fellows in the community, for the act of doing any harm to one's fellow destroys the aim of *Igwebuiké*, and will definitely lead to pains and sorrows.

The researcher recommends that good elementary institutions that will incorporate the upbringing of children and the youths of Umuaga should be established. This is because, if the young ones have adequate moral and intellectual knowledge, they will have little problems in meeting up with the demands and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

The researcher recommends that well equipped health institutions should be established, and practitioners that are real humanitarians in contrast to those who are out for the financial benefits should be employed. The institutions should also take their time to enlighten the people of Umuaga on the causes and symptoms of some peculiar sickness among them, for example, stroke and hypertension. This will help them to seek medical assistance when

they become victims of such illnesses, and not to sit back, suffer and accuse one another of witchcraft and evil architatory.

David Hume argues that only action that have public utility or the wellbeing of mankind can be considered virtuous (Omoregbe 83). In this light, the researcher recommends that only projects that have the wellbeing of the people of Umuaga in mind can be really accessed and utilized by them should be carried out. As such, the governing body of Umuaga land should examine the living situation of the people, and declare the most demanding aspects as the common good. Projects like erecting new boreholes for good water supply, this will reduce the risk of water borne diseases.

Just like the 'I and thou' philosophy of Gabriel Marcel, *Igwebuike* also stresses the importance of brotherhood that is complementary. In this light, the researcher recommends that the financially strong members of Umuaga land should always, as possible as they can assist those who do not have. The suffering of these less privileged ones are obvious to some extent, as such, the financially strong ones can at least assist them either financially or with other material needs.

The researcher recommends that the people of Umuaga should be enlightened on the needs of entrepreneurship, especially the youth. If it is possible, seminars on new innovations and how one can really start up something should be conducted for them. The community members should also be encouraged to take part in it fully.

## **Conclusion**

The problem of human suffering which is closely related to that of the problem of evil is one fundamental phenomenon of the human life that many scholars have agreed on, especially between theists and atheists. It is an existential reality that has man at its center, but man should always remember that he exists in the society, and it is this society that gives him his full meaning in life. He should therefore put himself in positions that will enable him to observe the norms and common good of his society. He should see himself not as only a being in the society but a being that actualizes his true nature through the act of participatory and complementary living.

*Igwebuike* does not close its eye to this problem that man encounters. In fact, it is because of this suffering that it urges everybody to carry out his living with the

life and problems of his brother in his heart, for when two carry a load, the weight is shared and less felt by the individuals.

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