

**'IKWA OGWE' IN ASOUZU
AS METHODOLOGY:
HERMENEUTICS OF THE
ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN
UNDERSTANDING**

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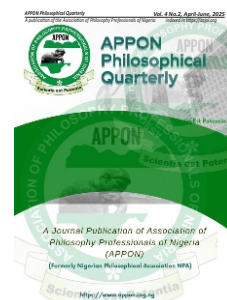
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ABSTRACT

The paper critically examines the concept of *Ikwa Ogwe* as philosophical methodology in Innocent Asouzu's philosophy of complementary reflection. It leverages on the metaphorical function of language in explanation, interpretation and understanding. The paper sets before itself the task of determining the nature of the linguistic tool and to understand how *Ikwa Ogwe* is explained by Asouzu as a mental seeing through a possibility to a solution of methodological problem. The study presupposes that speech events which enter human discourse in everyday communication is first artifice of the mind towards an intentional object in the 'missing-links' of reality. Typical metaphorical discourses show there is semantic problem of making sense in the seemingly tensed logical absurdity of metaphorical expressions. The analytic, hermeneutic and critical reflexive methods are used in the study. Therefore, rather than being a particular method, the concept *Ikwa Ogwe* is broad approach to explaining, interpreting and understanding reality.

Keywords: *Ikwa Ogwe*, Methodological, Understanding, Hermeneutics, Explanation

Introduction

Philosophy, the science of all sciences is defined as the science of the ultimate cause of Being or reality. As such, it does not preoccupy itself with the proximate, contingent or accidental causes of things that are but must seek means to knowing its subject matter and justifying that cognition. An enquiry into the nature of this 'ultimate causes' of Beings is explainable from the framework of its formal object. In the present discourse, this is achieved in the consideration of the question of methodology. An epistemological understanding of the metaphysical or ontological can be realized by adopting choice and appropriate philosophical method to understanding the subject matter in question. It is said that he who desires an end requires a means. The philosophical end of every enquiry is cognition of reality. The 'means' to this end, the material object of the enquiry is the requisite philosophical method to be employed. Reason makes appeal to its cognitive powers, namely intuition, critical and reflective thinking as well as logical inferences for this this function. The faculty of understanding perceives a link between particular grasp of reality and the means to attaining it. This is, the subject always seeks appropriate intellectual resources at its disposal to know and to explain its understanding of things that seem shrouded in cognitive mystery. To what cognitive faculties does one appeal to in order to explain how it is that we know and experience things? Is knowledge gratuitously given? It has to be discerned from and explained from the chaotic assemblage of cognitive contents in the world. The subject has sufficient categorical

resources at its reach to lay down a framework by which to do this.

The paper succinctly examines the concept 'Ikwa Ogwe' as is encapsulated in Professor Innocent Asouzu's *Ikwa Ogwe Essential Readings in Complementary Reflection: A Systematic Methodological Approach*, among his other works. We shall explore and relate this concept to the broader functioning of language in interpretation, explanation and understanding.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The concept *method* comes from the Greek word *meta* and *hodos*, meaning *a way*, or *manner of going after* or carrying out an academic enquiry. Methodology refers to the science in the approaches to attaining the desired end of research. The material object of every inquiry is the *Being* that is contemplated as reality or as being, as existing in one form or other - material, immaterial, spiritual, psychic, abstract or concrete. Weary of attesting to some remote principle in things David Hume criticizes the rationalists for proceeding in their inquiry from particular instances to general principles, they still push on their inquiries to principles more general, and rest not satisfied till they arrive at those original principles, by which, in every science, all human curiosity must be bounded.¹ It is to the axiomatic or that which is necessarily true and universalizable that the rationalists seek foundation all knowledge.

Mayring Philipp observes that there is a sort of war of conflicting paradigms in the field of the sciences. This conflict presents a dichotomy between a “constructivist, postmodern position and a realistic position.” In other words, this

¹ David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding in The Empiricists* (New York : Anchor Books, 1974), Sec. 1, 308.

methodological impasse is a war between “a rigid positivistic conception of research with a quantitative, experimental methodology, on the other hand an open, explorative, descriptive, interpretive conception using qualitative methods.”² The first orientation according to her is the “evidence based approach.” It requires experimentation “in the form of Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs).”³ This is formulated as the only valid scientific procedure and is taken as standard. The second methodological *desiratum* is of that form of science (which conducts the object of inquiry as 'tentative' and 'interpretive'. It is that in which the researcher acts as 'bricoleur' but in which the researcher (actor) is active, “critical empowerment-guided following not only scientific criteria but also poetic and artistic criteria (embodied experience, narrative truth, research report as literary text).”⁴ Thus, to have cognitive access, to know, understand and explain our understanding, perception or grasp of this reality (that *form* of Being that actually exists or is taken up in discussion on the assumption that it exist) the most appropriate way must be used. Different approaches are like many roads that lead to different destinations.

The most sophisticated linguistic vehicle is the use of metaphor in social discourses and communications. Its use poses the most semantic problem because in addition to the already abstracted relations of ideas of the subject term and its characteristic being abstracted, there are further insertion or transfers of meanings, imagery or symbolic function in either or the two terms.

Etymologically the word metaphor derives from the Greek μεταφέρω, *metaphora* which means, “To carry over”, “to transfer”, “to change or alter” the sense of one word to another word. In other words, it is the transfer of the sense of one word unto another. This usage or transfer at the same time implies both a sense of comparing and “logical absurdity” because literally it often amounts to a contradiction in terms. This is part of the reason why metaphor entails application of an unfamiliar or uncommon name to a thing. For instance, 'There lies my Ship', 'There goes my heart', 'Okereke is a lion', 'and Jesus Christ is the lion of the tribe of Judah.' According to Aristotle, lying is a species of lying. In the second, one speaks of his or her beloved as heart. In the third and fourth, Okereke and Jesus Christ are in different senses, predicated with bravery, a characteristic of the lion. Metaphor implied a sort of displacement as it “applies to every transposition of terms”⁵ which supports the substitution theory of metaphor.

George Lakoff in *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor* has argued that in recent times metaphor is used to mean “a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system” and constitutes a pervasive event in our everyday life not in the language use but also in thought and action. This is a departure from that limited classical rhetorical sense that restricted it to the word, phrase, or sentence. Lakoff explains that:

Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. The

² Philipp Mayring, *Qualitative Content Analysis: Theoretical Foundation, Basic Procedures and Software Solution*. Klagenfurt, 2014, 6 URN: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-395173>

³ Mayring, *Qualitative Content Analysis*, 6

⁴ Mayring, *Qualitative Content Analysis* 6

⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor, Multidisciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning in Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 16-17

concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people.⁶

Lakoff challenges the assumptions in categorizing between literal and figurative language. The implication is that in treating metaphor as a figurative language, it is opposed to the literal. In pursuance of this view, proponents held that mainly “all everyday conversational language is literal, and without metaphor all subject-matter can be “comprehended literally. Their conclusion is that only literal language (as lexical definitions and concepts in the grammar) can be “contingently true or false.” Contrarily, George Lakoff argues that metaphorical expressions are integral aspect of every language. The semantic and artistic values of metaphor in human discourse are incontrovertible.⁷ However, there is a general lack of interest in metaphor. This is partly explained from the point of an assumption among some language users. These users tend to consider that the proper use of language consists in its purely literal form. Richard Moran argues that for them metaphor only share “the relative infrequency and marginal status of songs or

riddles.”⁸ But this misguided judgement does not negate the communicative value of metaphor. Kofi Awoonor in *The Breast of Africa* hinted at the semantic difficulty with metaphor when he said that symbolic expressions are used to hide real from the apparent meaning.⁹ In this case taking a direct or literal meaning of given expression would most likely be meaningless. Users of metaphor, proverbs and idioms do not intend to use them to hide meanings. When it is necessary to employ them in communication, they are used to preserve a novel idea. This is the point that is overlooked. Live metaphorical discourse is usually the preserve of competent and performative speakers of a linguistic community. Moreover, it is the much-contracted nature of certain linguistic terms and the twisty and figurative on that both mark its perplexity and metaphorical value. As a matter of fact Moran informs us that many “writers with very different concerns have pointed out that figurative language of one sort or another is a staple of the most common as well as the most specialized speech, as the brief list of directions of interest leading to metaphor would suggest.”¹⁰ Moran further argues poor assumption that the proper use of language consists in its purely literal usage. Metaphorical discourses become supplanted because of the frequent focus on literal meanings of words in literary studies. However, many:

⁶ George Lakoff and Mark Johnsen, *Metaphors We Live By* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 4 <https://epdf.pub/metaphors-we-live-by10400cd80fd3ab2832d3cb4bcf90591629616.html>

⁷ George Lakoff, *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor*, (1992), 2 <https://terpconnect.umd.edu/~israel/lakoff-ConTheorMetaphor.pdf>

⁸ Mayring, *Qualitative Content Analysis*, 248

⁹ Kofi Awoonor, *The Breast of Africa, A Survey of the History, Culture and Literature of Africa South of the Sahara*. (New York: NOK Publishers International, 2005), 83

¹⁰ Mayring, *Qualitative Content Analysis*, 248

...writers with very different concerns have pointed out that figurative language of one sort or another is a staple of the most common as well as the most specialized speech, as the brief list of directions of interest leading to metaphor would suggest.¹¹

It needs to be pointed out that the comprehension of figurative language itself is twisty and perplexing. By these terms is meant that the working out of the meaning relations when such expressions are used laden with multiple interpretations. It may be literal or metaphorical, primary or secondary, hidden or ordinary. Only one of these that may apply in a given time. Generally, understanding of such expressions formally depends on the specific ways in which literal understanding of the meaning of words in ordinary language attained.¹²

Elucidating the Concept of *Ikwa Ogwe* in Asouzu

The Igbo conception, *Ikwa Ogwe* is copiously elucidated by Innocent I. Asouzu as a methodological process in *Ikwa Ogwe: Essential Readings in Complementary Reflection. A Systematic Methodological Approach, The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection In and Beyond African Philosophy* among his other works is an espousal of the philosophy of “Complementary Reflection” in contemporary African philosophy. The

concept draws from the verb *Ikwa* in Igbo language. Literally, the term means 'to stitch together', 'to construct', and 'to trim and arrange a set into a desired pattern. In these various, the concept evokes the sense of sowing or stitching a piece of cloth, or constructing a raft or 'bridge' across two ends, that is, in terms of bridging a pathway. For Asouzu then, *Ikwa Ogwe* denotes a systematic or scientific method or approach to enquiry by which to understand the nature and truth of reality. He notes that a “commitment to systems and methods... help the inquirer focus on his or her subject matter in an ordered coordinated manner as is provided by the dictates of the system in question” and to come out with clearly delineated results according to the method and dictates of the system. Thus, reference to 'systems and methods' serve as guides. It is for this reason that Asouzu refers to the approach as building “bridges (*Ogwe*) through which reality becomes accessible more transparently.”¹³ For Asouzu, *Ikwa Ogwe* amounts to a scientific method. Towards this function, the faculty of understanding exercises its categorical functions that perceive the 'unity of consciousness' in recognition of the 'missing links as modes of being serving each other in a mutual complementary manner.’¹⁴ Enquiry must be disposed towards the transcendental categories. The methodological process must be illumined and held active as habitual but *a priori* forms of thought. Under what Asouzu defines as “complementary transcendent existential conversion” the process predisposes towards the conversion of maxims into general laws.¹⁵ The

¹¹ Mayring, *Qualitative Content Analysis*, 248

¹² Mayring, *Qualitative Content Analysis*, 248

¹³ Innocent I. Asouzu, *Ikwa Ogwe: Essential Readings in Complementary Reflection. A Systematic Methodological Approach*, (Calabar: Saesprint Publishers, 2007), 5

¹⁴ Asouzu, *Ikwa Ogwe*, 215

¹⁵ Asouzu, *Ikwa Ogwe*, 216

categories of thought, of being include “fragmentation,(relativity), unity, totality, universality, comprehensiveness, wholeness and future reference.”¹⁶ The grasp and methodological predisposition towards the categories ensures that the subject is in control, recognizes any inherent 'ambivalent situation' and is equipped to control threats that arise from such ambivalence.¹⁷ This methodological building of bridges is to “close relationship that exists between all realities, the transcendent and the world immanent alike.” This closing up of the epistemic disconnect in order to elucidate understanding is nourished on the perception of the “idea of unity in complementarity and clear indication of commitment to the inestimable potentialities offered by the transcendent unity of consciousness.”¹⁸ A successful intellectual bridging of 'perceived' epistemological gaps on our way of enquiry is scientific method.

Asouzu conceives method as a fundamental disposition of a philosopher in quest of truth. It is that “frame of mind” in its honest and unequivocal commitment to realizing the truth of philosophical objective(s) set before it.¹⁹ Commitment to truth binds on the philosopher to seek reason and experience as his guiding principles. Every form of philosophy in terms of its formal object is the “perceptible patterns of thought ...clearly articulated as methodologies (in the)...search for truth and

authenticity.”²⁰ Asouzu notes that such commitment helps the “inquirer to focus on his or her subject matter in an ordered co-ordinated manner as is provided by the dictates of the system in question.”²¹ He further defines that “It is because systems and methods serve as guides that we refer to them as bridges (*Ogwe*) through which reality becomes accessible more transparently.”²² He further to expatiate that whenever a philosopher,

...thinker or scientist' embarks upon such a strenuous exercise as to craft a unique bridge through which he seeks to embrace reality, we say of such a person, *O na akwa ogwe* (he or she is building a bridge)... is embarking on the art of providing a system and a method as bridges needed to connect thinking subjects to reality. Thus, *Ikwa Ogwe*.... is another way of saying that a scientist is providing the requisite tools for effective exploration and penetration of reality.²³

The search for adequate 'tool' and instrument of thought that translates thought into practice, that clarifies and makes distinct perception and understanding of reality is the building of bridge across spheres of cognitive impasse. Hence, such a philosopher that puts in place a bridging

¹⁶ Asouzu, *Ikwa Ogwe*, 215-216

¹⁷ Asouzu, *Ikwa Ogwe*, 216

¹⁸ Innocent I. Asouzu, *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection in and Beyond African Philosophy* (Calabar: University of Calabar Press, 2004), 158

¹⁹ Asouzu, *Ikwa Ogwe*, 148

²⁰ Asouzu, *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection*, 42

²¹ Asouzu, *Ikwa Ogwe*, 5

²² Asouzu, *Ikwa Ogwe*, 5

²³ Asouzu, *Ikwa Ogwe*, 5

framework of ideas and approach to understanding “*na-akwa ogwe*.”

Understanding and of explanation of this articulated framework or instrument of thought helps in traversing the limiting factors in subjectivism and objectivism. The construct in *Ikwa Ogwe* places things, events, or reality in their true perspectives. It is said that he who clearly explains himself or herself would readily be understood (*Onye kwa Ogwe, amara uche ya*. Or: *Akporuo, e geruo*). Thus, in *Ikwa Ogwe* intentional objects are clearly and unambiguously revealed in such a manner that it becomes common knowledge to members of an epistemological community (*Ihe doro egwu [Ewu] na Okuko anya*).

Language in the Hermeneutics of Understanding

Language enters into hermeneutics the very communicative uses of language, the events of meaning realized in the infinite use of finite system of sign relations, and executed orally as speech or in the durable form of a text. In *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, Ricoeur defines language as “that through which and by means of which, we express ourselves and express things”;²⁴ and in *On Translation* he adds that it is “the use of signs, which are not things, but concern things – the exchange of signs in inter-location. This is the main role that ordinary language plays “at the level of community identification.”²⁵ The linguistic

signs are finite that is, judging by the number of the alphabets in particular languages. By means of this finite sign relations the human person, as *homo loquens* uses in an infinite or unlimited ways as we are ever saying one thing or other to somebody and something and the addressed understands or seeks to understand what is being communicated. This event of meaning whether as speech (orality) or textual is ever recreated as new forms of sentences having the same semantic content. It is unlimited or infinite judging by the innumerable multiplicity of spontaneous creativity and innovative speech events enacted in human communication exchanges.²⁶ This event of meaning can be identified and re-identified through the sign relations in an endless fluid of meaning-generation within a discursive community.²⁷ Characteristically, discourse as creativity in language reveals the following realities: (i) subjectivity, for someone speaks, (ii) intentionality, for someone decided to say something, (iii) reference, for one says about *something*, and (iv) inter-subjectivity, for one says or speaks to another.²⁸

The use of ordinary language follows more basic confines of socially 'fixed' meanings of words in a sentence. This is not the case in metaphorical discourse. Metaphors “divergence from the ordinary operation of language.” It uses analogical reasoning to attain conceptual transfer of meanings. In doing so, there are substitution

²⁴ Ricoeur, Paul. *The Conflict of Interpretations, Essays in Hermeneutics*. Edited by Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 85

²⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation*. Trans. Eileen Brennan (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), 12

²⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor; Multidisciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning in Language* (London: Rutledge & Kegan Paul 1978), 14, 9

²⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur; An Anthology of His Work*, (ed.) Charles E. Reagan & David Stewart (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 122

²⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, (1974), 76-78

of the 'meanings' of words in sentence. Paul Ricoeur does not agree with Aristotle who opines that "the mastery of metaphor is a gift of genius and cannot be taught."²⁹ For Ricoeur, metaphorical discourse beyond being ornamental, penetrates to the very depth of verbal Interaction" for semantic innovations. To use metaphor well is to "understand and possess the mastery of resemblances" since one thing is usually spoken as another.³⁰

Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. Hermeneutics has been understood to entail explication. It is to "explicate to someone that which proves difficult for him to understand."³¹ Ricoeur defines *interpretation* as "a work of understanding that aims at deciphering symbols." It is a critical philosophical method rooted in interpretative understanding of life's expressions of the concrete conditions of human experiences in and of the world. To interpret is to render a text, sentence or concept, which is rather foreign, ambiguous, complex or complicated, easily cognizable. That which is not ambiguous is 'clear and distinct.' It is so to say, transparent. The intellect quickly runs through it to enable understanding. It is perceptually clear. As given clearly in perception, that is, if a sensory object or the Cartesian formula, idea as the object of thought. The Igbo would, in this vein say, talk about that issue which is confusing (*Ihe ngbagoju anya*).

The question of understanding symbolic

expressions raises core problems for human understanding. In the *Poetics of the Will*, Ricoeur is concerned with the philosophy of the creative imagination. This creativity is focused on semantic innovations that native speakers make. It is also concerned with all practical representations in discourse at the individual, cultural and social level.³² The employment of the term by Ricoeur in *Poetics of the Will* introduces new meanings into our understanding of things and, by so doing extends the problem of polysemy. Polysemy means multiple meanings that do arise in the use of figurative, symbolic or metaphorical language. According to Ricoeur "all symbolism... constitutes a vast expression of the imaginary at its cultural level."³³ Metaphorical expression is a specific function of language. Live metaphor is communicative tool used in speech acts and writing in a linguistic community. At the same time metaphor creates problem of meaning and requires interpretation because there are transfers of meaning from the normal forms in which they are being regularly used in discourse.

There are three distinct elements in every complete expression namely: the speaker (sender of message, or addresser), the listener (addressee, audience or recipient of the message), and the *world*, topic of discussion or the object domain in the communication. Correspondingly, language serves the following functions of communication: expression, appeal and representation, or the representational,

²⁹ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 92

³⁰ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 92

³¹ Kurt Muller-Vollmer, "Language, Mind and Artefact. An Outline of Hermeneutic Theory Since the Enlightenment" ed. Kurt Muller-Vollmer *The Hermeneutic Reader* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 3

³² Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*. Edited & translated by John B. Thompson. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 39

³³ Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 39

referential and descriptive functions.³⁴ It must be hinted that there are always cases of semantic indeterminacy, linguistic perplexities and polysemy in our daily discourses. Language, therefore is such a tool of communication common to all men who must grapple with its semantic and syntactic structure to knowing how its parts—the articles, subject and object terms, the verb, adverbs, etc. relate and mean when put to communicative use. In inter-subjective discourse, one who speaks to ease-off the understanding that other people must offer in terms of clarification or explanation. Understanding and speaking (and listening to) are but different effects of the same epistemological quest in which the power of speech is made manifest. The subject does his/her best, using denotative acts and illustrations to point at, to illumine what is being discussed. The Other, the interlocutor or discussant cooperates, placing oneself en-route to knowing what is being pointed out to him/her. Questions are usually being asked. When answered it adds to clarify murky areas of the subject matter and enhances understanding. Therefore, in the act of comprehending what is being accounted for or explained to him or her requires that both the speaker and hearer.³⁵ By the term *explication*, Dilthey means the methodological understanding of permanently fixed life-expressions. Hermeneutics is the art of this understanding. Explication is the same thing as interpretation. The means of this

understanding is language. Dilthey writes that as the life of the mind only finds its complete, exhaustive and therefore, objectively comprehensible expression in language, explication culminates in the interpretation of the written records of human existence.³⁶ What is usually being worked upon to enable understanding is the textuality of the permanently fixed life-expressions.³⁷ Johann Martin Chladenius explains the task of interpretation in making known to another a written text:

There is nothing more common than someone, who, in his desire for us to understand a certain book, will teach us those concepts necessary for its understanding. And we say of this person that he has interpreted the book for us. An interpretation is, then, nothing other than teaching someone the concepts, which are necessary to learn to understand or to fully understand a speech or a written work.³⁸

Interpretation is not the same thing as guesswork, though guessing is on the part to fixing the understanding, to determining the context, to framing the horizon of possible connotations and bounds of meaning. Thoughts become distinct concepts just as phonemes are tied down to specific ideas to mean things.³⁹ Humbolt holds that:

...as no concept is possible

³⁴ José Medina, *Language. Key Concepts in Philosophy* (London and New York: Continuum 2005), 2

³⁵ Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Language, Understanding, and the Historical World." In Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, ed., *The Hermeneutics Reader* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2006), 102

³⁶ Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Hermeneutics of the Human Sciences." In Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, ed., *The Hermeneutics Reader*, 161

³⁷ Dilthey, "The Hermeneutics of the Human Sciences", 161

³⁸ Johann Martin Chladenius, "Reason and Understanding: Rational Hermeneutics." In (ed.) Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, *The Hermeneutics Reader* 58

³⁹ Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Language, Understanding, and the Historical World." In

without language, at the same time language cannot be an object for the mind since, indeed, every external object attains complete substantiality only through the medium of a concept. However, the entire manner of subjective perception of objects is transmitted necessarily into the structure and into the usage of language.⁴⁰

It was then supposed that the text (oral or written) for interpretation has objective significance such that if words and sentences are used correctly by an interpreter according syntactical and lexical rules, a linguistic expression “would always convey the meaning which the author intended.”⁴¹ This means that if a text “appeared obscure or ambiguous, this was because the writer did not succeed in the correct use of language, the correct explanation of terms, or in the proper construction of his arguments.”⁴² The authorial good intention and competence alone do not suffice to bring the audience, the reader or hearer to understand.

Philosophical Reflection

It has been seen above that interpretation is a form of explanation. It would be remembered that the essence of interpretation, explanation, illustration, exemplification or description is to create that cognitive space for understanding. Ontologically, every being tends to reveal itself. In other words, to bring itself into disclosure or a state of non-concealment,

(hence, *ex-sistere*, 'to stand out in the open'), the very cognitive status of a particular reality gets perplexing as the intellect invests in concepts and employ same to describe, refer to and meaning something in the material world or object of a proposition.

Let us exemplify with the following expressions:

- i. *Nkọwa Ọbula nwere ihe (ife) a nakọwa maka ya n'ime asusu ọbula, ọbuladi asusu Igbo.*
- ii. (a) *Na mbu, Onye Nkọwa ga amariri ihe Ọna- kọwa makaya.*
(b) *Ọ ga-abu ihe doro ya anya ọfuma nezie. Ọgaghi abu Ikọ nkọọ ma ọbu akukọ ufe, nke eji gbaakwa nwa Nnunu Nne ya efepu.*
(c) *Makana Onye na anoghi ebe eliri Ozu, asi ya buo Ọli Onwere ike bido na uzọ ukwu ya*
- iii. *Nke abuo, Isi g'ejụ ya bu Onye na-enye nkọwa ahu oyi, Anya edokwa ya edo.*

Let us try to infer from and explain the above.

- [I] The Igbo noun *nkọwa* literally is to explain. It is not limited to this. It crosses border into philosophical analysis which is its nearest etymology, 'to break- down', to clarify, to define, to explicate, etc. By so doing, the complexity or ambiguity of a concept (*definiens /analysans*) or subject matter is resolved into easily cognitive relations and terms (*definiendum / analysandum*). It is the object term, that about which understanding is sought that usually cognitively

⁴⁰ Humboldt, “Language, Understanding, and the Historical World”, 104

⁴¹ Kurt Muller-Vollmer, “Language, Mind and Artefact. An Outline of Hermeneutic Theory Since the Enlightenment,” Kurt Muller-Vollmer, ed., *The Hermeneutic Reader*, 4-5

⁴² Muller-Vollmer, “Language, Mind and Artefact.” In *The Hermeneutic Reader*, 5

perplexing. It is on the basis of what the subject is, that understanding what is that we can grasp an idea about what is predicable of it or not. Therefore, every proposition must be about a specific subject matter. The same relation goes for every explanation that may be given about something, a concept or substance. It is in language that propositions are stated, and understanding of it expressed. You do not explain, clarify, explicate and seek to understand nothing.

of clarity and compounding of a subject matter leads to confusion and misunderstanding. Here, the rationalist's paradigm of deducing theses of arguments from the definitively certain necessary propositions and axioms is desirable. The expression '*Ikọ nkọọ*' means guessing or assuming something to be as claimed and when there is nothing to show for it that it is so and so. Thus, the conception '*Akọkọ ọfẹ*' refers to a fairy tale, that kind of Cock and Bull story

[II] (a) The one who explains or interprets (*Onye Nkọwa, Onye na enye Nkọwa*) must know about what he/ she offers to explain. Such must have gained cognitive certainty and the authority of experience or learning. You do not explain what you do not know anything about. Johann M. Chladenius attests to this in a piece quoted above. Explanation (*Nkọwa*) is what (a) speaker(s) do /does by words of mouth or writing to expound concepts, clarify thoughts etc. in order to remove confusion, misunderstanding or ignorance and to enable perception or cognition of the subject matter. It must express cognitive virtue in terms of agent reliabilism.

[II] (c) This expression literally means that if one is not present when burial is conducted, if asked to exhume the body will probably start from the side of the leg. The epistemic reality it points at is the epistemological importance of context, situation and perspective in knowledge and understanding. When one explains a point, a process or event he or she does it from a context and takes into view certain perspectives. This reference to the situation does not mean subscribing to relativism. Rather, it indicates that while ascribing objectivity to things, these exist as situated and as perceived, just as George Berkeley noted that to be is to be perceived, '*esse est percipi*'.

[II] (b) The interpretation or explanation offered must be 'clear and distinct', hence *Íhe doro ya anya* means that which clear, distinct and certain.. This explains that indistinctness, complexity and complication are not readily taken in at once in understanding. Lack

[III] The subject must clearly manifest intellectual virtue in terms of the reliability of the cognitive powers, intellectual and sensory and demonstrate these to inform knowledge through reliable cognitive processes. Hearers

always seek to have good explanation or interpretation. Thus, the Igbo expression: '*A koruo, E geruo*' means "sound, or deep explanation, (brings about) good understanding." The verb '*Iko*' is 'to tell', 'to explain', or 'to narrate'. Here, the speaker plays the active role and dominates the discussion with illustrations, the use of examples, proverbs, figures of speech, etc. The speaker is in a dialogue situation. Ontologically but sincerely, one has the epistemic duty to make known or to put across that epistemic reality which weighs down upon him/ her and upon which he/she 'labours' to bring across to or put the Other through. The subject gives and is required to give a true account of what he /she knows, not about all that are to be known. Inserted within the explanatory process is always: "From the way I see it", '*Ka m si hu ya*'; "What is clear to me", '*Nke doro m anya*'; "What I know about it", '*Nke m mara maka ya nke Oma*', etc. The act of telling is more communicative and discursive than talking is.

Conversely, every talking to, every narration or explanation, etc. requires epistemic cooperation of the one being spoken to, the one(s) that hear(s) or is being addressed. That audience listens, hears to what is being said, narrated, or talked about. In Igbo discourse the verb '*I ge*' means to 'listen to'. '*Igeru*' is to listen well or listening to the fullest. By extension the verb '*Ige*' it means 'to contemplate', 'to examine' or 'to weigh' that 'thing' which meaning is elicited as the object of the sense of sound. something. Of course, understanding of the

subject matter is end-point of which the story is told or narration made. Listening is not an epistemic end in itself in a conversation or discourse. Every story or written account of an event is a narration. It must be put into narrative structure or in plot. Be it prose or poetry part of the authors' or narrators' is describe, refer to, discuss and explain. Explanation must have the subject(s) and the objects terms rehearsed in varying lengths of sentences or propositions, paragraphs, chapters and even whole textbooks. Adverbial clauses indicate and attempts to answer the who?/ what?, when?, where?, why? Questions when placed before or after the verbs of the sentences. It is these that locate and string together the meaning relations in the whole verbal or written exposition. In this discourse, readers conversationally seek to understand the meaning of the subject matter communicated to them. This means their cooperation and competence is called into question. The scribal nature of the works of discourse and artifice implant them with possible multiple meanings. It now addresses everyone who can take up such to read. However, writing reduces spaces for dialogical exchange. The oral has the advantage of acts of pointing at things referred to in the text. Speech can be taken up as text. Hermeneutic understanding of a text is attained as a form of reading. What is read and interpreted is one aspect of the people's mode of life, mode of being, as extracts from their cultural deposits.

Conclusion

The concept *Ikwa Ogwe* has been examined in epistemological parlance, which anchors on the communicative functions in the use of ordinary human language, be that in speech-acts or written text. Ontologically it establishes the place of the subject saying/ talking about one reality or other in an inter-

locutionary discourse with someone else. The events of the speech-acts and texts provide the hermeneutic 'texts' on which interpretation works to enable understanding. The locus of the explanation, interpretation, etc. is language. Employing language in this framework (as array of set of, or combination of approaches) amounts to methodology.

Ikwa Ogwe suffices as method in Innocent Asouzu's complementary reflective philosophy if by it we understand methodological *guides* that help the "inquirer focus on his or her subject matter in ordered in ordered coordinated manner as it provided the dictates of the system in question."⁴³ The concept "*ikwa*", "to build" is from the verb "*kwa*" (build), to *construct*" a framework of access across two points or gulfs, hence, the *Ogwe* (noun), bridge. Metaphors are propositional and analogical. It predicates of a subject in discourse and uses simile in talking of one thing as another. Hence, Asouzu says of this metaphor that "*onye kwaa ogwe amara uche ya*, "when a person builds a bridge we know his mind."⁴⁴ When we speak metaphorically, we do engage in physical construction of bridges; we engage ourselves in semantic re-creative of creative events which are brought into dialogue, critical and complementary reflection. His complementary reflection operates with an "open mind-set" as against such egocentric commitment to "non-interference", attitude that precludes objectivity in interrogating the "missing links of reality."⁴⁵ As if at a loss of how to explain a reality, but laying hands on the facts of experience, the mind invokes the power of analogy and the creative imagination of the intellect to connect our understanding.

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