

**DECOLONIZING ENVIRONMENTAL
KNOWLEDGE IN AFRICA:
A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH
THROUGH IGWEBUIKE**

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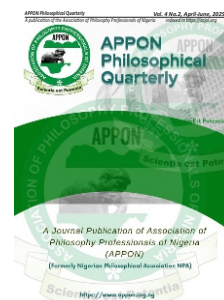
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ABSTRACT

Africa faces an urgent environmental crisis, including water scarcity, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and climate-related health problems. These challenges are scientific and policy issues; they are also deeply philosophical, raising questions about the human relationship with nature, knowledge, and responsibility. Western environmental approaches, shaped by human-centered and dualistic thinking, often fail to respond to Africa's communal, spiritual, and relational ways of life. This paper aims to examine how 'Igwebuike', an Igbo philosophical framework, provides a de-colonial and relational approaches to environmental ethics in Africa. Guided by the principles of relationality, unity, hierarchy, and complementarity, 'Igwebuike' treats both human and the environment as interconnected as well as morally bound to each other. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative philosophical approach, employing conceptual, hermeneutic, and comparative analyses of relevant texts. It offers a systematic and experience-based structure for ethical environmental action and sustainable living. Theoretically, the study is grounded in Igwebuike philosophy within a de-colonial framework, which challenges Western epistemological dominance while affirming indigenous knowledge systems. By placing Igwebuike in dialogue with de-colonial thought, this study unveils its potential to inform ecological ethics, restore relational knowledge, and challenge extractive environmental practices.

Keywords: 'Igwebuike', African Environmental Philosophy, De-colonial Knowledge, Environmental Ethics, Relational Ontology

Introduction

Africa is currently confronted with an intensifying environmental crisis marked by water stress, deforestation, prolonged droughts, biodiversity loss, and disease burdens exacerbated by climate change. While climate change is often framed primarily as a scientific and policy challenge, it is also fundamentally philosophical. At stake are competing conceptions of nature, humanity, knowledge, and responsibility. The

prevailing environmental frameworks that shape global climate discourse are largely Western in origin and are grounded in anthropocentric and individualistic assumptions that have proven insufficient for addressing Africa's socio-cultural and ecological realities.

African environmental philosophers have argued that Western environmental thought frequently rests upon a dualistic worldview that separates the material from the spiritual and construes this division in

competitive or hierarchical terms.¹ Within such a framework, the non-human world is often reduced to instrumental value, assessed primarily in relation to human utility. Although these paradigms have generated significant scientific insights and policy mechanisms, they have struggled to resonate with or adequately respond to African ecological contexts shaped by communal, spiritual, and relational modes of existence.

The emergence of African environmental philosophy therefore represents a critical effort to resist epistemic domination and to articulate ecological thought grounded in African ontological realities. It affirms that nature, community, and personhood are fundamentally interconnected, and that environmental ethics must arise from this relational matrix. Yet this philosophical resurgence faces an important methodological challenge. Paulin J. Hountondji contends that philosophy cannot develop in isolation from scientific traditions. If African philosophy is to provide viable responses to contemporary crises, it must demonstrate methodological rigour, systematic coherence, and empirical relevance.²

It is precisely at this juncture that the question of scientific legitimacy arises. *Igwebuike* is scientific not in the narrow positivist sense of laboratory verification, but in its systematic structure, methodological coherence, and experiential grounding. It operates through articulated principles that function as a foundational guide within a relational ontology. Furthermore, it is empirically embedded in longstanding communal ecological practices that reflect adaptive sustainability. In this sense, *Igwebuike* constitutes a form

of endogenous scientific rationality rooted in African epistemic traditions rather than a derivative imitation of Western scientism.

This paper argues that *Igwebuike* philosophy meets the methodological challenge outlined above. *Igwebuike*, an Igbo philosophical framework articulated by Ikechukwu Kanu, is not merely a cultural proverb. It is a systematic ontological model grounded in ‘relationality’, complementarity, hierarchy, and unity.³ It provides both a metaphysical foundation and a practical orientation for rethinking environmental ethics in African contexts.

The central thesis of this paper is that *Igwebuike* constitutes an indigenous African knowledge system that is simultaneously de-colonial, philosophical, and systematically structured. It critiques colonial and neo-colonial environmental paradigms while offering constructive pathways for ecological responsibility rooted in African epistemology. By situating *Igwebuike* within contemporary debates on decolonization and environmental philosophy, this study advances it as a viable framework for rethinking climate ethics and ecological justice in Africa. The discussion proceeds by clarifying the concept of decolonization in environmental knowledge, outlining the core principles of *Igwebuike*, and demonstrating its relevance for both human–human and human–environment relations within the context of ecological crisis.

Understanding De-colonization in African Environmental Knowledge

Khokholkova describes decolonisation as a political “counter-project” to the colonial enterprise, implemented by the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the

¹ Chigbo Ekwealo, “Environmental Ethics and Values in the 21st Century: An Africanist Philosophical Analysis,” *Journal of African Environmental Ethics and Values*, no.1 (2011): 5

² Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, trans. Henri Evans (London: Hutchinson University Library for Africa, 1983): 98.

³ Ikechukwu A. Kanu, “The Dimensions of *Igwebuike* Philosophy,” in *Igwebuike: An African Complementary Philosophical Framework* (USA: *Igwebuike* Research Institute, 2020): 3.

second half of the twentieth century and transitioning by the beginning of the twenty-first century into a new phase of emancipation associated with the dismantling of socio-cultural structures and institutions imposed by former colonizers.⁴ Frantz Fanon, a luminary in this field, critiqued colonialism's psychological, cultural, and structural impacts, emphasising that decolonisation involves not only dismantling colonial systems but also reclaiming intellectual and cultural autonomy.⁵ Other thinkers, such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, highlight the centrality of language in reclaiming Indigenous epistemologies,⁶ while Smith, critiques the extractive tendencies of Western research and advocates for methodologies rooted in Indigenous worldviews that prioritise community participation and benefit.⁷ At the heart of decolonisation is its focus on dismantling colonial structures that continue to govern Indigenous knowledge systems.

Decolonisation of knowledge, particularly within African studies, has gained increasing importance in recent decades. According to Kwachou, Hountondji's work⁸ significantly advanced African decolonising knowledge discourse

by critiquing the romanticisation of Indigenous knowledge without critical engagement. He argues that the mere descriptive acknowledgement of African philosophies, and their framing as "indigenous," risks rendering African knowledge systems static and pre-modern. Instead, Hountondji proposes the concept of *endogeneity*, which shifts analytical attention to the origins of knowledge within African contexts rather than as to whether such knowledge predates imperialism.⁹ Supporting this position, Sophie Oluwole argued that Africa uniquely relies on foreign languages in formal education, despite substantial evidence that mother-tongue instruction facilitates deeper understanding and effective knowledge transmission.¹⁰ This stance is further reinforced by Kwasi Wiredu, who advanced a programme of "conceptual decolonization",¹¹ aimed at reversing processes of mental assimilation through the critical rejection of foreign philosophical traditions and the re-engagement with Africa's own Indigenous conceptual schemes and categories of thought.¹²

These debates on epistemic decolonisation have direct and urgent

⁴ N. E. Khokholkova, "Decolonization of African Studies: Theoretical and Practical Dimensions," *Journal of the Institute for African Studies*, no. 3 (2024): 32–43, <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2024-68-3-32-43>

⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1952); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968).

⁶ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1986).

⁷ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Indigenous Peoples and Research* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

⁸ Paulin J. Hountondji, "Scientific Dependence in Africa Today," *Research in African Literatures* 21, no. 3 (1990): 5–15; Paulin J. Hountondji, ed., *Endogenous Knowledge: Research Trails* (Dakar: CODESRIA Book Series, 1997); Paulin J. Hountondji, "Global Knowledge: Imbalances and Current Tasks," in *Knowledge, Power and Dissent: Critical Perspectives on Higher Education and Research in the Knowledge Society* (2006), 41–60; Paulin J. Hountondji, "Knowledge of Africa, Knowledge by Africans: Two Perspectives on African Studies," *RCCS Annual Review*, no. 1 (2009).

⁹ Monique Kwachou, "Pathways for Pragmatic Decolonisation in Research," *Open Research Europe*, <https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.19943.1>

¹⁰ Sophie Oluwole, *Wikiquote*, YouTube video, 2016, accessed @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yH1bM4RI9Ig>

¹¹ Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980): 32.

¹² Kwasi Wiredu, *Conceptual Decolonization in African Philosophy: Four Essays* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 1995).

implications for African environmental management and climate knowledge. Colonial modes of knowledge production have historically framed African environments as sites of extraction, conservation, or crisis through externally imposed scientific paradigms, frequently disregarding locally embedded ecological understandings. As a result, African Indigenous concepts emerge as necessary philosophy for encouraging knowledge production grounded in lived African realities. In this context, the *Igwebuike* philosophy becomes particularly significant, as it emphasises collective power, relationality, and shared knowledge as foundational principles for sustainable environmental understanding, climate adaptation, and community-based environmental management.

Igwebuike: A Brief Overview of its Principles

According to Ikechukwu Kanu, *Igwebuike* is an Igbo proverb and also a typical Igbo name.¹³ In Africa, proverbs have long served as a means of preserving and transmitting knowledge. African philosopher Mbiti argues that proverbs contain the remains of the oldest forms of African religious and philosophical wisdom.¹⁴ This implies that proverbs are reservoirs of wisdom that have guided many African societies since prehistoric times. *Igwebuike* comes from three Igbo words, *Igwe* (multitude), *bu* (is), and *ike* (strength) literally meaning “number is strength” or “number is power.” Beyond its literal sense, it expresses unity and solidarity, symbolizing *otu obi*, which means one heart and one soul.¹⁵ In the

African worldview, *otu obi* (solidarity) is essential because life is uncertain and full of risks. In Kanu’s exposition he argues using an Igbo proverb that teaches that isolation leads to weakness, since one person alone cannot withstand life’s challenges. *Otu Obi* points to the need for complementarity in order to deal with existential realities fully backed and supported. The image of carrying two sticks symbolizes preparedness and mutual support in the face of uncertainty.

Thus, the main principles of the African worldview that makes it *Igwebuike* and *Igwebuike* in the African worldview include: the interconnectedness of reality; the spiritual nature of the human person that creates a basis for connection to other spiritual beings in the African universe; the collective or inclusive nature of the family structure; the ones of mind, body and spirit; and the value of interpersonal relations.¹⁶ Kanu posits that *Igwebuike* philosophy possesses four principles that guide it. They include; the principle of identity, the principle of contrariety, the principle of hierarchy and the principle of unity.¹⁷ These principles govern and shape the *Igwebuike* philosophy that forges the bonds of communality, solidarity and complementarity.

The Principle of Identity: The principle of identity shapes *Igwebuike* philosophy and states that every being is determined in itself, is one with itself and is consistent in itself. The qualities of matter in traditional metaphysics, which are referred to as accidents; such as size, colour, shape distinguish one being from the other. These qualitative identities comprise its differing

¹³ Ikechukwu A. Kanu, “The Dimensions of Igwebuike Philosophy,” in *Igwebuike: An African Complementary Philosophical Framework* (USA: Igwebuike Research Institute, 2020): 9.

¹⁴ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1970): 89.

¹⁵ Kanu, “Dimensions of Igwebuike Philosophy,” 9.

¹⁶ Kanu, “Dimensions of Igwebuike Philosophy,” 10.

¹⁷ Ikechukwu A. Kanu, “On the Origin and Principles of Igwebuike Philosophy,” *Journal of Religion and Human Relations* 11, no. 1 (2019): 165,

<https://www.ikechukwuanthonykanu.com/repo/ORIGIN%20AND%20PRINCIPLES%20OF%20IGWEBUIKE.pdf>.

properties. The principle of identity is fundamental in *Igwebuike* philosophy because it forms the foundations upon which inter-subjectivity, inter-connectedness, complementarity can complement each other.¹⁸

The Principle of Hierarchy: The principle of Hierarchy in *Igwebuike* philosophy outlines the order in which forces in the universe align themselves. In Igbo African Ontology reality can be subsumed into the following categories according to hierarchy of their force; spirit. At the apex of forces is God, it is he who has the force, power in himself and transmits it to others.¹⁹

The Principle of Contrariety: The principle of contrariety takes into account the otherness of reality. Aristotle in his definition of contrariety explains it as a kind of difference. This difference is to be known as a kind of otherness. The term contrary speaks to those attributes differing in genus which do not belong at the same time to the same subject. *Igwebuike* accepts contrariety as part of the natural universe. It understands that the universe constitutes many contraries for instance good and evil, life and death, hot and cold, substance and accidents. Even though they are contraries to each other, they are indispensable realities of the universe. When the relationships between these contraries are well managed, reality is enhanced and stronger.²⁰

The Principle of Unity: The principle of unity exists in *Igwebuike* philosophy despite the existence of the principle of contrariety, the principle of unity speaks to the completion of the whole, and thus there is a unity in the midst of diversity. *Igwebuike* presents 'being' as possessing a relational character of mutual relations. Thus, 'to be' is to live in solidarity and complementarity

and to live outside the parameters of solidarity and complementarity is to suffer alienation. 'To be' is 'to be with the other', in a community of beings. Mbiti classically proverbializes this relationship thus: "I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am".²¹ The African worldview, therefore, is governed by the principle of complementarity, which seeks the conglomeration, the unification, the summation of fragmented thoughts, opinions and other individualized and fragmented thoughts and ideas.²²

The foregoing exposition of *Igwebuike's* foundational principles establishes it as a coherent and systematic philosophical tradition rooted in Igbo ontology. Far from being a mere cultural aphorism, *Igwebuike* articulates a relational metaphysics structured by identity, hierarchy, contrariety, and unity. These principles not only implant communal solidarity and complementarity but also provide a conceptual basis for understanding reality as fundamentally interconnected.

Having outlined its ontological structure, the task now is to consider its ecological implications. If *Igwebuike* presents being as relational and complementary, then its relevance cannot be confined to human-human relations alone. Its structure necessarily extends to human-environment relations. The same principles that govern communal solidarity equally frame humanity's relationship with land, forests, rivers, animals, and the spiritual dimensions of the cosmos. It is at this juncture that *Igwebuike* emerges not merely as an ontological framework but as a resource for environmental knowledge.

¹⁸ Kanu, "Origin and Principles of Igwebuike Philosophy," 166.

¹⁹ Kanu, "Origin and Principles of Igwebuike Philosophy," 167.

²⁰ Kanu, "Origin and Principles of Igwebuike Philosophy," 169.21

²¹ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1970): 108.

²² Kanu, "Origin and Principles of Igwebuike Philosophy," 171.

***Igwebuike* as an African De-colonial Environmental Knowledge.**

In order to affirm *Igwebuike* as an African environmental knowledge, it requires situating it within the broader scope of de-colonial thought given the disruptions of colonialism. According to Young, colonialism did not merely dispossess Africans of land; it also displaced indigenous epistemologies, particularly relational ecological knowledge systems.²³ European colonial administrations altered land tenure systems, converted communal territories into privately owned estates, cleared forests for plantations, extracted minerals through intensive mining, and confined communities to overcrowded and ecologically fragile reserves. Simultaneously, African cultures, languages, and spiritual traditions were disparaged as pagan and irrational.²⁴ These processes entrenched a human-centred and extractivist worldview on African soil.

Western modernity reinforced this orientation through anthropocentrism, which placed the human being at the centre of reality. The non-human world was evaluated primarily in terms of its utility.²⁵ Humans were regarded as possessing intrinsic value, while non-human entities were reduced to instrumental worth. Moral duties were understood as obligations owed primarily to other humans, with any

responsibility toward nature viewed as indirect or secondary.²⁶ This anthropocentric view normalized environmental domination.

Colonial expansion also introduced a mechanistic conception of nature, according to which nature was understood as a machine to be controlled and manipulated. This outlook failed to recognize the intrinsic purpose and self-regulating character of ecological systems. Vandana Shiva observes that traditional agricultural societies operated within the limits of natural regeneration, preserving soil fertility and biodiversity. However, industrial modernity redefined these natural limits as obstacles to be overcome. Artificial fertilizers, monocropping and genetically uniform seed systems were promoted as superior replacements for nature's regenerative capacities.²⁷

This mechanistic worldview was philosophically reinforced by seventeenth-century scientific thought. René Descartes distinguished between *res cogitans* (thinking substance) and *res extensa* (extended substance), portraying non-human beings as mechanistic entities devoid of intrinsic consciousness.²⁸ Isaac Newton's *Principia* described the universe as governed by universal mathematical laws, reinforcing an image of reality as predictable and reducible to mechanical

²³ Robert J. C. Young, *Empire, Colony, Postcolony* (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2015): 53.

²⁴ Musa W. Dube, "African Eco-feminisms: African Women Writing Earth, Gender and the Sacred," in *Ecofeminist Perspectives from African Women Creative Writers*, eds. Enna Sukutai Gudhlanga, Musa Wenkosi Dube, and Limakatso E. Pepenene (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024): 13.

²⁵ Taiwo W. Osemwegie, "Eco-Bio Holism: An African Environmental Value and Approach to Environmental Justice and Sustainability," *Journal of African Environmental Ethics and Values*, no. 1 (2011): 18.

²⁶ P. A. Ojomo, "Environmental Ethics: An African Understanding," *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 4, no. 3 (2011): 101–113, <http://www.jpanafrican.com/docs/vol4no3/4.3Environmental.pdf>

²⁷ Vandana Shiva, "Reductionism and Regeneration: A Crisis in Science," in *Ecofeminism*, eds. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (London: Zed Books, 1994): 28.

²⁸ René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984; originally published 1641); *Discourse on the Method*, trans. J. Cottingham, A. Kenny, and J. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; originally published 1637)

motion.²⁹ Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* advocated the mastery of nature for "the relief of man's estate," presenting knowledge as a tool for domination.³⁰ While these developments enabled scientific progress, they also contributed to a separation of humans from the natural world and legitimized extractive practices.

In contemporary environmental philosophy, especially within de-colonial discourse; this mechanistic and anthropocentric worldview is increasingly critiqued for lacking relational, ethical, and spiritual depth. It is precisely within this space of critique that Igwebuike emerges as an alternative.

At its core, Igwebuike is grounded in relationality. Its ontological orientation understands reality as an interconnected web of forces rather than as isolated substances. This has profound ecological implications: the environment is not an external object but part of the community of being. Human flourishing is inseparable from environmental well-being, and ecological disruption destabilizes the balance of forces that sustain existence. This conception resonates with Placide Tempels' notion of vital force, where force is the unifying reality that links all beings.³¹ In the African ontological sphere, force flows hierarchically yet relationally, connecting God, spiritual beings, humans, and nature.³² Unlike Western dualism, Igwebuike

recognizes no radical separation between spirit and matter, sacred and secular, or human and non-human.

This relational anthropology echoes Mbiti's formulation: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am".³³ Ecologically interpreted, this principle extends to human-environment relations: "We are because the earth is."³⁴ Environmental care therefore becomes a metaphysical necessity rather than merely a regulatory requirement.

Igwebuike's principle of unity within diversity provides a philosophical template for ecological harmony. Contraries such as life and death, growth and decay, are not oppositional threats. Rather, they are complementary dimensions of a unified whole. From an environmental standpoint, biodiversity reflects this unity in diversity, and ecosystems depend upon mutual enhancement and balance. Sustainability, therefore, requires equilibrium rather than domination. Exploitative attitudes toward land violate relational solidarity; if being is fundamentally relational, then the destruction of forests, rivers, or animal life constitutes a rupture in the community of being that amounts to a form of self-alienation. Sacred ecological elements; forests, rivers and animals embody this interconnected unity. In this way, *Igwebuike* directly challenges capitalist extractivism, which reduces land to commodity rather

²⁹ Isaac Newton, *The Principia: Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, trans. I. B. Cohen and A. Whitman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999; originally published 1687).

³⁰ Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, trans. L. Jardine and M. Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; originally published 1620).

³¹ G. Azenabor, "Placide Tempels' Theory of 'Vital Forces'," in *Modern Theories in African Philosophy* (Lagos: Byolah Publishers, 2010), 39.

³² Taiwo W. Osemwegie, "Eco-Bio Holism: An African Environmental Value and Approach to Environmental Justice and Sustainability," *Journal of African Environmental Ethics and Values*, no. 1 (2011): 23.

³³ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1970): 108.

³⁴ Ikechukwu A. Kanu, "The Dimensions of Igwebuike Philosophy," in *Igwebuike: An African Complementary Philosophical Framework* (USA: Igwebuike Research Institute, 2020); Vandana Shiva, "Reductionism and Regeneration: A Crisis in Science," in *Ecofeminism*, eds. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (London: Zed Books, 1994)

than community.³⁵

The principle of hierarchy in *Igwebuike* places God at the apex of force, followed by spiritual beings, humans, and nature. However, this hierarchy does not legitimize exploitation. Rather, it implies responsibility proportional to power. In this structure, humans are endowed with consciousness and agency and bear a moral obligation to preserve balance within the ontological order. Environmental degradation therefore represents a moral failure, a misuse of transmitted force. This sharply contrasts with colonial hierarchies that justified domination over land and indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, *Igwebuike's* principle of contrariety recognizes difference and tension as indispensable aspects of reality.³⁶ Applied ecologically, drought and rain, predator and prey, growth and decay are not problems to be eliminated; they are dynamics to be managed. Modern industrial systems often seek to eliminate unpredictability through technological control. *Igwebuike*, by contrast, promotes environmental stewardship that respects natural cycles and fosters adaptive coexistence. It encourages sustainable agriculture, reverence for regenerative processes, and communal environmental governance aligned with cosmic and moral harmony.

Conclusion

Over the decades, traditional African societies have treated land as communal rather than purely private property. Land was revered as a sacred inheritance, borne out of ancestral trust and understood as a

spiritual habitat. In reclaiming environmental knowledge through *Igwebuike*, we return to this ontological foundation, where, in the African worldview, the living, the dead, and the unborn exist in dynamic continuity. Mbiti captures this relational anthropology in his well-known formulation: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am."³⁷ Ecologically interpreted, this insight implies that environmental decisions reverberate across generations. Stewardship is therefore not optional but inter-generationally binding. This mindset directly challenges colonial land privatization systems that 'commodified' land and facilitated environmental degradation by severing land from its communal and spiritual significance.

To enthrone *Igwebuike* as African environmental knowledge is to affirm that indigenous ways of being and knowing is philosophically valid and indispensable for ecological restoration. It is to also acknowledge that *Igwebuike* articulates an indigenous holistic approach grounded in unity, complementarity, and relational being. The epistemic marginalization of African thought under colonial modernity must therefore be critically resisted. The assumption that African spirituality is primitive or unscientific demands philosophical rebuttal. Since its relational ontology provides a viable framework for sustaining ecological balance.

Contemporary ecological crises have revealed the limitations of mechanistic rationality and anthropocentric reductionism. A clear example is industrial agriculture's reliance on mono-cropping,

³⁵ Ikechukwu A. Kanu, "African Eco-Spirituality: An Igwebuike Indigenous Response to Modern Ecological Crisis," *Tolle Lege: An Augustinian Journal of Philosophy* 4, no. 1 (2022)

<https://acjol.org/index.php/tollelege/article/download/3936/3855>

³⁶ Ikechukwu A. Kanu, "On the Origin and Principles of *Igwebuike* Philosophy," *Journal of Religion and Human Relations* 11, no. 1 (2019): 169.

<https://www.ikechukwuanthonykanu.com/repo/ORIGIN%20AND%20PRINCIPLES%20OF%20IGWEBUIKE.pdf>

³⁷ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1970): 108.

synthetic fertilizers, and genetically uniform seed systems, which prioritize short-term productivity over ecological resilience. Such practices have accelerated soil depletion, reduced biodiversity, and intensified climate vulnerability through greenhouse gas emissions and disrupted carbon cycles.³⁸ By treating land as an inert resource to be maximized rather than a living system governed by interdependent processes, mechanistic rationality has undermined the very ecological balance it sought to control. Shiva further demonstrates how industrial modernity reconfigured natural regenerative processes as constraints to be overcome, thereby legitimizing ecological domination³⁹ as evidenced by Nigeria's oil extraction, where 13 million barrels spilled since 1958 have acidified Delta soils and killed mangroves that once stabilized coastlines.⁴⁰

Igwebuike, by contrast, restores the moral and spiritual dimensions of ecological existence. It proposes a holistic knowledge system that integrates spirituality, ecology, and communal environmental governance. Environmental care is thus reframed as a metaphysical necessity rooted in relational ontology rather than mere policy compliance or technological management.

In doing so, *Igwebuike* contributes not only to African decolonization but also to global environmental philosophy. While critics may contend that it is culturally particular, its philosophical implications are universalizable, it aligns with ecological relationality, complements communitarian political theory, challenges neoliberal individualism, and resonates with environmental justice movements.

Ultimately, *Igwebuike* demonstrates that sustainability is not only technological, it is ontological and moral. It calls for a

reorientation of being itself, away from domination toward relational harmony. In this sense, *Igwebuike* is not simply an African cultural resource; it is a timely philosophical intervention into contemporary ecological discourse.

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³⁸ A. Altieri, *Agroecology: The Science of Sustainable Agriculture*, 2nd ed. (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2018): 67–78.

³⁹ Vandana Shiva, *Who Really Feeds the World?* (London: Zed Books, 2016): 67–92.

⁴⁰ UNEP, *Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland* (Nairobi: United Nations Environment Programme, 2011): 108–120

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