

3. African Theosophical Image of man and its Influence on bringing up the Young

Traditionally, in African thought and culture, the birth of a new child is the dawn of hope. The child is seen as the pride of the day and the hope of a bright future for the family and the society. From this perspective, it is seen as a necessity to educate the young ones; – bringing them up, with the intention of fulfilling through them, the family dreams for the future. An African adage says: Good upbringing and education of the young today is an investment for all tomorrow. Bringing up the child responsibly means laying good foundations for the future of the society. That is why the education of the child in the African setup has always been a communal responsibility. Stressing the importance of upbringing and the education of the young, the African Igbo says: “*Nku onye kpara n’okochi ka o na-anyia n’udummiri*” (the firewood that one gathers during the dry season is what he uses to warm himself during the rainy season). The sense here is that one must educate his child from a young age in order to reap good fruits at old age. When one ignores upbringing at an early age, one cannot expect wonders later in life. From here we can see that the African connects the joy of the presence of the child in the family, community and society with the responsibility of his upbringing and education. The child is a gift and responsibility.

The child is seen as good, loved and cherished. The position of the child is very prominent in the family. The young is handled with care and is seen as an indispensable part and parcel of the family, community and the society at large. In some extreme cultural societies, the possession of at least one child is a prerequisite for a family to be recognized as such in the community. The more number of children one has, the greater the image of the family. When a young man and a young woman come together and marry, the next topic or question with which they are often confronted is: When are the children coming? And if eventually the family remains childless, their lamentation and hopelessness is enormous; and there is always a lot of pressure from the extended family, relations and community on them to look for a solution to their childlessness. This is one of the basic reasons accountable for polygamy in the past history (except those in the Islamic religion where the practice is still in place) of African culture. The African doesn’t see any more important reason for getting married than the procreation of children.

The African Igbo, a major tribe in the Nigerian nation, whose philosophy of life, identity and beliefs could be read from the meaning of their names, give such names to new-born babies to portray the importance and image of the child in their culture: *Nwa-amaka* – Child is good; *Nwa-ebuka* – Child is priceless; *Nwa-ka-ego* – Child is more valuable than money; *Nwa-bu-ugwu* – Child is my pride, honour and dignity; *Nwa-bu-echi* – Child is or holds my future; *Nwa-bu-nchekwubem* –

Child is my hope; *Nwa-bu-mkpam* – Child is all I need, child is the summary of my wants; *Ifeyinwa* – nothing can be compared to a child. These do not however mean that the child or a human being is the greatest in the hierarchy of beings. Man belongs to the hierarchy but is not the primus. The Igbo always emphasize the place of God as the Alfa and Omega in their existence. The name *Chibuzo* – (God is first) says it all. God is on the fore front of the hierarchy of beings.

There is a hierarchy of Beings in the Igbo cosmology. From the highest down the ladder in the order of importance, in terms of commanding and controlling metaphysical powers are the following ontological Beings: (1) *Chineke* – God; (2) *Umu mmuo* – divinities, spirits which are the creatures of the supreme God; (3) *Alusi* – man-made divinities; (4) *Ndi-ichie* – ancestral spirits; (5) *Mmadu* – man; (6) *Anu obia* – animals; (7) *Osisi* – plants; (8) *Ihe adighi ndu* – inanimate objects.

These hosts of visible and invisible kingdoms of realities play their essential parts and roles in the hierarchical functioning of the Igbo and African cosmos. It is not accidental however that the creator God – *Chineke* placed the human being right in the middle of this hierarchical structure. This emphasizes and underlines the place that the human being takes among the existing things. Man is the centre of being. This synchronizes with the Christian anthropocentrism, which is in line with the biblical creation narrative. Before Christianity, the Sophist – Protagoras¹, as early as the 5th century BC, has already made the great assertion: *Man is the measure of all things*.

According to Arazu², the Igbo term *Mmadu* (humanity) has an etymology that makes man the centre of goodness in creation. Firstly, *mmadu* (*mma-di* or *mma-du*) as the imperative of the expression *mma* (good or goodness) – *di* or *du* (the verb to be or to exist), means “let what is good be” or “let there be goodness”. Secondly, *mma-du* (*mma-di*) as a simple statement in the indicative case means “beauty exists” or “goodness exists”. The Igbo concept of *mmadu* is a combination of the concept of goodness or beauty to which that of existence is added. In Igbo, man (*mmadu*) is neither exclusively masculine nor feminine. It refers to both genders. In the word “*mma*” beauty or goodness, which underlies the Igbo ‘*mmadu*’ is a prefix that should be seen as a challenge to responsibility. That means, *Mmadu* (man) interpreted as *mma-ndu* (the beauty or goodness of life) is a challenge to the human person and a call to live according to the demands of the name. To live and act in a manner that displays the beauty or goodness of creation.

Obed Anizoba in his *Igbo concept of man*³ gave a premise for understanding the fundamentals of Igbo metaphysics. In Igbo cosmology, man is by nature com-

¹ See PROTAGORAS, *The Dialogues of Plato*, in: *Great Books of the Western World*, Vol.6, (ed. M.J. Adler), Chicago 1996, 38-64.

² ARAZU, R., *Covenant Broken and Reconciliation (Sin in Salvation History)*, Enugu 1994, 182-3.

³ ANIZOBA, O.M., “Igbo Concept of Man: A premise for understanding the fundamentals of Igbo Metaphysics”, in *University of Nigeria Library series*, Nsukka, 1989.

posed of material and immaterial aspects. But unlike the dualistic tendencies of the classical Greco-Roman world which divided man into two broad incongruous parts, Igbo and Africans generally believe like the Christians, in the words of Kelley, that the “human nature is the unity of body and soul in human personality”⁴

Some anthropological research findings in some parts of the African continent conclude that in this “human personality”; there exist four principles. Ikenga Metu⁵, an Igbo researcher, in line with other researchers, believes that among the Igbo people of Nigeria, “four constituent principles can be distinguished in man: *Obi* or *ume* – heart or breath; *mmuo* (normally called *Onyinyo*) – spirit or shadow; *chi* – destiny; and *eke* – personality of ancestral guardian.”

J.O. Awolalu says that, “the Africans believe that man’s nature is partly material and partly immaterial. He is composed of body which is tangible, concrete and measurable... as well as the immaterial entity which is immeasurable and intangible.”⁶ This first category is the material aspect of man called *ahu*, the physical body. It is composed of all parts of the body with which man interacts with his mundane environment. Some of these parts like *ukwu* – leg, *aka* – hand, *ibu* – face, etc, have their respective cults since the African people believe that the spiritual element in man manifests itself in them by influencing man’s interaction with his environment for either good or bad, depending on the degree of one’s ontological cordial relationship with the ultimate reality. In addition to the biological components of the physical body, there are other material components including the discharges of the body like the urine, spittle, finger and toe nails, hair, and all bodily appurtenances such as one’s clothes, rings, necklaces, shoes, beddings and even foot-prints. The African people guard all these jealously because in their metaphysics, one could use any of these components of man’s physical body for charms, either to harm the individual or do him good. Though these components of the human frame perform their biological functions on the one hand, they are on the other hand believed to house the spiritual entities which could enhance the personality of the individual. Thus there is the belief that there are some powers inherent in some parts of the body of man, which could aid the individual’s life’s journey if properly harnessed.

The second aspect of man is immaterial in nature. The spiritual body of man is ontologically viewed by the African people as a life force which has a vital relationship with other life forces in the cosmos. An examination of the major theomorphic constituents in man makes this basic metaphysical principle clear in African cosmology. The African people are not in doubt as to whether the divine spark in man is the central core in man, or whether it is the major principle and the highest of all other principles. It is their belief that this divine spark chose the physical

⁴ KELLEY, J.N.D., *Early Christian Doctrine*, London, 1968, 344.

⁵ See METUH, E.I., *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions*, Onitsha, 1987.

⁶ AWOLALU, J.O., “The African Traditional view of Man”, in *Orita* 6, 2, 1972, 101.

body as the cloth in order to help it gain expression and interaction in the lower world. It is this very spark that links each being ontologically to every other. It is this divine spark that influenced the African Igbo to give man the name *mmandu*, beauty of life, because as Anizoba opines, the Igbo “ascribe man’s uniqueness to the fact that the life-force which God put in man is God’s special gift to all His living creatures.”⁷ This is why Njaka says that “other created beings have godhood also but in lesser degree than man, hence he (man) assigns himself a position nearer to God than any held by the Creator-God (Chineke)’s other creatures.”⁸

Ontologically viewed, the dignified position of man (not far removed from the Christian theological image of man as *imago dei*) raises him spiritually and connects him with the evolving spiritual forces working in and through him. Therefore it is clear in African metaphysics that man is in a position and status which can enable him and raise him further spiritually if he tries to make himself a conscious co-worker within the vine yard of African cosmological garden. In African theosophy, the divine spark, which we have already mentioned above, manifests its presence in the human physical body (let us take an example from Igbo cosmology) in various ways:

1) *Ndu* – life force, is seen as the most important theophoric ingredient of the divine spark which the Ultimate Reality puts into man as well as into all other animate things. It is the essence of being in itself without which the being would be dead.

One of the fundamental metaphysical practices of the Igbo people is the preservation of life. And this is a primary value in Igbo tradition and culture. That means: right at the centre of Igbo theosophy is anthropocentrism. This is why Arinze says that, “the Ibos therefore offer sacrifices for good health, for recovery of the sick, to stop epidemics, for the preservation of travelers, for life in general and against death.”⁹ In addition, Isichei buttressed this view by saying that “... the whole tenor of prayer and sacrifice was directed towards long life, concrete protection from specific ills....”¹⁰

2) This divine spark also manifests its presence in the human being in *Ume* – life breath, which in Igbo theosophy is an animating principle in man which is in itself an important ingredient that establishes the presence of *Ndu* – life. It is believed to be mystically attracted by the divine spark from the breath which goes into the body through the respiratory organs. Its absence is believed to force life out of the physical body and this leads to death. This is why oftentimes some people think that *Ume* – breath is synonymous with life. It is the Igbo theosophical view that the evil one can through magic, medicine or occult take *ndu* –

⁷ ANIZOBA, O.M., *The Dignity of Man in Igbo Traditional Religious Belief*, Nsukka, 1986, 67.

⁸ NJAKA, E.N., *Igbo Political Culture*, Evanston, 1974, 30.

⁹ ARINZE, F.A., *Sacrifice in Igbo Religion*, Ibadan, 1970, 15.

¹⁰ ISICHEI, E., “Seven Varieties of Ambiguity: Some Patterns of Igbo Response to Christian Missions”, in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 3, Nr.3, 1970, 216.

life out of one's body by calling the victim's name in some bad way while reciting some incantations. This act forces the victim to sneeze. Metaphysically, to sneeze is to force the *ume* – breath which ensures *ndu* – life out of a living person as it flows out with the “aggressive wind”. This is why when one sneezes, any Igbo person around him (since by nature every Igbo sees it as his ontological responsibility to protect life) calls on the victim to be conscious of the fact that his life is at stake by saying: *Ndu gi* – “your life”, which is a shortened way of wishing him: *Ndu gi apula* – “may your life not depart from you.” After overcoming the ordeal of consciously retaining the breath, the victim will return the good wish to his well-wisher by saying *Ndu mu na gi* – “your life and mine”, which in full means “may your life and mine not part from us”.

It is fascinating and very interesting to realize here, in an intercultural analyses, how similar human metaphysics are or can be. In the German culture, one notices a similar human reaction by sneezing. When one sneezes, the other says: “*Gesundheit*” – good health. This is a way of saying: live healthy, or let your good health and life not depart from you. Even when the ontological and philosophical explanations may not be the same, one realizes the similarity of thought and language in these two different worlds of cultures. The human being remains the same and has the same basic needs (happy life and good health) all over the world.

3) *Mmuo* – spirit soul, is another source through which the presence of the divine spark is made manifest in the human being. It is thought to be the invisible person in man. In African thought and culture, the *Mmuo* does not die at death; it always survives and reincarnates. It is also through the *Mmuo* – spirit soul that the divine spark establishes the state of Igbo morality. As a sacred refraction of the Universal Soul, the spirit soul always ensures that the conscience (the interior divine law which the divine spark gives in man) tells man what is good and what is bad. In Igbo theosophy, man's inability to obey the *Mmuo* – spirit soul desecrates it and this leads to the debasement of the dignity of man. Furthermore, the Igbo people believe that it is only man that has *Mmuo* – spirit soul hence he reincarnates while the lower animals do not. We have also met above in our discussion this human assumption of classifying animals as lower beings devoid of reason and perhaps without soul in western anthropology (see Gehlen, Ottmann, etc), in the attempt to boost the ego and dignity of the human being. I must add here, in all fairness to the animals, that it has not been sufficiently proved beyond doubt, if the animals are really there, where we place them; because we observe in recent times what animals can accomplish, when they are trained.

4) *Chi* – spirit double, is another organ through which the divine spark increases its presence in man. It is a common theosophical and metaphysical phenomenon throughout the Igbo culture area that, as Arinze says, “all Ibos believe that each individual has a spirit, a genius or a spirit called his *Chi*...”¹¹ which is

¹¹ ARINZE, *Ibid*, 15.

resident in the spirit world before *Chineke*, and tries to solicit for good things for the individual. The *Chi* is also conceived by the Igbo people as an ubiquitous entity which is capable of living in the body and at the same time being the individual's ambassador in God's theocratic scheme of things.

Both Arinze and Awolalu¹² observe that this *Chi* accompanies the individual from the cradle to the grave. *Chi* is thought to be responsible for the different traits of character of children of the same parents. This is evident in the Igbo proverb which has it that: *otu nne na-amu, ma otu chi anaghi eke* – the same mother procreates all the children but they are not created by the same *Chi*. Discussing this proverb, Ezeanya says that "...*Chi* is responsible for the diversity of character traits even in children of the same mother. But the Supreme Being is remotely responsible in the sense that he has created *Chi* itself."¹³ Since it is *Chi* who chooses one's *akaraka* – destiny, at conception, it is therefore a theosophical belief of the Igbo people that one's *Chi* pre-exists one. Therefore, *Chi* derives from Chukwu – God. *Chi* could in fact be said to be the Igbo expression of God's providential care for each individual person. *Chi* is God's own representative in man. It protects and guides man through the dangers and snares of the world.

We saw above in the Christian biblical image of the child, where angels are projected as babies, that they sometimes play the role of guardian angels. In the African anthropology, the *Chi* in the new-born child could in a way be seen as his "guardian angel". But in the real sense and in the African context, "*Chi*" plays a greater role than the Christian guardian angel. Thus C. K. Meek describing "*Chi*" writes: "One of the most striking doctrines of the Ibo is that every human being has associated with his personality a genius or spiritual double known as his "*Chi*".¹⁴ He goes on to compare this conception of a transcendent self to the Egyptian notion of "*Ka*" which was the double or genius of a man, an ancestral emanation apparently which guided and protected him during his life time and to which he returned after death. This approach, though partially correct, seems to be defective and does not express exactly what the Igbo "*Chi*" stands for. This is because the opinion fails to note that besides the duty of guiding, the "*Chi*" has some direct power over the individual, even if, as some would have it, such power is only over material life and matter; and again that the individual abilities, faults, good or bad fortune are also ascribed to "*Chi*". Hence the Igbo speak of "*onye chi oma*" (a man of good *chi*) and "*onye chi ojoo*" (a man of bad *chi*). We must note also that man (mmadu) is one single psycho-physiological composite, a well-integrated organism, which has both material and spiritual aspects. And *Chi* is within man and not external to him. *Chi* is part and parcel of

¹² AWOLALU, J.O., "The African Traditional view of Man", in *Orita* 6, 2, 1972, 109.

¹³ EZEANYA, S.N., "Igbo Religious Proverbs as a Means of Interpreting the Traditional Religion of Igbo People", in *West African Religion*, Nr.15, 1974, 11.

¹⁴ MEEK, C.K., (1937), quoted in OBIEGO, O.C., "Igbo Idea of God" in *Lucerna*, vol. 1, No 1, Enugu, 1978, 34.

the child (human being). Therefore, the idea of comparing Chi with a guardian angel is primarily not very satisfactory.¹⁵

Now, from these four organs – *Ndu, Ume, Mmuo and Chi*, – we realize that the African image of the human being emphasizes more the spiritual aspect of man than the material. And the Igbo people being conscious of these theosophical organs, through which the Ultimate reality could manifest itself in man, always display in their day-to-day living, a life of spirituality, because they know that these spiritual organs link them with the other invisible entities in Igbo cosmology. The maintenance and sustenance of good ontological relationship with the beings higher than man are always priorities. That is why anything which would desecrate man or which is against the natural order is very repugnant to the African people. Thus their numerous taboos were not created in vain or out of fear of the unknown, rather they were the products of well thought-out theosophical laws which are fundamental to the individual's metaphysical well-being. The African fore-bearers who rigidly observed these theosophical laws, would today wonder why such things as war, hunger, corruption, poverty, etc exist. In the world which our forefathers knew and lived in, these theosophical laws ought to reflect those qualities of justice, goodness and love which were traditionally the essential attribute of the Ultimate Reality, to which man in his image and dignity alludes.

The great emphasis on the spiritual aspect of man's being is responsible for the deep religiosity of the African. There is no ethics – as a way of life – for the African in general, devoid of religion and vice versa. Life for them and all about it points to religion and their religion dictates their way of life. Deep within his being, the African feels an irresistible religious imperative. It is religion, which makes the first and most absolute claim in the life, hopes, aspirations, fears and joys of the average African person. Traditional religion is at the very heart of traditional society. Oliver Onwubiko pointed out that, "Religion in the indigenous African culture was not an independent institution. It is an integral and inseparable part of the entire culture. Religion in the African sense was practical. One's entire action is reflective of one's religious concepts and practices as is seen in the ordering of society. This is because social morality is dependent on religion."¹⁶

From this point of view, you cannot define or try to understand the African image of the child and the human being per se outside the frame work of his religion. Isidore Igwegbe wrote: "There is an absolutely integral relationship between religion and culture. African tradition was inherently holistic. Here, less than anywhere, could you discern the secular from the sacred."¹⁷ The ordinary life of the African is conducted in relation to the sacred. The African takes his re-

¹⁵ For more details on *Chi*, see NDUKAIHE, V.E., *Achievement as Value in the Igbo/African Identity: The Ethics*, Berlin, LIT, 2006, 186-189.

¹⁶ ONWUBIKO, O.A., *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, Enugu, 1991, 24.

¹⁷ IGWEGBE, I.O.O., *Sacramental theological Thinking in the African Symbolic Universe*, Fankfurt a.m: Peter Lang, 1995, 41.

ligion wherever he goes: in the family, at work, in the market, in the village square, he is always conscious of his religious imperatives. Life and morality are considered direct fruits of religion. Africans do not make any attempt to separate the two, and it is impossible for them to do so without disastrous consequences.¹⁸ In this connection, Arthur Leonard observed of the African Igbo that, “they eat religiously, drink religiously, bathe religiously, dress religiously, and sin religiously. In a few words, the religion of these natives is their existence, and their existence is their religion.”¹⁹ This is opposed to the system of life in western civilization whose modern thinkers strive to disengage religion from all walks of life. The distinction between the secular and the religious is pronounced. Such differentiation cannot work for the African.

In African tradition, J.S. Mbiti encapsulates the life and being of the African, in relation to his religion, in the following words: “In traditional religion there are no creeds to be recited; instead, the creeds are written in the heart of the individual, and each one is himself a living religious creed of his own religion. Where the individual is, there is his religion, for he is a religious being. It is this that makes Africans so religious: religion is their whole system of being.”²⁰ That means that religion is inextricably linked to the whole of life, whose personal and communal activities it animates. The feeling of wholeness is an important aspect of the African life.²¹ For the African therefore, life is one. Making religious and secular distinctions is not part of his life. And this holistic approach to life forms the background for African anthropology.

And as I wrote elsewhere²², we need perhaps to think here about the contribution of Ikenga Metuh in order to understand fully the African conception of man. He sees in the African holistic worldview a deep connection between the spirit-world and the human-world. “Spirits and humans are both persons. Spirits are distinguished from humans in that they are invisible and are exceedingly more powerful. Religion (and life in general) is interplay between *mmadu* and *mmuo*, humans and spirits.”²³ He furthermore suggests that a distinction be made between the notion of man and the self (the person and the self). Paradoxically, man is one but self is multiple. Man is not subject to the body and soul dichotomy as in western thought. Man can exist in his material body or out of it without being split. When out of the material body, man can be described as a

¹⁸ IDOWU, E.B., *Olodumare – God in Yoruba Belief*, London, 1962, 146.

¹⁹ LEONARD, A.G., *The Lower Niger and its Tribes*, London, 1966, 429.

²⁰ MBITI, J.S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, 1982, 3.

²¹ APPIAH- KUBI, K., “Jesus Christ – some Christological Aspects from African perspectives”, in Mbiti, J.S., (ed), *African and Asian Contribution to contemporary theology*, Bossey, 1977, 204-8.

²² NDUKAIHE, V.E., *Achievement as Value in the Igbo/African Identity: The Ethics*, Berlin, LIT, 2006.

²³ METUH, E.I., *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes: The Problem of Interpretation*, Jos, (2nd ed) 1991, 110.

spiritual body. A dead person is always visualized in a bodily form, as a sort of unquantified body, imagined to be like the shadow of a man on a sunny day.

Man is the individual person created by God. A living person is called ‘*onye mmadu*’, and a dead person is called ‘*onye mmuo*’. The “*onye*” is the personhood in man – dead or alive. Hence it is the full individual person not a part of him or his soul (as in Christian faith: where death is the removal of the soul from the body. “Der Tod bedeutet die Trennung von Seele und Leib”²⁴), which survives after death. For the African, there is no separation of body and soul at death; there is only a transformation and change in the form of existence. Here, as opposed to Christianity, the whole person continues to live in the land of the dead. That is why the dead are buried with some material items that are believed would facilitate their continued successful existence in the other world. In all fairness to the Christian faith however, the body/soul separation does not render the soul purely Platonic. The church teaches that there exists a re-unification at the resurrection. “Man kann diese Lehre freilich nur dann richtig verstehen, wenn man es damit macht, dass die Seele nicht ein Teil des Menschen neben dem Leib ist, sondern das Lebensprinzip des einen und ganzen Menschen, modern formuliert: sein Ich, sein Selbst, die Mitte seiner Person.”²⁵ One can understand this teaching only when one does not see the soul as a part of the body that lies beside it, but rather as the life-principle of the one and whole human being.

In a modern formulation, the ‘I’ and the ‘self’ constitute the centre of the human person. For the African, this ‘I’ and ‘self’ are at no point separated; the human remains always unique. Similarly, at conception, a new individual person is created by God and born into the world. This is so in spite of the belief on reincarnation. “The ancestors, of course, are neither the reincarnated children’s creators nor do they actually come back to life in their persons but only in their qualities and influence.”²⁶ What reincarnates is not the personhood (the man) of the ancestor but the principle of the self.

Therefore the world of the African is a holistic one, seeing no difference between the spiritual and temporal, and all centering their activities on man. To this effect therefore, African anthropology regards man, not just as the individual, who is bodily present, but rather, man – *mmadu* is best seen as a life force at the centre of multiple interactions: the individual within himself, with his lineage community, and with the spirit world. *Man is a life force interacting with other life forces in the universe.*

So, when an African sees a child, the image that he has of him is the entire chain of the cosmic relationship transpiring in this child. That is why one handles

²⁴ *Katholischer Erwachsenen Katechismus* (Das Glaubensbekenntnis der Kirche), hrsg. Von d. Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Bonn 1985, 408.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ OKOLO, C.B., „The Traditional African and Christian Values: (Dimensions of Dialogal Encounter)“ in *African Ecclesia Review (AFER)*, vol 2, 1987, 85.

this little human being with caution, fear and respect, bearing in mind what he represents. He is endowed with different principles of self, which link and allow him to interact with other beings in the world. *Chi* – spirit double links man with God; *Eke/Agu* – the incarnated ancestral spirit links man with the ancestors; and *Obi* – heart and mind holds life as primary substance in the self and links man with the entire universe of life forces. These could be regarded as the sources of the self, and make up the identity of the child and as such every human being in the African sense. And these various and different aspects of the self and identity are seriously taken into consideration in the upbringing of the African child. This African holistic view of man influences immensely their ideas and methods of educating their young ones. Whoever sees or deals with a child, is conscious of the fact that, in this little being, he is dealing with God, his ancestors and the ring of cosmic organs, who are steadily interacting with the human being.

Summarily, the Africans see themselves as creatures of a Divine Being. They owe their origin to the Ultimate Reality who at conception gave them that refraction of Him which in theosophical language is called Divine Spark. This aspect of the Ultimate Reality manifests itself through so many intangible entities in man such as: *mmuo* – spirit soul, *ako-na-uche* – intellect, *Chi* – spirit double, *ume* – life breath, *ndu* – life force and *akara-aka* – destiny. Above all, the human person is at the centre of creation and existence; hence the African Igbo name – *Mmaduka(ihe)*, that means: the human person is greater than things. Basically, in the African anthropology, man is seen as a creature of *Chineke* – (the God that creates), *Chukwu* – (the Supreme Being). The Igbo word for man (human person irrespective of sex, age and status) is *mmadu*. Etymologically, this concept stems from two words: *mma* – goodness, beauty; and *ndu* (*du*) life (existence). This suggests that the Igbo, and Africans in general, see man as the fullness, goodness and beauty of life. That is why the prime value for them is life, *Ndukaihe* (life surpasses all things), and the epitome of life exists in the human person. Thus when one does anything that negates, dehumanizes, or fails to promote life, the Igbo ask: *Onyea obukwa mmadu?* (Is this person a human being?). That is to say, every action of man – spiritual and temporal, is and should be geared towards the promotion of the goodness of life – *mmadu* (human being).

Moreover, the Africans understand that it was through these in-built theophoric channels that they relate ontologically to other beings in their cosmos. In order to maintain the cordial ontological relationship so that man would enjoy his true self and being as man, the Africans have to ensure that these channels are not desecrated, and this engendered the creating of the myriads of cosmic laws called taboos in simple language. Africans also have a philosophy of living, which is both a way of life and at the same time a key to the ontological solution of their problems. It is also in their thinking that it is only man that has the privilege of having soul among all other living beings in this corporeal world. With this special gift to man, the Igbo forebears called man *mmandu* – the beauty of life, who has the Di-

vine blessing of living here now, and there in the spirit world, while continuing to live here afterwards by reincarnation. With all these theosophical privileges at the back of their minds, they tried to display a spiritual life always in order to continue in a cordial relationship with the Ultimate Reality, because it is only by doing so, that they would continue enjoying the “paradise stage”²⁷ of life.

The birth of a new child is seen as the beginning of the journey to this “paradise stage”. All the ontological credentials are in-born in the child from day one. But the young person must be equipped for the journey, which he must make through our complicated world. That is why the Africans believe that the child must be brought up with the culture and values of his people and his world. The upbringing and education of the young is therefore seen as an additional preparation geared towards the actualization of life in this “paradise stage” of existence.

Moreover, considering the imperfection of human nature, and the dreams for a secure future, upbringing and education of the young are seen as necessary steps towards the actualization of real life. It might be interesting here to note that the idea of old-age insurance – what the Germans call *Rentenversicherung* – is not yet existent in most African states, partly for reasons of poorly organized political and social financial structural systems, but most primarily as a result of the belief that an African begets children basically to ensure that he has future generations, who will take care of him at his old-age. No wonder the existence of such names: *Nwabuechim* – my child is my tomorrow, my future; *Nwa-akolam* – (God) let me not lack children; *Nwabuolum* – my child is my voice; *Nwabunchekwubem* – my child is my hope; etc. One’s own child is one’s greatest insurance. Those who have no children are often sorrowful and live in fear of a miserable old-age.

Finally, I see my position confirmed in the African image of the child: A child is the gift of God and as such good, but must be educated for his personality actualization. This view is contained in such names like: *Nwa-amaka* – the child is good, *Nwa-bu-Onyinyechi* – the child is God’s gift. In addition, the child is the future guarantee for the parents, family (nuclear and extended) and community (*Nwabuechi* – the child is the future). Moreover, the child is an honour to his family (*Nwabugwu* – my child is my honour and prestige, *Nwabuuhum* – my child is my face, my mirror, etc.) Nonetheless, an educated child is a huge asset to his people (*nwa-azuziri mma bu ugwu ndi nwe ya* – a well brought up child is the pride and glory of his people). Based on these facts, I strongly believe with the Africans in the importance and value of proper upbringing of the child. Children must be educated and brought up as present and future ambassadors, to face the challenges of their time, and be able to meet up with their present and future responsibilities. In this sense and with this view, therefore, a proper and an adequate development of the child is considered a *sine qua non*.

²⁷ ANIZOBA, O.M., “Igbo Concept of Man: A premise for understanding the fundamentals of Igbo Metaphysics”, in *University of Nigeria Library series*, Nsukka, 1989, 8.

Along this line of the child's development, every region of the globe should be in the position to bring up their young with regional values and cultures, but not losing sight of the relevance of these values to the global existence and collective survival of humanity. This means, in concrete, that educational psychology can also wear African clothes, whose pedagogical effects must be relevant to the global solidarity of the entire humanity.