

**A REVIEW OF IGWEBUIKE AND BEING IN IGBO ONTOLOGY BY PROF.
ANTHONY IKECHUKWU KANU, O.S.A**

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The paper published in January 2019 in *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* is a work of great reminiscence. Though a journal paper, it delved into a much needed contemporary issue with regard to the prospect in African Philosophy that has come to stay. The question of being as *what is* or *that which exists* is very central and fundamental in Igbo Ontology and it's very proper to the area of Metaphysics. Igbo Ontology is simply Igbo being. Ontology, therefore, studies the structure, meaning and principle of whatever is in so far as it exists. Metaphysics, however, studies and investigates the network as well as the nexus of interrelatedness of realities as such in their deepest ontological sense. From the verb *to be*, a kind of activity the nomenclature *being* presents itself as something knowable. If man knows being at all, he knows Being as such.

Accordingly, the author gave a succinct appreciation of Igwebuike as the modality of being in Igbo Ontology. Igwebuike is an Igbo word, which is a combination of three words. Thus, it can be understood as a word and as a sentence: as a word, it is written thus, *Igwebuike*, and as a sentence, it is written as, *Igwe bu ike*, with the component words enjoying some independence in terms of space. For Kanu, *Igwe* is a noun which means number or population, usually a large number or population. *Bu* is a verb, which means *is*. *Ike* is a noun, which means *strength* or *power*. Put together, it means 'number is strength' or 'number is power', that is, when human beings come together in solidarity and complementarity, they are powerful or can constitute an insurmountable force. At this level, no task is beyond this collective capability. To this point there is an ontological perspective that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations.

Kanu specifically identifies *Igwebuike* as a being-with. *Igwebuike* means "there is strength in unity", it believes in the harnessing of the group or community effort. There is no isolation of being from the other, it is a form of being-with, a form of belongingness, a form of *sharedness* otherwise there is alienation. Equally, the

Igbo people normally talk of power as something that belongs to the multitude (“Igwe-bu-Ike”). In fact, the very concept of the multitude is in itself understood as a source of power and authority.

Kanu strongly articulates in this paper under review that Igwebuiké rests on the African principles of solidarity and complementarity. It argues that ‘to be’ is to live in solidarity and complementarity, and to live outside the parameters of solidarity and complementarity is to suffer alienation. ‘To be’ is ‘to be with the other’, in a community of beings, that is, Igbo being. It is a kind of communalism, which is an African philosophy of community underlying the principle and unity of African thought and culture.

Kanu, to properly situate his *Igwebuiké and Being* in Igbo-African Ontology, delved into and through many philosophical works of great African Philosophico-Historical figures like Placide Tempels’ *Bantu Philosophy*, Alexis Kagame’s *Ntu*, Emmanuel Edeh’s attempt at *Igbo Metaphysics*, the *Chi* of Okere, T., Abanuka, B., and Njoku, F.O., and Panteleon Iroegbu’s *Belongingness*. Kanu’s review of these philosophico-Historical heavyweights’ thoughts showed that their positions and postulations have introduced more problems to the proper appreciation of being in Igbo-African Philosophy. Kanu, however, opined that the appropriate concept of being in Igbo-African Metaphysics is *Idi*. In a very particular and strict sense, the western appreciation of being as *what is* has over the time, in line with Igbo worldview and development in African Philosophical tradition and African philosophical enterprise undergone the needed and expected nomenclatural-translational appreciation in line with Igbo-African awareness and understanding of reality as such.

Igwebuiké is an African metaphysics of communalist existence. It is an Ideology. It is the modality of Igbo being. It is very central and at the heart of African Philosophy as a movement and as a discipline. Igwebuiké shows the existential interaction and interrelatedness in Igbo-African community. Being as whatever is, is in one way or the other, that reality that simply belongs. Being, therefore, belongs and this is what one understands as the modality of being. And this form of modality is belongingness.

Kanu, an astute thinker and prolific-philosophical writer through his *categorization of being* summarily showed Igwebuiké as an ideology in the manner, the way, the style or the modality of being, that is, being in relation to the other. Aesthetically, Kanu definitively appreciates Igwebuiké as the *uZO* (modality) of

idi (being). Igwebuike as the modality of being is at the heart of African Philosophical enterprise.

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