

A REVIEW OF KANU, IKECHUKWU ANTHONY'S "IGWEBUIKE AND THE LOGIC (NKA) OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY"

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The paper is a modest effort at articulating an African logic which is the basis or source for the now fully developed discipline of African Philosophy. Its basic presupposition is that asking if there is an African logic is an illogical question; for if there were no African logic, we cannot be talking about African Philosophy. Philosophy is intimately connected to logic and in fact, it is logic that makes philosophy. For this reason, when there is an African Philosophy, an African logic must follow. At a second level, philosophy is obviously a culture bound engagement and since logic is part of philosophy, logic also has to be culture bound. Therefore, there has to be an African logic which gives meaning to and determines what African Philosophy is. What then is this African logic?

Before considering what African logic is, the paper first looks at what logic is. Taking together the position of different scholars, the submission of the paper is that "the art of sound, correct and critical reasoning is the domain of logic" (11). Logic is concerned with producing truth, coherence, consistency and orderliness in arguments and reasoning. Given the concerns of logic, it can perhaps be seen as the most important branch of philosophy. Following from this, the paper is of the opinion that African logic focuses on "the structure of African thought." This is because, "every culture and people have its own peculiar way of thinking or reasoning, and it is the African pattern of reasoning that has brought about logic" (12). By this token, African logic is a variant of logic and there are others. This assumes the diversity of logic and this assumption is premised on the fact that logic is intimately related to language and as languages are different and culture bound, so too logic has to express this diversity. Languages in communicating express the reasonability and rationality of communication and self-expression. It is also through this linguistic medium that logic is also established. African logic speaks to the centre or locus of logicity from an African purview. Here, African logic is the basis upon which something makes sense for the African. The author of the paper uses some Igbo proverbs to further make his point. One of such is,

‘whenever the palm tree tilts, it is because of what the earth has told it.’ Thus, within the African frame, the earth can talk to the palm tree and it is logical so say the palm tree listens. Such conclusions are not reached from only single occurrence, but from several instances and this becomes the basis for logical connection.

Haven generally set the frame for African logic, the paper gets down to specifics with regard to the core elements of African logic. The paper considers Igwebuiké as that which universalises and particularises logic within the African context. At the universal level, logic is one, it is that which appeals to every reasonable mind. Syllogistic arguments, for example, belong to this universal level. Logic becomes particular within the context of application. Here, cultural experience becomes a fundamental fact in determining what is logical. This the point where Igwebuiké connects with African logic. It is what determines logicality in the African context. Igwebuiké represents complementarity. It is an Igbo word or phrase which can be translated as ‘number is strength’. That is, human beings are insurmountable when they come together in solidarity and complementarity. Being is presented here as that which possesses a relational character. Igwebuiké framework seeks the conglomeration, unification, and summation of fragmented thoughts. This complementary relationality of Igwebuiké can be linked to the relational harmony which Plato describes in the soul and the state in *The Republic*. Igwebuiké insists that humans all work together in order to attain the total joy of completion. The paper also contends that Igwebuiké ontologically grounds African logic. This is the case because Igwebuiké is dialectical. That is, it involves some sort of contradictory process between opposing sides. Just as it is the case in Plato’s dialogues and Hegel’s logic, dialectics or confrontations is a key mode of African logic courtesy of the Igwebuiké frame. From a proverbial point of view, the Igbos say that, ‘God who creates mud, made available something to wash off mud.’ This goes to show that, though both mud and water are opposing forces, they are both sides of the same coin. This represents a kind of “inner curve of reciprocity” (16). This is what helps African epistemology to avoid the dualism of subjectivism or objectivism. This is how Igwebuiké grounds African logic.

As mentioned earlier, this paper is bold and commendable effort. But there are grey areas that require attention. In the first place, the understanding of logic which ties it to language is quite an insufficient understanding of logic. By this, it is meant that the understanding of logic which grounds the discourse of

Igwebuike and African logic is restrictive. Although, the paper defines logic in quite a comprehensive sense when it says that, the art of sound, correct and critical reasoning is the domain of logic and that it is concerned with producing truth, coherence, consistency and orderliness in arguments and reasoning. At the point when it begin to make its arguments for an African logic, it then reduces the understanding of logic to its relationship with language and culture. This understanding of logic is quite insufficient because, granted that communicative interaction has to be logical for it to be successful, such linguistic interaction captures only part of the core of logic. The etymology of logic is the Greek word *logos* which means speech, word or thought, but the development of the discipline has expanded way beyond just rationality of speech or thought. Other vital elements have been incorporated into its core. Consequently, given the insufficient understanding of logic, the essay seems to have a generally insufficient tone. The paper seems to have restricted logic to the realm of informal logic, not minding that there is formal logic, symbolic logic, mathematical logic and a host of others which encompasses what logic generally is in philosophy. It seems to ignore the fact that logic at its inception was formal. It is only recently that informal logic evolved to study and assess the logical elements of natural languages.

At another level, the particularisation of logic to linguistic frames, naturally relativizes the aspirations of such logic. Since logicity is that which makes sense within a particular cultural context, mutual validation can only happen thereof. When you say there is logic in the adage that 'whenever a palm tree tilts somewhere, it is because the earth has told it to', this logic only makes sense to someone who shares in the frame within which this kind of thought is established. The adage above suggests that the earth can talk and the tree has the capacity to listen. That is, inanimate objects can communicate in human-like manner. This kind of thought patter may be comprehensible to an Igalaman who believes that grasses, tress and even walls have ears. But to somebody who does not belong to such a frame, how does such a position make sense? Communication and interaction breaks down when there is a contact between people who do not share the same basic frame. The Fulani, in his logical frame, believes land is given by God and he can take land anywhere. The other average Nigerian believes he has an ancestral home and it is not right for anybody to take it. Two mutually incommensurable frame are confronting; two logics are clashing. The point here is that each is relative to those who hold them. This relativizing tendency of particularising logic is an issue Igwebuike logic has to

address. If not properly addressed, an ultimate result in this regard is the position that truth is more than one.

Also, it needs to be underscored that in as much as logic is a tool for self-expression, it is fundamentally a tool for assessment. This is clear enough from the understanding of logic as the study which helps to demarcate good from bad reasoning. From this understanding, logic basically incorporates the prescriptive disposition of philosophy. Here, the aim of logic is to identify thought processes or patterns that are flawed from those which are not. As was noted earlier, the paper under review belongs to informal logic, in the realm of informal logic, the study of fallacy is central. These fallacies guide thought to be able to sort out good from bad reasoning. This is why logic is basically about frames and structures. Its focus is on the impartial assessment of arguments and positions in order to determine that which has a greater measure of reasonability. It is only a dispassionate logic that can help to resolve issues when mutually incommensurable frames are clashing. It sets out to do its work by establishing which position is most reasonable. This is because reason has no cultural bounds. Every rational person can appreciate the dictates of reasonability. In fact, that we can appreciate complementarity is because it adheres to dictates of reasonability. Logic should stand as tool for assessment. This is the reason this review suggests Igwebuiké should be considered more as an orientation and an approach to philosophy rather than a logic.

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