

IGWEBUIKE: A FUNDAMENTAL APPROACH TO AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

Kanu, Ikechukwu Anthony's conceptual coinage of Igwebuikology is understood as the systematic study of Igwebuik philosophy within the bounds of traditional African philosophic enterprise with regard to prospects and problems. Igwebuikology is Kanu's fundamental approach to African philosophic enterprise visible in his other likely concepts as Igwebuikocracy, Igwebuikopedia and other literary publications. Using the method of critical evaluation and analysis, the researcher appreciates Kanu's great effort in contributing to African philosophical enterprise.

Keywords: Igwebuikology, African Philosophy, Being, Belongingness.

Introduction

African Philosophy is recently appreciated and defined as a movement and a discipline. As a discipline, it shares in the philosophical traditions especially the one that is African amidst its Africanity and Philosophicality. According to Osuagwu (1999), Philosophicality advocates claim for African Philosophy, a strictly formal and genuine scientific sense of the term and discipline of Philosophy. Advancing, Osuagwu (1999), states that the Africanity of African Philosophy also receives a scientific consideration, identification and specification. In its particularities, it includes the geo-ethno-technological factors. As a movement, it is an Afrocentric methodological deconstruction, reconstruction and construction aimed at reclaiming and rewriting the right and proper history of centuries of philosophical excursus. The concept of Igwebuikology is an extension of Igwebuik Philosophy, however, is an underlining principle for many African Philosophic heritages. Notwithstanding, Iroegbu (1994, p.116) defined African Philosophy thus:

African Philosophy is the reflective inquiry into the marvels and problematic that confronts one in the African world, in view of producing systematic explanation and sustained responses to them. It is inquiry with two aspects: philosophical and African.

Beyond every derogatory reference of African philosophy as Sage philosophy, Folk Philosophy, Negritude and or Ethno Philosophy as well as far from being just the maxim that constitutes the *leit-motif* or inspiring principle, that is the *motto* or *philosophy of life*, African philosophy according to Iroegbu (1994, p. 117-118) is philosophy done in an African context...In this respect, every philosophy is contextual philosophy. It is, therefore, *quest for (African) wisdom*. Stressing further, Iroegbu (1994, p. 116) explains that *African philosophy is the reflective and systematic investigation into the fundamental question that confronts the human being*. Like other philosophical enterprise, African philosophy is a human enterprise.

Explication of Igwebuikology

Igwebuikology is simply a coinage of Igwebuiké and Logy literally meaning science of Igwebuiké. It is a systematic knowledge of Igwebuiké in its entirety. Igwebuikology is a science or systematic study of Igwebuiké Philosophy as it applies to Igwebuiké Ethics, Igwebuiké Economics, Igwebuiké Politics, etc. As a concept, Igwebuiké embodies all the fundamental appreciation and application of the philosophy of Igwebuiké. It's Kanu's proposal to the typology of Igbo being. Igwebuiké therefore is a hermeneutics of communal strength as the typology of Igbo belongingness where being is in one way or the other. That is to say that a being fundamentally belongs. Igbo being therefore is Igbo belongingness. Being is belongingness.

According to Kanu (2014), Igwebuiké is *the study of the modality of being for the realization of the being*. Where being is seen as belongingness, Igwebuiké can be said to be the modality of being through belongingness. Equally Kanu, (2015) sees Igwebuiké as one concept that stands on the principles of solidarity and complementarity. Igwebuiké in this extended use remains a great underlying principle for great many African philosophic thoughts and knowledge. (Ekei, 2005, p.331), descriptively showed the proper meaning of Igwebuiké thus:

The importance of communal existence is a rational provision aimed at a better understanding and appreciation of man, not as a discrete individual but as a being-with. This understanding has provided an enduring manner of attending to man as being with an inalienable interconnectivity with the rest of men. And so, the idea of coexistence as bedrock of caring and concern (sympathy) is highly significant in Africa as a

whole. Hence, the Igbo people normally talk of power as belonging 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.

Understanding of Igbo Being

Umeogu (2007,p.108), defines Igbo being thus, Igbo being means Igbo reality. It means identity. It means Igbo space. It means Igbo time. It means Igbo people. To be precise, Igbo being means everything or any place or any person at all. Igbo being in a very strict sense is a concrete reality, a spatial reality and temporal reality that belongs. Umeogu, (2007) however reiterates that “the typology of Igbo being is belongingness”.

Understanding Igbo Belongingness

Iroegbu, (2000), in one of his papers referred to *Being as Belongingness: An African metaphysics To Be*. Belongingness is therefore an African metaphysics of being. It is a proper African understanding and appreciation of existence and condition of any and every reality as such. A typical Igbo appreciation and understanding of existence or being is tied up in belongingness. Hence a being fundamentally belongs.

Belongingness is Ontosophical

Being is ontosophical. The concept of ontosophical shows that being *which is belongingness* is knowable. Its *knowability* is metaphysical. Belongingness is knowable. *Stanford dictionary of Philosophy*, however, has it that in line with Fitch's paradox of knowability which is one of the foundational or fundamental puzzles of metaphysical epistemic logic, there is a challenge to the knowability thesis, which states that every truth is, in principle, knowable. One may refer to it as metaphysical episteme or epistemological ontology. They point at one indubitable fact that being as belongingness is knowable. The paradox is that this assumption implies the omniscience principle, which asserts that every truth is known.

Belongingness, like Igwebuiké, is activity. They are action packed. Belongingness is a fundamental quality in understanding being. No being can be understood in terms of its completeness but in its relation to other beings. Every being is defined by a relation to something or with an attribute of engaging in something. This fact of ‘beingness’, which is a form of relation, is a form of belonging to, belonging with, and belonging in which in relation therefore,

becomes a kind of state by which being realizes itself among others and others within it. This relation spells out a place where being realizes itself, a place of social reality, a kind of integrated universe, in Donne's word: "...a piece of the continent, a part of the main..." This relational form or way of belonging as an integral universe is not a differential one but a fundamental or ontological integration. And for this particular being in itself, it is through this fact of belongingness that it integrates itself in reality.

This is to say that being belongs and this belongingness is a fundamental condition for a thing to be considered a reality. To this end, being and belongingness are said to be ontological. Reality therefore, is better known and understood by the concept of belongingness. In other words, reality or being, in its total manifestation, is a process involving belongingness. Without belongingness, there would be no discussion on being. Whatever is part of reality is belonging to something. To understand being as belongingness, it must be understood in its relation to others. Belongingness however, overshadows these existential facts of operations. This notion of belongingness is clearly reflected in John Donne's (1996) 'No Man Is An Island';

No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a
piece of the continent, a part of the main... any
man's death diminishes me, because I am involved
in mankind, and therefore, never send to know for
whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.

Being's identity, therefore is in belongingness. Belongingness identifies being as such. Being's nature is in belonging. Its role is in belonging. Its mode and operations are in belonging. Belongingness, as such, is the ontological value of being. By belongingness being is related to other beings by relationship of what it is or does. In understanding being as belongingness on the onto-relational level, there should be, as Iroegbu, (1995,p.374) opines solidarity of belongingness in being and solidarity of being in belongingness, in the manner in which we exist and relate in the reality of being and belongingness:

Belongingness holds that our existence as human beings,
as well as our integral participation in the society in
which we find ourselves, are to be defined by our being
given the sense and substance of belongingness.

Being as belongingness is necessitated while comprehending being as expressing itself thereby, rolling into belongingness in its general and fundamental character and attribute. Often, the question is, can being be without belongingness? Echoing Jean-Paul Sartre, there is no being which is not the being of a certain mode of belonging, a certain mode of existence.

Ingredients of Belongingness

An ingredient is a substance that forms part of a *mixture*. It means an essential part, a component, a constituent or an element. Every concept has something that helps to build it or that made up its whole. There are few concepts that are basic to the formation or appreciation of belongingness as the African communalist metaphysics of being as such. They are:

Knowledge

Being as belongingness is *ontosophical*. Knowledge is very important in life. Francis Bacon in his entire philosophical enterprise summarily declared that knowledge is power. The Bible even says that God's own people perish because they lack knowledge (Hosea 4:4). Knowledge is a product of man's quest to get into the other or something. Belongingness, the issue at hand, does require knowledge even if it seems not to. It is not a matter of regarding or intending to do that. In order to really belong, you must know the other, his needs, and be disposed and determined to respond to these. You need to know the limitations and powers of who and what you are belonging to. In belongingness, I know the other directly; the union I experience with that other goes with my awareness of its separateness and individuality. It is uncommon for us not to realize that knowing is involved in belongingness due to our habits which most often restrict knowledge to the intellect and arbitrarily, to what can be verbalized. But the truth is that not only words are or could be communicated, and once we think so, we restrict equally the meaning of communication, and that is dangerous; for experience remains a valid kind of knowledge and experience is acquired in relation with other people. Knowledge is very relational. Knowledge not only relates but has universal application.

Hope

Hope has enshrined in itself the principles of projection and expectation, tied in an embrace towards a progressive move in a man's bid to actualize himself. Man, no doubt, is hopeful, for he is perpetually hoping in expectancy and, at times, in suspense. Hope is the thread of life and could be seen as the elixir of life. In belongingness, there is every inclination for the other to grow and this specific

expectation is stringed unto caring. What does hope mean in the context of belongingness? It does suggest hoping for growth, and the hoping of growth, as we hope, our belongingness equally hopes; and continues to stretch. Hope does suggest an expression of the plenitude of the present, by the participation of the elements of the nature. By belonging one is stirred and spurred by the possibilities to be realized. Belongingness is not only associative, it is also multidimensional and once the light of belongingness is not shining, there would not be growth, and that being will, no doubt, start to decline. Belongingness though rooted in the past and present is equally rooted in the future as it enlarges the importance of the present, but does not subordinate the present and cannot turn it into a mere means. Life is replete with hope and in it there is an inter-twine of love and faith. We hope for the actualization of a purpose, in anticipation of a promise. In belongingness the expectations of the past, present and future are tied.

Care

Care is feasible and possible because of belongingness. It is one's ability to create and maintain relationships that facilitate the growth of the other and stands in a position to say something positive towards the growth of yourself and the other. The meaning which a being has to fulfil is something beyond himself, it is never just himself." Once one remains in his own cocoon, he is selfish, he cannot expand or enlarge himself, for he does not really live as a gregarious animal. Man is a social animal; that means he is made to live in a society; he who is unable to do so is either a beast or a god. It then suggests that one needs to be his brother's keeper, must care for the other in order to really hold that he belongs to the community, which cannot be sustained without the oil of care. It is by caring for another that you aid him to grow, and by so doing it enters the process of self-development and actualization. Whether one is belonging to a group, community, etc., a particular trend is seen and a pattern is established. It is care that helps an individual to record, and indeed, orders one's principles and values properly together with activities around this great project of belongingness; which could be stretched to lead to the source of life – God. It is via care that we can get at belongingness and arrive at the meaning of our lives. Man is at home with himself, not by dominating or even appreciating nature, but by caring and being cared for. It is the project of belongingness, strictly speaking, that can ameliorate the human condition or situation. In belongingness, one does not need to lose touch with either himself or the other. With care, belongingness becomes more meaningful as it unifies all the activities of relatedness among beings that always belong.

Patience

In a world dominated by turmoil, scandals and ethical breaches, where people and institutions lack integrity and moral fortitude, discouragement is bound to prevail. Where negativism and social dilemmas take stronghold of people's minds, probabilities are that more people will become more impatient, hence, there is need for patience in order to maintain equilibrium in the society. It is in the bid to really participate in the project of belongingness that the nudge one requires to forge ahead and explode positively is built and maintained, so as to really become the changed person belongingness makes of one, for it is not static. By belonging, you mature, and maturity at different levels, entails transcending your own needs and wading through life, forging ahead to tap into the deepest resources of our humanity. Doing so suggests the reality and necessity of patience.

Patience entails waiting. As you exercise patience you grow and mature in wisdom and knowledge, and eventually gather experience, you assist the other to grow according to his own pattern, and realize himself in his own time. Patience entails tolerance, and as such, encourages human relationship for it is indeed a mark of respect for the other. You require patience to really belong to any group or community as there are various behaviours and characters. To belong, you must give oneself a chance to learn, see explore and use time meaningfully so as to really influence human relations and blend with others who are positive-minded as belongingness is positive and tied to excellence.

Justice

It is impossible to belong and remain in a naturally or manmade hostile environment. Justice as giving to each his or her due upholds belongingness as very basic for the possibility of dispensing justice. Belongingness as a definitive principle of communalism is the arrangement of the fundamental structures of any society such that it incarnates and manifests the commonness of origin of history and of general destiny of all the members of the community. Belongingness is, therefore, "Umunna concretized". Belongingness pursues in a large sense the social justice of the people. According to Iroegbu, (1996), "*it (belongingness) makes sure that all belong and that none is marginalized: both contributively and distributively.*" Belongingness here will be understood as a defining principle in the theory of African Communalism. The fundamental structures of communal existence are definitively pillared on belongingness.

Expressions of Belongingness in some African Philosophical Concepts

Onebunne (2012), shows that there is a growing reflection on and expansion of literature on African philosophy, African concepts and African realities. In African philosophical traditions, there are some concepts that contrast or even explain Western philosophical traditions and concepts. One of such concepts is belongingness. However, there are many expressions of belongingness either in a strict sense or in a large sense, by implication or otherwise by many African thinkers of repute. Some of these African philosophers, in trying to posit their philosophies ended up directly or indirectly buttressing the fact of belongingness as a fundamental fact of being as well as a definitive principle of African Communalism. It is in this sense that belongingness is the propulsion of being towards self-realization. This is why belongingness remains a process towards, a way of becoming, and as well, an activity of being within a community of beings.

Many African philosophers and authors indirectly dealt with the prospects and principle of belongingness in their pursuit for an African identity, the socio-economic and political well being of Africans. The philosophical engagements of some of these philosophers are on different levels expressing communalism in concrete deep terms especially in the ideological - political or philosophical thoughts like *African brotherhood* or *Ujamaa* (Nyerere), *Negritude* (Senghor), *Consciencism* (Nkrumah) and other authors. What of the philosophical writings of Placide Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy* and John Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophy*. Others are the Theories of African Personality to Recover and Build on the Identity of the African (Edward Wilmot Blyden), *Pan-Africanism* for the entire African in or out, the *African Humanism* that preaches that traditional Africans were humane and communal, with a spirit of "Ubuntu" - humanness.

Linguistic Appreciation of Igwebuiké

Igwebuiké etymologically is a composite word *Igwebuiké* as well as a complete sentence *Igwe bu ike* all meaning literally unity of strength or communal strength. *Igwe* means group or community, it means an association. For Kanu, (2017) the linguistic formation of *Igwebuiké* makes the word to be "at the heart of African thought, and in fact, the modality of being in African Philosophy". Kanu understands that, *Igwe* is a noun which means number or population. *Bu* is a verb meaning is. *Ike* is another verb meaning power or strength.

Igwe means being. *Igwe* means belongingness. *Igwebuiké* is a communalist metaphysical theory of collective action, strength and power. The strength and power in question fundamentally rests on the community. It is a communal

strength for corporate existence. Igwebuike therefore is a philosophy of communal agreement and consensus.

Kanu, (2017), Igwebuike literally means number is strength or number is power. This power or strength is manifested when human beings work in solidarity and/or complementarity Kanu opined. Igwebuike like Belongingness is in line with African Worldview life and activities are shared. Kanu, (2017, p.120) reiterates this when he affirms that “Igwebuike is a complementary philosophy which understands life as a shared reality”. Igwebuike is therefore an expressive modality of being as belongingness in African Philosophy. It is an expression of collective capability. This idea is well articulated in Asouzu’s Ibuanyidanda as Complementary Ontology. As an action word therefore, Igwebuike carries the entire arrangement of African reality. In line with view, Kanu convincingly affirms that Igwebuike is an African Philosophy of complementarity.

Philosophical Principles of Igwebuike

Igwebuike has a complementary methodological moment. For Kanu, “the underlying principle of Igwebuike Philosophy is the principle of complementarity. Complementarity here is understood as balance, a kind of match or to add to. It has to do balancing or combining well. To complement, therefore, means to bring together, and most probably form a new look or idea. Kanu, however, explains that, “as the modality of, complementary relations to the other, therefore, becomes the point of fulfilment for being, for it is in relation to the other that a being realizes itself”. Every being needs the other for self realization- the self is not realized in isolation. This is a form of relationally belongingness.

Expressions of Kanu’s Igwebuike Philosophy

It is indeed a credit that Kanu has over the years sustained Igwebuike Philosophy via many numerous publications and themes. His publications on Igwebuike and other concepts of human endeavour and enterprise show his dedication to explore to the fullest the philosophy of Igwebuike. Igwebuike concept has been turned into an institution by numerous engagement and projects the idea of Igwebuike offers to the human society via Kanu’s intellectual rigour and submissions. Hence one thinks of *Igwebuike Journals, Igwebuikepedia: An African Internet* . Few of Kanu’s papers to this regard are: *Igwebuike as an Igbo-African Philosophy of Inclusive Leadership*, *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol.3, No.7, 2017, *Igwebuike Philosophy and Human Rights Violation in Africa* in *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*,

Vol.3, No.7, 2017., *Igwebuike Philosophy and Issues of National Development*, in *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol.3, No.6, 2017.

Igwebuike in Communalism

There is Igwebuike in communalism. However, the term communalism as a theory originates from the latin origins as *communio-onis (f) communis -is-e; communitas -alis (I)*. It is derived from the adjective communal, which originates from the French *commune* and is translated community. Communalism properly and generally expresses an intense community spirit and communal interrelationship that exist among groups of people or an entire people. Igwebuike is a product of community spirit. Communalism embodies ties of close relationship and interactions through common origin, language, culture, customs, religion and socio-economic life. In a large sense, it is an expression through nationality, that is, people from the same root. Hence, peoples commune easily, freely and more intensely with their members in contrast to social give and take, and this makes their community the central focus of their lives.

Communalism is opposed to individualism where people think and act on the basis of the wishes of the individuals as opposed to community good and values (it is as well opposed to pluralism where there are dualistic tendencies of opposing forces to every issue. Fundamentally, communalism undergirds the social aspect of human nature. It is so pronounced in African societies that it is regarded as an African way of life at least in pristine and still in many modern African societies and groups. Communalism remains an African political theory especially of well-ordered society. The various understanding of *communio-onis(f) and communion -is-e (adj)* underline the key characteristic of a human community, namely mutual participation, social relationship, fellowship and equal sharing of certain fundamental rights, values, origin (root), good or orientation in the community, which are often expressed in a nation as people from the same root (natus).

The full understanding of communalism is expressed in the meaning of community. According to Ekennia (1998), communalism expressed in a community, “refers to social relationship, fellowship, socialites, organized society. It invokes obligingness”. In our popular parlance and understanding, it invokes belongingness. The community is understood as a nexus of interrelational relationship for human actions and interaction. And communalism is practical in this community since it is basis for a communal life that demands a just ordered and well organized society. According to Senghor (1961), “we see this that the

Negro-African society is a collective society, more precisely communal..." The term communalism, associated with African society and life, has a political origin. It became famous in the western colonizers and for the decolonization of African continent. To some it is a political weapon for the independence and a development weapon for Africans. And Ekennia (1998) summed it up thus:

If communalism was regarded as one of the guesses made on the African social system by westerners in the eye of Mbonu Ojike, it turned out to be the foundation of African theories of political and economic liberations, in the work of authors like Kwame Nkurumah, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Julius Nyerere and many other politicians of Africa.

Nyerere (1976), however, defines African communalism as African brotherhood. His is an *Ujamaa* project in a practical concretization of a task of a command breakthrough for Africa. These African thinkers and writers who reiterate the original existence of the communal way of life among African people believe in the sense of the communion of soul, one mind, one spirit, as opposed to aggregation of individual in a society among Africans. In Iroegbu's (2001, p.41), "thus the life of sharing, communal togetherness distinguishes African societies from the western ones where there is pronounced individualism"

With regard to the status of communalism, Iroegbu believes that, communalism is not an abstract theory like the Hegelian Utopian ideal world. It is rather a realizable model designed for a particular society, an African one. Communalism, therefore, addresses the foundational and distributive structures of any society that is the institution of any society, which are so justly arranged for the good of all members, communalism remains a theory of justice for a well-ordered society for an ordered society where everyone belongs for the wellbeing of all. In such communal belonging, there is a kind of shared personality or *sharing with other selves*.

Conclusion

African philosophy is part of the world philosophical heritage. Igwebuike Philosophy is at the heart of African Philosophy which is part of the world Philosophical tradition like Chinese Philosophical tradition, European Philosophical tradition, etc. African Philosophy is part of the philosophical tradition that tries to underline the African heritage and knowledge. Igwebuikeology nevertheless is a philosophical tool that makes the African

Philosophical enterprise real. Igwebuikology places Igwebuik philosophy at the heart of African reality making African philosophical knowledge worth it.

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