

## IGWEBUIKE AND AFRICAN LOGIC

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### **Abstract**

*The major focus of this paper is to echo or reecho the reality of African communal spirit which is made manifest in almost everything the African does. This is all about sharing of ideas, discarding unjustified ideas and bowing to superior ideas. This paper recognizes the limited nature of the individual human person and as such finds a solution in the collective human person. The logic is simple: what I cannot see, my brother may see it; what my brother and I cannot see another person may see it. This is the spirit of igwebuike. Igwebuike as a foundational structure of African logic enables the African to maintain sound, correct, objective and critical reasoning. It makes it easier for the African to evaluate arguments without bias in order to distinguish correct reasoning from incorrect reasoning. This paper strongly argues that the proper understanding and application of igwebuike philosophy will help to sharpen the thinking faculty of the African. African logic therefore, provides the African the tools and skills as a being in the African world through the focal lens of Igwebuike philosophy.*

**Keywords:** Igwebuike, Philosophy, Logic, Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony, African

### **Introduction**

The fact that the human person is a rational being is undebatable and undeniable. Every human person, irrespective of culture, tribe, and nationality, manifests this essential quality: rationality. The rationality of the human person is mostly made manifest in the way and manner a person or a group of persons thinks or acts. It is from the action or inaction of a person that we can judge a person. The evaluation of a thing or a person is generally dependent on certain logical structures. This implies that without logic, the human person can hardly achieve anything meaningful.

It is important to note that the human person is a relational being. The implication of this statement is that the human person is a being that interacts with others; he communicates with others. Hence, he makes use of language as he communicates. Human communication will be very difficult if not impossible without logic. So, logic is an essential quality of language. It has been argued that

“logic is central to any culture because every culture has a language and language is only made possible by logic” (Ndubisi, 2017, p. 80). It is not possible to have an organized culture that is devoid of logic. The thrust of this paper is to establish the nexus between *Igwebuike* Philosophy and African logic. Suffice it to say that *Igwebuike* philosophy is an articulation of Professor Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu – a contemporary African philosopher and theologian. Kanu is the founder of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies; *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*; *Igwebuikipedia: Internet Encyclopedia of African Philosophy*; and many other academic foundations.

Therefore, to achieve the aim of this paper, we shall first of all take a look at the basic understanding of *Igwebuike*, logic, and also African logic. Thereafter, the paper shall make effort to present *igwebuike* philosophy as the foundation of African logic. The paper ends with a conclusion,

### **Igwebuike: A Brief Exposé**

There is a popular Igbo adage that says: *ofu mkpuru aziza anaghi aza ezi*; transliterated to mean: one stick of broom cannot be used to sweep. This means that when one brings many sticks of broom, they can form a bundle of sticks and only then can the bundle be used to sweep. It is a fact of life that no human person, no matter how intelligent or powerful, can claim to achieve success all alone. There is always the need of the other as one makes effort to climb the ladder of success. The above examples are clear manifestations of the notion of *igwebuike*. There are things one cannot achieve all alone; in this case, there is need to interact and collaborate with others. The concept of *igwebuike* is all about strength in many. It is a popular notion in Igbo worldview. However, as an ideology, it has been popularized by Professor Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu.

*Igwebuike* is a true manifestation of the African spirit – I am because we are. It is an ideology that finds true meaning of reality in relation to the other. The notion of *igwebuike* is such that when human beings gather together in one accord, they are powerful or can constitute an insurmountable force (Kanu, 2016a, Pp. 3 – 4; Kanu, 2016b, Pp. 8 – 88; Kanu, 2016c, Pp. 5 – 7; Kanu, 2017, Pp. 13 – 14). *Igwebuike* explains the kind of bond or strength in collaboration and community spirit. It is a fact of life that no human person can claim to know everything; and so the need of the other to complement one’s knowledge. Kanu (2016a) explains:

As an ideology, *igwebuike* 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 others' in a community of beings. This is based on the African Traditional Religious and philosophical experience (p. 3).

In sum, the concept of *igwebuike* is an indication of the necessity of synergy. Akam (2008) strongly avers that one of the essential factors for success is the ability to synergize (p. 72). *Igwebuike* as propounded by Kanu amplifies the value of African communal spirit towards achieving success or anything meaningful in life.

### **General Understanding of Logic**

Simply put, logic is the art of good and sound reasoning. It manifests the true nature of the human person as a rational being. It is all about the proper application of human rationality to human experiences. Logic is an essential property of a rational mind; it is what essentially differentiates human beings from other lower animals. Ndubisi (2015) presents a clearer analysis of the notion of logic:

Logic concerns itself with the proper method of reasoning. It distinguishes correct reasoning from incorrect reasoning; removes ambiguities and obscurities from human discourse. Logic brings out truth from false, consistency from inconsistency, orderliness from disorder, valid argument from invalid argument. Logic dissipates confusion that usually arises in our everyday discourse (p. 64).

The above citation is a concise view on the general notion of logic. On his part, Copi (1982) is of the view that logic studies the method and principles that enable us to distinguish good reasoning from bad reasoning and correct reasoning from incorrect reasoning (p. 21). Also Aja (2008) sees logic as the branch of philosophy that teaches us to reason correctly (p. 3). Echekwube as cited in Jaja and Badey (2012) avers that logic is concerned with the process of thinking and reasoning correctly (p. 96). From the foregoing, one can simply say that logic is the science of sound and correct reasoning. Therefore, having presented a brief overview of the concept of logic, the next subtopic shall focus on African logic.

### **African Logic**

The notion of African logic presupposes the existence of African philosophy. The struggle or debate for the existence of African philosophy can now be found in history books. No rational mind argues today about the existence of African

philosophy; the matter speaks for itself. Many scholars have come out to establish and enlarge our knowledge on the notion of African logic. In the words of Ndubisi (2017), "African logic is a major branch of African philosophy and it deals precisely with the application of reasoning to the world and culture of the African, to his language and object of his reference" (p. 82). The fact is that every people and culture has a particular way of reasoning that is unique to them. There is logic in every culture. This explains why Jaja and Badey (2012) sees African logic as "the application of the thinking process on the African world, language, culture and objects (p. 96). African logic, in this sense, deals with the reasoning of the African people with reference to language, beliefs and ways of life of the African people. It has to do with the ways the African thinks and reflects with reference to realities in the African world. Jaja and Badey (2012), Uduma (2015), Ogugua and Ogugua (2015), Ndubisi (2017) and Kanu (2017) have separately argued for the reality and nature of African logic. Without mincing words, Uduma (2015) observes that "the existence of African philosophy is supposed to dovetailed the existence of an African logic" (p. 59). The implication of Uduma's observation is very simple: we cannot have African philosophy without African logic. Ndubisi (2017) argues that "African logic is shaped therefore by the way the Africans view reality. It is a natural logic encompassing the entire worldviews of the African peoples and culture. African logic thus concerns itself not so much with abstract reasoning as with difficulties and problems of real life" (p. 83). Kanu (2017) sees African logic primarily as the "structure of African thought" (p. 12). He further explains: "Every culture and people has its own peculiar way of thinking or reasoning and it is the African pattern of reasoning that has brought about the African logic" (Kanu, 2017, p. 12).

One thing we must note is that Africans, as rational beings, possess quest for knowledge acquisition and they actually possess some knowledge. This knowledge of the African (African epistemology) can only be possible through the vehicle of African logic. So African logic provides the necessary 'Ingredients' towards the justification of what we claim to know. African logic, therefore, has to do with the application of reason to the affairs and realities in the African world with African lens.

### **Igwebuike and African Logic**

The notion of Igwebuike as earlier stated has to do with the communal spirit of the African people. It is anchored on the understanding of complementarity. In African world, there is a very serious connection between igwebuike philosophy and African logic. Generally, African people do not draw their conclusions

simply on what one person has said. Whenever and wherever the African people meet, the outcome of their reflection is not based simply on the authority of one person but on the general views of people concerned. Among the Igbo people of southeast Nigeria, it has been observed that generally, family or kindred discussions are based on the principle of *igwebuike*. There is always this idea of bowing to the superior arguments. With arguments and counter arguments, the African arrives at a general conclusion. This is the dialectical and complementary nature of African logic which is primarily structured on the philosophy of *igwebuike*.

For sure, the individual possesses logical and rational thinking. This notwithstanding, the logic of an individual is meaningful when compared and contrasted with others. This is a case of iron sharpens iron. Kanu (2017) elucidates:

The African worldview, therefore, is ruled by the spirit of complementarity which seeks the conglomeration, the unification, the summation of fragmented thoughts, opinions and individualized and fragmented thoughts and ideas. It believes that the whole is greater than the corresponding parts. It is also a view that maintains that by the coming together of the individual or parts, a viable and sustainable whole will emerge, and by this, the parts will get to the brim purpose of their existence (p.14).

One thing we must note is that African logic is communalistic. This does not mean that it does not have regard for individual or personal reflections and thoughts. It simply means: bring your ideas and let us reason together. There is always a greater strength when forces are pulled together. It is an existential fact that two good heads are better than one good head. This is the basis of the argument on *igwebuike* as the foundation of African logic. It is all about complementarity. This explains further the position of Asouzu (2004): "Complementarity is a philosophy that seeks to consider things in the significance of their singularity and in the exclusiveness of their otherness in view of the joy that gives completion to all missing links in reality" (p. 39). The African strongly believes and would always accept sound and critical reasoning that enjoys communal assent. In this case, if a person thinks that he has a stronger argument, the onus is on him to convince members of his community to see reasons with him. There is a high possibility that what one person sees may not be exactly the way the person presents it; hence the need for some other

persons to look at it again for the purpose of confirmation or refutation. This is the spirit of African logic that is largely hinged on the philosophy of igwebuike.

### **Conclusion**

So far, we have been able to establish the nexus between Igwebuike philosophy and African logic. The major focus of this paper is to echo or reecho the reality of African communal spirit which is made manifest in almost everything the African does. This is all about sharing of ideas, discarding unjustified ideas and bowing to superior ideas. This paper recognizes the limited nature of the individual human person and as such finds a solution in the collective human person. The logic is simple: what I cannot see, my brother may see it; what my brother and I cannot see another person may see it. This is the spirit of igwebuike. Igwebuike as a foundational structure of African logic enables the African to maintain sound, correct, objective and critical reasoning. It makes it easier for the African to evaluate arguments without bias in order to distinguish correct reasoning from incorrect reasoning. This paper strongly argues that the proper understanding and application of igwebuike philosophy will help to sharpen the thinking faculty of the African. African logic therefore, provides the African the tools and skills as a being in the African world through the focal lens of Igwebuike philosophy.

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