

A REVIEW OF PROF KANU'S "IGWEBUIKE PHILOSOPHY AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION IN AFRICA"

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One of the most intriguing aspects of Kanu's essay is mainly its effort to interrogate the spate of human rights violation in Africa from the perspective of the Igbo-African indigenous knowledge systems. He does this through the ideologies and perspectives embedded in the concept of 'Igwebuike.' The present study intends to disinter the strengths and weaknesses of Kanu's (2017a) proposal regarding how to not only consider but also safeguard and guarantee human rights in Africa. Before we explore the weight of his proposal, the task of each of the following paragraphs is to explain the meaning of Igwebuike as well as the spate of human rights violation in Africa. This is calculated to allow us to possess a good gaze of the perspective that Kanu's analysis derive.

The spate of human rights violation in Africa has almost become an abnormal norm that has not been given the needed critical revision and improvement. This, to my mind, seems to be the primary contention of Kanu (2017a). Kanu (2017) bemoans the firm grip of the fundamental human rights in several places in Africa where the lives of Africans have loss its intrinsic worth. Using Africa in general and Nigeria in particular as a point of cue, Kanu explores how human rights are violated from the dimensions of State, Religion and Biomedical research. Of these trio, I maintain that the biomedical perspective to the denigration of the lives of Africans is not to be treated as trivial. Perhaps this occurs according to Kanu (2017a: 12) as a result of "The challenges of underdevelopment, poverty, disease, inadequate health infrastructure etc." Kanu seems certain these factors contribute to "have made Africa to become a vulnerable group for the conduct of biomedical research" (Chima 2008: 12). And the consequence is not far-fetched the contraction of deadly viruses that have led to the death of innocent Africans. This is clearly a contradiction of what the principles of fundamental human rights depict. As a result of the high and disturbing transgression of the fundamental human rights of Africans, Kanu

(2017a: 124) proposes his Igwebuiké concept for succor. What exactly is Igwebuiké?

For Kanu (2017b: 171) 'Igwebuiké' is an Igbo word that is characterized by three simple words. On his terms, the three words involved: *Igwe* is a noun which means number or population, usually a huge number or population. *Bu* is a verb, which means *is*. *Ike* is another verb, which means *strength* or *power*. Thus, 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 (Kanu, 2017b: 171). From this etymological analysis it is clear that the concept extends to solidarity, collectivism, interdependence and mutual respect and understanding for one another. In the words of Kanu regarding how Igwebuiké works to curtail the spate of violence and extremism that undermine human rights:

Igwebuiké philosophy sees the other as a part of me, and together, in our peculiarities, we make up the whole. And if together we make up the whole, it then means that the other is a part of me and what affects the other affects me. To alienate the other is to alienate myself (Kanu, 2017a: 125).

As the foregoing illustrate, the essence of Igwebuiké is to mediate mutual understanding and respect – the perception of the other as an extension and embodiment of one self (Kanu, 2017a: 126-7). In his words: "The other is understood, not in terms of the 'I and the Not I' but in terms of the 'I and Thou'. The other is seen as a complement of the self, and to violate the human rights of the other who is a complement to you is to violate your own fundamental human rights" (Kanu, 2017a: 127).

In spite of the positive and social engineering essence of Kanu's Igwebuiké, one is still led to infer that his approach and application to the distinction between the one and the other is not nouveau. For instance, his use of the phrase 'I and Thou' is more synonymous with the existential ethic of Martin Buber. However, Kanu (2017a) uses the phrase here as though it sprung originally from his intellectual engagements. Similarly, assuming the traditional Igbo used this concept as a yardstick for social ordering one wonders why they still warred among themselves and in some cases against ethnic identities such as Igbo-Ibibio conflict and Akpa interventions (Isichei, 1983: 164).

In spite of the foregoing warrants, it is instructive to still maintain that Kanu's spirited effort still deserves accolades especially his exploration of the biomedical dimension to the violation of fundamental human rights in Africa. For the reader of his essay, this is the place where the shocking truths concerning human rights violation is rendered more acute yet given minimal attention in the public sphere.

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