

## THE IGWEBUIKE PHILOSOPHER AND SOCIETY: A PORTRAIT OF PROFESSOR KANU IKECHUKWU ANTHONY, O.S.A

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### **Abstract**

*This paper is written to introduce Professor Kanu, Ikechukwu Anthony, O.S.A. He a friar of the Order of Saint Augustine of the Province of Nigeria and a Professor of Religion and Cultural Studies, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umunya. Prior to Tansian, he served as Dean of Students at the International Bio-Research Institute, Enugu. He also taught Philosophy and Religion at Saint Augustine's Major Seminary, Jos and the Augustinian Institute, Makurdi. He is currently a member of the Governing Council of Veritas University, Abuja; a member of the Governing Board of the International Bio-Research Institute (IBI), Enugu and the Rector of Villanova Polytechnic, Oshogbo.*

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

### **Introduction**

KANU, IKECHUKWU ANTHONY, O.S.A., a friar of the Order of Saint Augustine of the Province of Nigeria is a Professor of Religion and Cultural Studies, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umunya. Prior to Tansian, he served as Dean of Students at the International Bio-Research Institute, Enugu. He also taught Philosophy and Religion at Saint Augustine's Major Seminary, Jos and the Augustinian Institute, Makurdi. He is currently a member of the Governing Council of Veritas University, Abuja; a member of the Governing Board of the International Bio-Research Institute (IBI), Enugu and the Rector of Villanova Polytechnic, Oshogbo.

Professor Kanu is the Founder/President of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies. His academic initiatives include *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* (IAAJAH), *International Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development* (IJASSD) and *Igwebuikepedia: Internet Encyclopedia of African Philosophy* (IIEAP). He has to his credit more than 162 papers published in National and International Journals; he has written 50 books and presented more

than 162 papers at National and International conferences. He is an Editorial Consultant to more than 20 National and International Journals. Professor Kanu has received several awards, and notable among them are: 2017 Africanwatch Orator Gold Merit Award, for Contribution towards Religious Research; 2018 Distinguished Academic of the Year, by the Society for Research and Academic Excellence (SRAE), University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN); 2018 Oracle of Wisdom Award, by the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University and 2018 Patron of the Arts, by the Faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Kanu has First Class Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy from the Urbaniana University, Rome; a First Class in Religious Studies from the University of Jos, Nigeria. He has Master's Degree in Religion and Human Relations from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and a second Master's Degree in Metaphysics from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In addition, he holds a Ph.D in Religion and Human Relations from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, with specialization in African Traditional Religion. He has been certified in *Advanced Negotiation Strategies* by the prestigious Harvard University, Boston, USA and in *Influencing People* by the Business School of the University of Michigan, USA; he has also been certified by HEC International Business School, Paris, France, on *Building your Leadership Skills*; He has been certified by the College of Business, University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign, USA on *Foundations of Everyday Leadership*. He has also been certified in *Creative Writing: The Craft of Plot-* by Wesleyan University, USA and on various courses on leadership and human development by the Young African Leaders Initiative Network, of the U. S. A. Department of State.

Professor Kanu is a member of several academic bodies including: American Academy of Religion (AAR), USA; The American Philosophical Association (APA), USA; Alternative Perspectives and Global Concerns (APGC), Canada; Igbo Studies Association (I.S.A), USA; International Society for Development and Sustainability (ISDS), Japan; Universal Researchers (UR), United Arab Emirates; and Global Association of Humanities and Social Science Research (GAHSSR), India; Commonwealth Academy of Science, Education and Arts, London and The National Coalition of Independent Scholars, San Antonio, Texas, USA. He is a Fellow of *Global Labour Organization*, USA; a fellow of the *Institute of Policy Management Development (IPMD)*, and a fellow of the *Society for Research and Academic Excellence (SRAE)*, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN); a fellow, Institute of Management Consultants (FIMC), Nigeria-London; a fellow of Eudoxia Research Centre (FMERC), Eudoxia Educational Centre, India and a

fellow of Commonwealth Academy of Science, Education and Arts, (FCA), London. Kanu was born on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1981, and hails from Arondizuogu in Imo State of Nigeria, an ancestral homeland and a centre of ancient civilization.

### **Professor Kanu: Proponet of Igwebuike Philosophy**

As a testament to his intellectual prowess and doggedness in pursuit of knowledge, Professor Kanu has not only distinguished himself as an erudite scholar but has added to the academic environment the philosophy of IGWEBUIKE. This can be understood as a word – *Igwebuike* or as a sentence – *Igwe bu ike*. In explaining *Igwebuike* as a sentence, Professor Kanu (2016) teaches that, “*Igwe* is a noun which means number or population, usually a large number of 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” (pp 3-4). Thus, like the old saying, ‘when a young man washes his hands, he can dine with the elders’ is true of Professor Kanu with the monumental contribution of IGWEBUIKE philosophy into the compendium of knowledge. Although Professor Kanu’s *Igwebuike*’s philosophy is based on solidarity and complementarity, the ideology is inherent in the philosophy of Martin Buber. In this philosophy, Buber’s main proposition is that we may address existence in two ways or twofold attitude. These are the combination *I-Thou* and the other *I-it*; wherein, without a change in the primary word, one of the words *He* and *she* can replace *it* (Buber 1958, p19). Firstly, the attitude of the “I” towards “Thou” in a relationship is not separated by discrete bounds but in the second, the attitude of the “I” towards an “it”, an object is separated in itself which we either use or experience. Simply put, the “I-it” attitude undermines or objectifies the other person unlike the “I-Thou” attitude in which there is mutual respect among persons. One of the major themes of Martin Buber thoughts is that human life finds its meaningfulness in relationship which the philosophy of *Igwebuike* strongly advocates.

### **Igwebuike Philosophy and Various Aspects of Humanity**

The ideology of *Igwebuike* cuts across every aspects of human life. Professor Kanu has been able to navigate through the socio-economic, cultural, religious, political and philosophical areas of human issues to advance the wisdom of *Igwebuike* as a guiding principle towards human capacity achievements such as economic empowerment and viability, social rebranding and actualization,

cultural fulfilment and pride, sound political engagements, and varied but colourful religious harmony that is garnished with a robust Afro-philosophical thought process. Professor Kanu's emphasis on the claim to superiority in the scientific community of knowledge as a hinderance to knowledge is apt. there is the urgent need to share knowledge from different areas of human endeavours towards effective progress and development of persons and the environment. Although these claims to 'superiority of knowledge' has a positive element in that, it increases the quest for knowledge and discoveries which will provide improved ideas on how best to approach issues that pertains to humanity. But applying the philosophy of *Igwebuike* that is, openness to other disciplines, would enrich knowledge and thus generate a more wholistic knowledge (Kanu, 2017). At the end, the society becomes a better place since the vast ideas of knowledge are shared and utilized for the common good.

As an African scholar, Professor Kanu's ability to illustrate that African logic is dialectical and relies on the contradictions is classic. By clarity of thoughts using the philosophy of *Igwebuike* that is based on solidarity and complementarity, he avers that, "the contradictory dialectics is not negative but affirms the functionality of differences so essential and incomplete dimensions of the whole" (Kanu, 2017, p.16). It follows then that African philosophy is based on African logic which is central to the clarity enjoyed when philosophies are discussed or presented. Our way of life as Africans is not separated from our philosophies and it defines who we *are*. Thus, Kanu (2017) posit that "*Igwebuike* provides an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possess a relational character of mutual relations (p.14). A prior discourse on African logic by Jaja and Badey (2012) agrees with Kanu (2017) that African logic is as old as African philosophy. Jaja and Badey assert that, "logic in Africa is organic to African culture and performs the task of helping such culture to attain higher levels" (p.101). Hence, African logic as a practical science or pattern of thinking or thought beautifies African philosophy using language and the way of life of a people. Since interdependence is at the heart of African logic and philosophy, the ideology of *Igwebuike* is indispensable in achieving it. More so, it is this dialectical approach that Kanu (2017) deploys using once again the philosophy of *Igwebuike* to elucidate on the Igbo-African ethics of reciprocity. This is not just a moral principle as Professor Kanu stressed but "a moral obligation one must have towards the other" (p.158). Although this moral obligation enjoys Biblical authority in Matthew 7:2 "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you...", the African traditional ethics teaches and practices this moral

obligation, though not satisfactorily, but it is at the center of a very ancient but ever new code of African lifestyle. It is also an obligation to self to see that every human person is accorded with the love and respect that is he/her right. If effectively used, *Igwebuike* philosophy would be a panacea for the increasing global Human Rights abuses, socio-economic neglect by those in governance, conflicts and wars, gender disparity issues and white elephant programs which affects the growth, development and future of children especially of the poor. For instance, Pogge (2005) lamented that despite a high and growing global average income, billions of human beings are still condemned to lifelong severe poverty, with all its attendant evils of low life expectancy, social exclusion, ill health, illiteracy, dependency, and effective enslavement. Such a trend will continue unabated until people are treated fairly through the distribution of resources and opportunities, and respect of their human rights. Hence, *Igwebuike* philosophy provides a platform that will close the gap between the rich and poor, leaders and followers based on its principle of solidarity because to violate the human rights of the other is to violate yourself. Preservation of human rights is a responsibility of all (Kanu, 2017).

Solidarity and complementarity which characterizes *Igwebuike* philosophy has a unique place not just in national development but also globally. For instance, the post-World War II events redefined the dynamism of our society. It saw the creation of alliances and interest groups from different countries, anti-colonial movements and decolonization were beginning to take root (Craggs, 2014). The United Nations was one of the creations after WWII whose purpose and principles covered all member States. It aims, similar with *Igwebuike* philosophy, include, "To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms....in the attainment of these common ends" (UN Charter, Article 1). Thus, drawing inspiration from these principles and mandate of UN, *Igwebuike* philosophy seeks a complementary approach to the issue of development in bringing about an enormous transformation of Africa. It is in this light that the African Union (AU) is a commendable organization in its efforts to promote and development Africa (*Montage Africa*). To achieve this, time is of the essence since, "every generation that mismanages time, creates a vacuum that becomes a burden to the next generation" (Kanu, 2017). In May 2019, the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) came into force with a wide market of 1.2 billion people worth \$2.5 trillion. It is a historical bold step towards Africa's revival in global economy.

This is a wonderful conviviality will yield enormous socio-economic and political benefits for Africa if properly implemented using the enabling laws (arbitration laws) and infrastructures. It is unfortunate that when 52 out of 55 countries in the continent have signed into the ACFTA, notable exceptions are Nigeria, Ethiopia and Sudan. These countries risk being excluded in this mega-trade agreement which will have consequences on their economies. But with *Igwebuike* philosophy, every African country should oblige its signature to savour the benefits of this big market. However, development is dependent on effective leadership and when that is lacking, then development planning and its execution becomes a mirage. The leader must see himself or herself as part of the group who is called to serve and not for seeking power. The leader is not a separate entity but leading from among the people (Kanu, 2017). Nigeria, Ethiopia and Sudan (in political turmoil at the moment) must do the needful to join other African countries in this vital co-operation in order to increase and create wealth for their citizens. A robust and development-oriented leadership is required to evaluate the importance of being part of the ACFTA but sadly, this seem to be elusive to the current government of Nigeria. In this situation, the principle of *Igwebuike* has been broken and as such Nigeria, Ethiopia and Sudan will be isolated in this wide and profitable market.

### **Summary**

The merits of solidarity and complementarity cannot be contested. Over the years and even at present, alliances in politics, economy or culture have yielded positive results. For instance, the introduction of the ECOWAS passport eased the movement of people within West African countries. This has boosted business relationships and social interaction across the region (Adepoju, *et al*, 2010). A similar arrangement has been successful in the European Union (EU). But in recent past, the political somersault with BREXIT proves that the principle of *Igwebuike* is vital to any socio-economic growth and development. The United Kingdom (UK) has a 31 October 2019 date to formally exit the European Union (EU) and this has caused anxiety and uncertainties in the political, economic and social aspects of the UK. The prize for excluding oneself from a group that has profitable objectives is indeed high. Although there might be different rules of engagements with regards to growth and development of a country or regional bloc, the bottom line is that inclusiveness and solidarity is paramount. It in this light that Prof Kanu advocates for *Igwebuike* philosophy as a common denominator for meaningful development and peaceful co-existence of a people.

Having explored *Igwebuike* philosophy and how it relates to human endeavours, it must be added that law is an intrinsic requirement for the success of this ideology. From entrenching Human Rights and socio-economic development realizations, laws are required to guide the processes of solidarity and complementarity among people. These laws must be obeyed and frequently reviewed to meet up with new trends. The concepts of law and development, like complex Siamese twins, are hard to understand in isolation but make more sense when analyzed together. For instance, in the state of nature as opined by Thomas Hobbes, life was nasty, short and brutish which precludes a state of anarchy and disorder (Kolak, 2016). But with the ordering of society, Jacques-Jean Rousseau advocated for a reciprocal trust from the state to the citizens having entrusted the former with the right to govern, this reciprocity must be demonstrated in the provision of welfare for the people (Griffith ed, 1998) and respecting the Human Rights of people must be primary (D'Souza, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

The common good of a community should be seen as the temporal welfare of the community avoiding collectivism and individualism (Onaulogho, 1994). *Igwebuike* philosophy like Martin Buber's thoughts seek to emphasize the *I-Thou* relationship where the common good is achieved only by the cooperation of individuals who in turn benefit from the good. By and large, Prof Kanu should be commended for his ingenuity and time in advancing the philosophy of *Igwebuike* which touches on every facet of mankind. It is hoped that this scholarship will be used for the growth and development of humanity.

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