

**A REVIEW OF IGWEBUIKE AS AN IGBO-AFRICAN ETHIC OF  
RECIPROCITY**

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This piece published in 2017 is a work of great significance. In it Kanu, the writer *sacralised* the concept of Igwebuike. He identifies Igwebuike philosophy as the Igbo-African ethic of reciprocity, entirely expressed in the golden rule summarizing the *good news* of Jesus Christ thus: *do unto others as you would wish them do unto you* (cf. Mtt. 7<sup>12</sup>). Globalisation and Modern technology are creating a kind of monoculture affecting the standard of human living and interaction as well as on our value orientation with clear consequence on evangelization. According to Benezet Bujo in his *Magnus Opus, Foundations of African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*, *if the good news of Jesus is to make its home among every people, it cannot identify itself with one specific culture, not even a global or monoculture.*

The concept of Igwebuike underscores a sense of community and unity as a complimentary African philosophy and African philosophy of solidarity especially when one tries to identify with the other. The concept of the otherness evokes a kind of moral-demand that is ethic, a form of value-relationship within a group. Igwebuike identifies a group of people that are out for their common good as such. The author expressed this idea fully when he explicates Igwebuike thus: Igwebuike is the modality of being. It is an Igbo word, which is a combination of three words. Thus, it can be understood as a word and as a sentence: as a word, it is written thus, *Igwebuike*, and as a sentence, it is written as *Igwe bu ike*, with the component words enjoying some independence in terms of space. Kanu made us to understand the three words involved: *Igwe* is a noun which means number or population, usually a large number or 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 and can constitute an insurmountable force. At this level, no task is beyond their collective capability. This provides an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations. To this point there must be a rule of interactive relation. According to our paper under consideration, it must be based on the fragments of Igbo-African Ethic of reciprocity.

Kanu, however, defined the ethic of reciprocity as an ethical principle that is beyond mere religious and or cultural boundaries. It transcends the limitations of all religious innuendoes and cultural bondage. Ethic of reciprocity properly expressed in Igwebuiké will account for the reparation to African continent over the time as against many centuries of plundering of Africa with many cases of stolen legacies making Africans aliens to themselves, branding their cultures fetish and pettishly idolatrous. The result of all these is that Africans are pagans or derogatively monkeys incapable of thoughts that liberate like the ethic of reciprocity. This is the beginning of racism.

The author, in this paper of a masterpiece-like took an academic glance across African trado-cultural values and other world religions to discover that ethic of reciprocity is at the heart of *African Philosophical Thought and Culture* expressed in many African proverbs, idioms, folktales and life style. In this ethic of reciprocity Igwebuiké is complimented by other philosophical concepts like *Onyeaghananwanneya*, *Ibuanyidanda*, African-Brotherhood, Ubuntu, Belongingness, Negritude, Africanism, Consciencism, et cetera, making living and life just a mere shared reality. Thus in Igwebuiké, like in the above numerated philosophical concepts, the ethic of reciprocity is not just a moral guide or mere act of faith but a moral obligation and duty, a kind of orthopraxis one must have towards the other. This attitude towards the *otherself* in the community of persons makes Igwebuiké Philosophy to be at the heart of Igbo-African Ethic of Reciprocity.

Prof. Kanu remains an avant-garde of great scholarship when he located Igwebuiké philosophical ideology as the modality of being in African philosophy. This nevertheless places Igwebuiké as a philosophical concept on the foundation of African Ethics which is exclusively anthropocentric. Juxtapose it to

say that the golden rule which is expressed clearly in the ethic of reciprocity is humanity-bound knowing full well that the idea of a community is the beginning of African ethics for the possibility of the ethic of reciprocity in Africa.

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