

**A REVIEW OF IGWEBUIKE AS A HERMENEUTIC OF PERSONAL
AUTONOMY IN IGBO-AFRICAN ONTOLOGY**

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The paper is a quest to establish African Individual autonomy, which according to the author the African is denied autonomy as a result of three factors: his relationships in the community, the African concept of destiny, and the interactive nature of the African universe. The author progressed by first establishing the true meaning of human autonomy. Thereafter, the three fronts of denial of autonomy were systematically x-rayed by the author from the works of many African Scholars.

Having examined the three arguments that have argued that the African has no autonomy, the author hermeneutically located the concept of African autonomy in the Igbo concept of *Onwe* – self. He opined that the original root of the word *onwe* can be traced back to *nwe* that means ‘to own’. Thus through this he established the self-identity behind *Onwe* in the Igbo Ontology. The author further asserts the universality of autonomy as beyond the frontiers of culture, time, race and colour.

Concluding the paper, the author employed phenomenological method to establish that Africans are real human beings that enjoy the natural human freedom, have will which give them the space to choose and be responsible for their actions. Hence the author collapsed the three arguments by establishing convincingly the autonomy of the individual person in African ontology.

Evaluation

The African Philosophy and indeed the African heritage is not a mere narrative by a disinterested observer, rather it is lived experience of the Africans and nobody can express it better than the Africans. It is time for the African scholars to rise and assert themselves in the global epistemic domain and tell their own story in their own way. Kanu, has in this paper taken the bold step of presenting to the world the true African concept of autonomy and the clear fact of the universality of humanity. It is devoid of relativity; Africans are among humanity and should not be excluded *a priori*. In the words of Kanu:

Human autonomy is an all-inclusive enterprise. It is not cultural or time bound. Autonomy points to the human person as a rational entity. As a universal experience, it is not limited to whites or blacks.

I totally subscribe to the excellent mélange of hermeneutic and phenomenological methods in collapsing the arguments against the African autonomy of the person in this paper and the hermeneutical location of the African human autonomy in the concept of *Onwe* – Self in Igbo ontology. According to Kanu:

The original root of the word *onwe* can be traced back to *nwe* that means ‘to own’. Thus, *onwe gi*, would mean he that owns himself, *onwe ya*, would mean he or she that owns himself or herself. The idea of ownership over the self introduces the idea of independence from the other and stamps the strong sense of autonomy.

Again the concept of Igwubuike is made manifest in the African community spelling out the individuality of the person, but Kanu argues that although the community defines the individual, this definition does not take away the individual freedom and autonomy of the person. Kanu, in this context established a balance (worthy of reckoning) between the community and the individual in African ontology.

However, Kanu establishes the co-existence of freedom and determinism working together to make the human person. Following the thought of Buber (1970), he asserts that the two are counterparts in the human person. To this end, I do not totally accept the middle course created here and the extent each one operates was not established.

Finally, the methodology, the style of writing, the lucidity of thought and the consistency of the logical presentation seen in this paper is quite commendable. Kanu has proved himself an iroko in African studies, thoughts, culture and Religion. The present paper has a lot to contribute in African studies and in the academic world.

References

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