

IGWEBUIKE AS AN IGBO-AFRICAN HERMENEUTIC OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract

The development of studies in the area of globalization, especially in relation to Africa and the rest of the Third World, reveal a couple of misconceptions. Globalization is usually presented by some African scholars as though it were a force in battle with traditional African paradigms. Some quarters speak of globalization as imperialism, westernization, neo-colonialism, capitalism, universalization, etc. It is presented as an evil manufactured in Europe and transported to Africa. Igwebuiké as an interpretation of globalization challenges these negative perspectives and argues that globalization is a necessary process of being and not a product. It is a modality of being and, thus, cannot be boycotted; for no one can boycott his or herself. In this study, the evolutionary approach is adopted. And it submits that life is moving towards unification and our hope can only be operative and realizable if it is expressed in greater human cohesion and solidarity, greater interaction on the global level; that is, mankind coming close together, and relating more and more with one another.

Keywords: Igwebuiké, Igwebuikology, Igbo, African, Philosophy, Hermeneutics, Globalization

Introduction

Ancient philosophy, particularly, philosophers of the Ionian or Miletus school were struck by the fact that, although, there were realities that changed from one form to another, there was continuity in the midst of change. Something always remained permanent in the midst of flux. They were also struck by the fact that there was a basic unity in the midst of the plurality of things, which explains the continuity in the midst of the changes in reality and the underlying unity in the midst of the plurality of things. Although these philosophers employed different realities for the explanation of the unity of reality, they were already indicating that there is a fundamental core of reality commonly shared by all the inhabitants of the globe. Globalization, as a concept presents our common humanity and the common yearnings and hopes that this common humanity generates.

Fafowora (1998), therefore, defined globalization as a process that deals with the increasing breaking down of barriers and increasing integration of economic, political, social and cultural relations across international boundaries. Ohuabunwa (cited in Kanu 2013), gives further insight when he defined globalization as an evolution which is systematically reconstructing integrative phases among nations by breaking down barriers in the areas of culture, commerce, communication and other fields of endeavour. In the midst of the emerging interpretations of globalization, this piece adopts the concept Igwebuiké to interpret the phenomenon of globalization from an Igbo-African perspective.

Negative Hermeneutics of Globalization

Over the years, the meaning of globalization has been misconceived by various scholars. It has continued to attract increased scholarly and analytical attention throughout the globe. Oguejiofor (2010) presents globalization as a force in battle with traditional paradigms:

Using the Igbo people of Nigeria as a case study, we will argue that in spite of the vaunted Igbo receptivity to change which encourages the eroding influence of globalization, the Igbo cultural tradition has a resilience which will find ways of retaining its specificity in a globalized world (p. 15).

Ajjala (2010), agreeing with Oguejiofor, avers that: "Globalization is re-colonization. Keeping our mind only on the positive side of globalization is not safe, since the negative out-weighs the positive when we look at it closely" (p. 221). She presents globalization as a synonym of re-colonization. Joy (2010) argues that globalization has led to the de-originization of the Igbo language as new words have emerged from the encounter between Igbo words and English concepts. According to Dominic (2010): "Globalization packages look like bait for a fish or the Greek gifts. They are like a typical syllogism of a self-centered logician, whose first and second premises already betray his interest and dividends at the conclusion" (p. 759).

McEwan (1990) understands globalization economically and politically. He sees it as the spread of capitalism. Toyo (cited in Kanu 2013), agreeing with McEwan, interprets globalization as an imperial policy and the final conquest of capital over the rest of the world. Akinde, Gidado, Olaopa (2002) avers that it is a one-arm banditry and exploitative antecedents of capitalism which, by its nature cannot exist without parasitic expansion. They argue that its immutable and primary focus is to exploit African resources, disintegrate its economies and incorporate it into the international capitalist economy. Madunaga (1999) thinks that globalization was created by the dominant social forces in the world to serve their specific interests.

Reflecting on the above misconceptions of globalization from his African colleagues, Agbo (2010) writes that:

Globalisation within the African intellectual context, has acquired terms that are nearest in meaning to it: universalization, internationalisation, liberalization, capitalization, Westernization, Europeanization, Americanization, re-colonization, imperialization... re-enslavement, etc... This, to me represents an irrational moralization of an amoral concept. The propagandist, emotional, and psychological engagement of globalization is, therefore, in my opinion both uncharitable and meaningless. (p. 26).

Reacting further, he argues that:

We have conceptualized globalization as a 'product' exported to the African with sinister motives, we have assumed in an incurable nihilistic pessimism, that somebody, some people, somewhere (in the west), sometime (in distant

and recent times) have sold us this ‘globalization’ and unfortunately, we had had to buy it without what Kwasi Wiredu would refer to as an ‘open utilitarian eyes’. (p. 26).

In the face of these negative perspectives of globalization, the question that could be asked is if globalization cannot be interpreted beyond this point. All these while that African thinkers have interpreted globalization negatively, what good has come out of it? Has it helped Africa or the Third World to become de-globalized? Reflecting on these questions and seeking possible answers to them raises the question as to the possibility of developing an alternative interpretation of globalization. It is on this basis that *Igwebuiké* is developed as an alternative hermeneutics of globalization.

***Igwebuiké*: Reinterpreting Globalization**

‘To be’ in Igbo ontology is *idi*. However, the modality of being is *Igwebuiké*. 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 as *Igwebuiké*, and as a sentence, it is written as, *Igwe bu ike*, with the component words enjoying some independence in terms of space. Let us try 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 or 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. As an ideology, *Igwebuiké* 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 the other’, in a community of beings. This is based on the African philosophy of harmony and complementarity, which is the underlying principle and unity of African Traditional Religious and philosophical experience.

Asouzu (2007b) in his complementary philosophy of *Ibuanyidanda*, presents the African reality as “an all-embracing whole, in which all units form together a dynamic play of forces, which are in harmony with each other, by completing and supporting the other” (p. 14). Asouzu (2004) further speaks of reality as “necessary complements of each other” (46). While describing the human society, Asouzu (2007a) advanced that, “Human beings and societies exist only in relations” (p. 74). *Igwebuiké* as the modality of being, interprets of globalization as the realization of the fullness of being. Globalization, therefore, becomes a journey towards the realization of the full potentials of being. If Tielhard de Chardin (1959), would speak of globalization, he would refer to it as the ‘omega point’, where the goal of convergence would be achieved. In Hegel, it can be described as the return of the ‘Absolute Spirit’ and in Karl Marx, it is the recognition that motion is the existent form of matter, that reality exists and develops, through dialectical contradictions, in interrelatedness, and interactiveness. If that be the case, globalization is not a

planned event, but rather a natural flow of event. Thus, Omoregbe (2007), defines globalization as “a natural process of socialization, a process of world history, a phase in the world historical process” (p. 152). Asouzu (2007a) corroborating with Omoregbe understands globalization as “a necessary consequence of the character of our being as relative subjects seeking full actualization” (p. 382).

If globalization is the modality of being, it would mean that it cannot be boycotted. No one can boycott his or herself; this explains why the more African scholars mourn the effect of globalization, the more they are globalized. Teilhard de Chardin (cited by Agbo 2010) writes that “Life is moving towards unification; our hope can only be operative if it is expressed in greater human cohesion and solidarity, greater interaction on the global level, mankind coming close together, and relating more and more with one another” (p. 26). Thus, Omoregbe (2007) avers that, “... man by nature is a social being with an irresistible urge to associate with his fellow human being, globalization is a manifestation of this natural urge in man” (p. 148). Asouzu (2007a) refers to it as “a necessary consequence of our being” (p. 382). Agreeing with Asouzu, Agbo (2010) writes that “Globalization is not only part of nature, it is the mode of being for human beings, it expresses our internal state. In an ontological sense, it is the category of our expressive existentiality! It is the name we give to the invisible force that is propelling reality forward with incredible velocity” (p. 36).

From the foregoing, Asouzu (2007b) understands globalization as: “the life we live, the completion we seek in our search for meaning and the measures we take to stay alive in the face of challenges that involve many” (p. 414). Thus, globalization offers all stakeholders a plethora of opportunities to access the immense richness of differences in order to better themselves, their communities and the world. If all peoples were to work together to explore the means of bettering human existence, Asouzu argues that the result would be “the possibility of harnessing the best opportunities offered by the world as veritable tool of making the world a better place for all” (p. 314). Globalization is, therefore, not new to Africa. It is rather a global expression of that African nature of being present to the other; relating to the other more deeply and directly. This obviously would involve a process of give and take. Globalization, therefore, becomes the realization of a fundamental dimension of the African philosophical heritage.

Conclusion

Igwebuiké interpret globalization as a process in which all the world is involved: generated by all, in all and for all. The interpretation of the globalizing process as a product manufactured in Europe and transported to Africa is false and also an attempt to alienate the being of the African who is by belonging. Reality in globalization is moving towards self-actualization, and Africa cannot tell the world to wait for her. Africa must move faster to catch up with the rest of the world economically, politically, socially, culturally, educationally and other wise. To begin to blame globalization as though it were a moral being is a waste of effort; no nation will be judged for globalizing, for that would mean blaming a nation for being. The world must be. Thus, the understanding of globalization as capitalism, Westernization,

Europeanization, imperialism, re-colonialism, re-enslavement, Americanization and universalization are not appropriate.

Agbo (2010), therefore, writes:

The more we complain about globalization the more we do things that globalize us... Someone is on the web looking for materials to debunk globalization, and yet he feels he does not want to globalize. In Nigeria, we are busy trying to outdo ourselves in an attempt to publish our articles in foreign journals, and yet we are averse to globalization. Why do we jeer at globalization even on our way to an international conference in London, Tokyo, Washington D. C.? ... Globalization is, perhaps, the old child that has many progenitors, and yet is an orphan. (p. 35).

The employment of *Igwebuike* in the interpretation of the nature and logic of globalization has turned an acclaimed enemy into a friend, and the terrifying journey into the anticipation of a welcome reunion. Until African scholars begin to see globalization as a process, she would continue to remain un-strategically positioned, in fact as a spectator, instead of a player in the incurably globalizing world.

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