

BOOK REVIEW

Title: **NJIKOKA AMAKA: FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF INTEGRATIVE HUMANISM** (A Contribution to African and Intercultural Philosophies)

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A philosophic system is the general trend or course of thought of a particular time, school or group of thinkers. Indeed, throughout the history of philosophy, Western philosophy, for instance, many philosophers have had the same fundamental concerns in philosophy and maintained more or less the same views about man and the universe. Their theories and beliefs tend to form clusters pivoting around the same or almost the same belief. Thus there are not only different philosophers, but also groups of philosophers, distinguished by their own particular views or outlook on reality, that is to say, man, life, society, knowledge, human history, human destiny, and the universe itself, etc.

It is in this context that we speak of Rationalism, Empiricism, Existentialism, etc., in Western Philosophy. Or we speak of Yoga philosophy, Nyaya philosophy, Mimamsa systems, etc., in Oriental Philosophy. These are philosophic systems. These philosophic systems are also different modes of philosophizing. It means also that those who philosophize under a particular system share more or less the same general outlook on reality.

Until quite recently African philosophy lacked this system-building approach to philosophical inquiry. In an essay entitled “The Yesterday and Today of African Philosophy: Towards a New Prospect”, Chris O. Akpan made the point that one of the challenges of contemporary African philosophy was “System-building” with the required “genuine Africanness”. According to this scholar, “indeed if African philosophy has to be relevant in our contemporary

world, then there is need for system-building, as a common front from which the African experience could be explained and understood”!

Very cheerfully work has begun on developing philosophies, systems and schools, with their unique methods and approaches in African philosophy inquiry. The book [Njikoka Amaka: Further Discussions on the Philosophy of Integrative Humanism (A Contribution to African and intercultural Philosophies)] authored by Godfrey O. Ozumba and Jonathan O. Chimakonam seeks to consolidate the African philosophic conversation in respect of system-building within the context of the philosophy of Integrative Humanism, a trend or tradition which has emerged from the Calabar School of Philosophy (CSP) and has become quite popular and dominant in contemporary African philosophy.

Since its formulation by Professor Godfrey O. Ozumba, the philosophy and method of Integrative Humanism, as an authentic system of African philosophy whose insights have universal applicability, has been work in progress. Several scholars have been attracted to Integrative Humanism and there has been an avalanche of critical essays and works written on Integrative Humanism with efforts to apply the basic assumptions, principles and method of this system to diverse areas of knowledge (see p. 138). However, in my view, there is such rich insight on each of the pages of this one book, than one may find in the many journal papers, reviews and researches which I have read concerning this scientific system of thought called “Integrative Humanism” or the philosophy of “Njikoka”.

I do not hesitate to declare that this must be the magnum opus of Integrative Humanism, because from the hindsight of my personal acquaintance with the authors, recognizing their vibrancy and intellectual dynamism and in acknowledgement of the breadth of scope and applicability of Integrative Humanism in diverse areas of human experience and knowledge, I have no doubt that the authors will further the discussions on [Njikoka Amaka: Further Discussions on the Philosophy of Integrative Humanism (A Contribution to African and Intercultural Philosophies)].

The present work is written in twelve chapters. The language is lucid and penetrating but devoid of the linguistic jargon that usually characterizes much contemporary philosophical writing. However, one notices in the book, another trend which is gaining currency in the way contemporary African philosophy is conducted and written. This is the creative use of African indigenous languages, concepts, terms, expressions, proverbs in enriching and spicing the philosophical discourse. We have seen this approach in the writings of Innocent Asouzu who is the originator of *Ibuanidanda* philosophy and in the works of M. B. Ramose who investigates African philosophy via *Ubuntu*. Asouzu and Ramose respectively, apply their Igbo and Nguni Bantu backgrounds in the development

of their philosophical theories and postulations. Thus our philosophical vocabulary is positively enriched.

However, these latter scholars take this approach as given or granted and offer no explanation or rationale for justification of this approach. We find justification of this approach in contemporary African philosophy in Ozumba's and Chimakonam's call on African philosophers to assume "a new consciousness which would enable them to do African philosophy, even if not yet in an African language but in an Africanized Western language" (iv). This call must not be misunderstood to be a reiteration of Wiredu's call for "Conceptual Decolonization" in African philosophy. Contrarily, without being contradictory, it is a radical call on African philosophers, all black people to:

...respond to the ruse of the colonizer. As the oppressor adamantly remains present through his language which Africans yet speak, Africans should then seek to speak that foreign language in order to destroy it. The Englishness or the Frenchness of those colonial languages must be broken; traditional meanings of words must be altered; words must be reshaped in various forms to reflect what the African has in mind and what he means; idioms must be reinterpreted to reflect the unabashed and highest degree of indomitable Africanness; this is because a language that would bear forth African truths if it yet remains foreign can only emerge from the ruins of the one that bore Western truths. (OZUMBA and CHIMAKONAM 2014, iv)

Based on this propelling logic of the authors, one notices an avalanche of Africanized usage of foreign words, because the authors believe that at this time "the African philosopher must now learn to write his philosophy primarily for Africans, regardless of the impressions it makes on a non-African".

Each chapter of the book builds towards a rewarding crescendo, revealing insightful perspectives of the nitty-gritty of Integrative Humanism. Chapter one provides a general background of the philosophy and method of Integrative Humanism. Integrative Humanism is the philosophical orientation that sees reality as having both physical and spiritual dimensions, past and present; as well as harmonized framework in which seemingly opposed variables unite without contradiction to achieve progress and epistemic wholeness. It is a human centered theory which derives its insights from electronics and mathematics and from the Igbo culture. Integrative Humanism is grounded on the Igbo cultural injunction "Njikoka Amaka", which translates "to integrate is better than to disintegrate". It is thus a contribution to African and intercultural philosophies, and integrativism is its method and its methodology (6-14).

The second chapter articulates the logic of Integrative Humanism. Its logic is founded on Njikoka, which according to the authors is the root of the trivalent African thought system. Thus the authors declare: “The African three-valued logic becomes the logic of Integrative Humanism” (16).

Chapter three introduces Integrative Humanism as a philosophy of life and living. Humanity and all earthly realities are exposed as being on a journey through time from *uwa mgbe nta* to *uwa mgbe ebi-ebi*. The ultimate destination of all earthly realities, including man, as a quest to beat and overcome the influence of time. When this is achieved, one sees being in its true light, eternal, one and united in Nke-Mbu. Nke-Mbu is the eternal God and man is a being unto eternity (21-23).

The fourth and fifth chapters of this monumental work of Ozumba and Chimakonam deal with the metaphysical and epistemological dimensions of Integrative Humanism respectively. For the Integrativist, being is one and many; physical and spiritual; active and passive. Hence, the Integrativists maintain that in the grand scheme of things, every being is from “Nke-mbu, as part of Nke-mbu in Nke-mbu! Nke mbu is the “first principle”, but there are other levels of beings, in their actuality and in their potentiality, present and future; but Integrative Humanism aims to ultimately transcend all lower levels and attain that level of knowledge of the absolute. This level is attained through revelational knowledge or the illumination of Nke-Mbu in *uwa mgbe ebi-ebi* (25,30-31).

What strikes me as I try to understand this metaphysical foundation of Integrative Humanism is the very skillful, tactful and ingenious way the authors have stripped of Spinoza and introduced a somewhat refreshing pantheistic metaphysics. In Epistemology, for the Integrativists, human knowledge transcends empirical, psychological, linguistic or cultural truths. Authentic knowledge must include spiritual, mystical, revelational and soulful truths. Ultimately, the criterion for knowledge is not just “justified-true-belief”, but Integratively-Justified-Contextually-True-Belief” (43).

Chapter six of the book focuses on the ethical question. Integrative Humanism has informed moral maxims that prescribe and sanction actions and propositions. These are:

1. Biri ka mbiri
2. Egbe bere ugo bere
3. Onye aghana nwanne ya
4. So mu adina
5. Ka so mu di (56)

Although these moral maxims are translated into English, the authors are evidently proud of their Igbo rich cultural heritage, but aspire to weave an integrativist moral philosophy aimed at a global audience.

Consequently, there is the attempt to respond to the myriad of perennial questions of moral philosophy. In the final analysis Ozumba and Chimakonam prescribe inclusive religious-legalistic global ethics. This is an ethics based on “religious insight, legal fortification and ethical rationality”(63).

The seventh and eighty chapters of the book explore themes in the philosophy of mathematics and in political philosophy respectively. The ninth chapter is in one word: profound! It deals with the “laws of thought in African logic”. The authors maintain that “African logic in its trivalence is an extension of Western classical logic which is bivalent. The extent to which each applies in the opposite culture demonstrates its lack of absoluteness. The ideal of logic therefore is universal but never absolute” (81). Thought in Western logic is evaluated either true or false, while in African logic it is evaluated true, false and integrated.

Chapter ten examines the place of Integrative Humanism in African science. The age-long perplexing question of philosophy of science—“can science explain everything or are there some phenomena that must forever elude science? is addressed. “The Integrative Humanism model of explanation (hereafter referred to as IHM) stipulates that every reality (physical or metaphysical) is connected in one form or another to the whole (Nke-Mbu) in the massive web of reality. Since African Science deals with reality, it follows that every phenomena can be explained using IHM” (90). This is the bold assertion of the authors, and they, I expect must be ready for reaction and challenge.

The penultimate chapter is concerned with how Integrative Humanism can find relevance in the philosophy of education. In the Integrative Humanist model, curriculum is crucial and the goal is to achieve a transformational curriculum through the principles of Integrative Humanism. But the authors insist that just as the colonial curriculum was efficiently structured to miseducate the people with an erroneous Western thought system that would turn black people to black-Europeans, a restructured transformational curriculum must be “drafted by Africans and for Africans but with intercultural outlook” to efficiently deliver our educational needs in the face of unremitting global challenges (96-104).

The twelve-chapter book reaches its climax as it addresses critics of Integrative Humanism. There is a systematic reaction to each of the objections that have been raised against the tenets of Integrative Humanism. Especially, there is a reproduction of Professor Godfrey Ozumba’s essay in reaction to Mesembe Edet’s (this reviewer) criticism of the idea of a spiritocentric and a bibliocentric humanism (113-117). Indeed, the critical reviews, misunderstandings, misinterpretations, misperception and misreading which have been sorted out and addressed in the “Rely to Critics” hopefully will lead to better understanding and appreciation of the tradition of Integrative Humanism.

All said, the authors have done a marvelous job. The book, [Njikoka Amaka: Further Discussions on the Philosophy of Integrative Humanism (A Contribution to African and Intercultural Philosophies)] Published by 3rd Logic Option Publishing is technically and aesthetically well packaged and the expected “Printer’s Devil” is very meticulously eliminated and some kudos must go to the publishers. This challenging, intellectually provocative and stimulating book provides an incredibly stable foundation upon which to build Integrative Humanism and the authors—Professor G. O. Ozumba ad Dr. Jonathan O. Chimakonam must be the human pillars upon which the supper structure of integrative humanism can be erected as they continue in their work to act as the compass for those who wish to navigate the streams of Integrative Humanism. The book is a must read.