

PHILOSOPHY OF 'EZI-OKWU-BU-NDU' AND THE ISSUE OF AUTHENTICITY: AN EXAMINATION

Prof. Bonaventure Chike Anetoh, PhD
Department Of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Tansian University, Umunya, Nigeria)
Email: anetohbonaventure@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the examination of Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' and the question of authenticity of human existence. 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu', which is literally translated as 'truth is life,' is one of the ideological legacies of the traditional Igbo people. The question of what actually constitutes truth has been the major concern of human beings in different parts of the world. Philosophers, particularly epistemologists, have searched and are still searching for the exact meaning of the term 'truth'. The traditional Igbo people, through their insistence on 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' (truth is life), consciously or unconsciously raised truth to an ontological status. The fundamental questions are: What is 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu'? Is there any relationship between truth and life? What is Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu'? What are the necessary conditions for the possibility of Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu'? What are the tenets and principles of Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu'? How does Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' address the question of authenticity of human existence? These and other related issues are scholarly very pertinent, and they are the major focus of this article. Employing analytical and hermeneutical methods of philosophical investigation, this article examines Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' and the issue of authenticity of human existence. It argues and maintains that authenticity does not lie on 'standing out' as Martin Heidegger argued or on making free and responsible choices as Sartre argued, but on living a life of truth. Hence, truth is the fundamental and indispensable principle of human existence.

Key Words: Philosophy, Truth (Eziokwu), Life, Authenticity and Existence

INTRODUCTION

Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' is an attempt to develop the ideological legacy of the traditional Igbo people. It is an effort towards philosophizing in traditional Igbo context which is geared towards popularizing and at the same time developing the thought pattern of the traditional Igbo people. Many African scholars have philosophized in western context, developing the ideologies and thought patterns of westerners. Such scholars have not deemed it fit to philosophize in African (Igbo) context, employing philosophy to the development of African (Igbo) indigenous ideologies and thought patterns. It is an act worthy of commendation for African scholars, precisely Igbo scholars, to contribute their quota to the development of indigenous Igbo ideologies and thought patterns by philosophizing in Igbo context. By so doing, they play their intellectual role towards the

development of Igbo people. It is good to note that some Igbo scholars have done great in this regard through their scholarly works and contributions. At this juncture, Anthony Kanu's *Igwebuike Philosophy*, Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda*, BonaChristusUmeogu's *Kola Nut in Igbo Metaphysics*, Godfrey Ozumba's and Jonathan Chimakonam's *Njikoka Amaka* and many others are very good examples of such effort to philosophize in Igbo context.

The term 'truth' (*eziokwu*) is a very common, but complex as well as controversial concept. More often than not, people make reference to truth in their daily discussions and activities. This explains why there is word for truth in all the cultural groups and languages of the world. During the trial and eventual crucifixion of Jesus Christ in the Christian Scripture, Pilate asked Jesus Christ the controversial question: What is truth? It seems to the researcher that Pilate was unconscious of the fact that he raised a strong and fundamental philosophical, precisely epistemological question. Truth is fundamental not only in epistemology, but also in different dimensions of human endeavor. It is unfortunate that truth is relegated to the background, and falsehood is being celebrated in our contemporary society. Hence, there is need to re-awaken and revive the consciousness of the importance of truth as it was obtainable in traditional Igbo society. It was such consciousness of the importance of truth in the traditional Igbo society that gave rise to the Igbo ideology and expression: *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* (Truth is life). Hence, Onwuatiegwu (2022) states that "... the Igbo maxim "Eziokwubundu" (truth is life), shows the level of importance which the Igbo people place on truth, to the extent of equating truth with life." (p.1) If 'truth is life', one can argue without any fear of contradiction that 'falsity is death' (*Okwuasi-bu-onwu*). The traditional Igbo people equated truth with life by insisting on *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* (Truth is life). This is as a result of the fact that they conceived deep connection and relationship between truth and life.

The fundamental questions that are scholarly very pertinent in this study are: What is 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu'? What are the conditions for the possibility of philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu'? What are the features/principles of philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu'? What is authentic existence? How does philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' address the issue of authenticity? These and other related issues are the major focus of this study, and they are to be given detailed as well as scholarly attention. This study employs hermeneutical and analytical methods of philosophical enquiry in the examination of philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' and its contributions on the issue of authentic human existence.

This article is partitioned into five sections. The first section focuses on clarification of basic concepts. The second section investigates the conditions for the possibility of philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu'. The third section focuses on philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' and its features/principles. The fourth section examines the issue of authenticity as well as the contributions of philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' towards achieving authentic human existence. The fifth section is the evaluation and conclusion of the study.

CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Clarification of concept is scholarly very necessary as well as imperative in every

philosophical discourse. It facilitates proper understanding of the discourse. An ancient philosopher, Socrates was very remarkable in the quest for conceptual clarification. Such enabled him to attain deeper understanding of concepts. It becomes very necessary in this discourse to clarify and analyze some of the prominent concepts.

CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY

The term 'Philosophy' is commonly used by people, but many people do not know the meaning of philosophy. It is very easy to see people using this expression: 'my philosophy of life is this or that' or 'our philosophy of life is this or that'. For such people, philosophy has to do with one's or people's ideology or world-view. However, it ought to be noted that ideology or world-view is not philosophy in the proper or strict sense of it. According to Okere (1983):

The nature of philosophy itself has been misconceived and false analogies established. The vision of the world is a world view, a *Weltanschauung*. But a *Weltanschauung* is not a philosophy, not even a "collective" one. To neglect this distinction is to compare two things that cannot be compared. A *Weltanschauung* describes a popular and traditional image recounting the story of the origin and actual functioning of the Status Quo. It is a statement of fact and is accepted as such by the community. Philosophy, on the other hand, is essentially an individual enterprise and is often a *mise-en-cause*, and a radical questioning of the collective image. By reflection and the questioning of this image, one makes an individual effort to find, that is, to give a meaning to one's world. (p.7)

It becomes obvious from the above quotation that philosophy in the strict sense is a reflective and critical enterprise. Hence, anyone that equates philosophy with people's world-view is making a fundamental mistake. However, people's ideology or world-view could be said to be philosophy only in a loose or general sense, but not in the professional sense of it.

Etymologically, the term 'philosophy' was derived from two Greek words: *Philos* meaning love and *Sophia* meaning wisdom. The combination of the above two Greek words gave rise to the term *Philosophia* which means love of wisdom. Hence, from etymological perspective, philosophy is defined as love of wisdom. The starting point of philosophy could be traced to the ancient period when Ionian or Miletian thinkers like Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes etc started employing rationality rather than myths to explain realities in the universe. They were basically cosmologists who were curious to identify the fundamental stuff of the universe. It was 'wonder' as well as 'curiosity' that motivated them for such search. Ogbozo (2014) identified the following basic characteristics of a philosophic mind: curiosity, wonder, asking questions and disinterestedness (pp.83-84). It ought to be noted that 'wonder', 'curiosity' and 'criticality' are very necessary in philosophical investigations. They are the basic ingredients in philosophical enterprise.

As a professional discipline, philosophy has been defined in varied, but related ways. It has not enjoyed any generally accepted definition in particular. Philosophers have approached it from different perspectives. This explains why there are many definitions of philosophy. In the words of Okolo (1998), philosophy is a “form of rational activity, a critical examination of all reality, of all areas of human experience including man himself.” (p.22) Hence, rationality and criticality are very indispensable in philosophical enquiry. According to Anetoh (2019):

Philosophy is basically a speculative discipline that reflects critically on every aspect of reality. No aspect of reality is excluded from philosophical investigation. It formulates as well as furnishes people with ideas that can enable them function effectively in the society, and thus improves human condition of existence in the universe. Philosophical ideas can be applied to different aspects of human endeavor. Through such application, philosophy contributes its quota towards human holistic development and well-being. (p.36)

Philosophical reflections are very necessary for man in his earthly existence, and have contributed immensely in shaping peoples' ideologies as well as understanding of life in general. Describing philosophy in a professional sense, Nwokereke (2005) states:

Philosophy, in this sense, is conceived as a highly organized and intellectual discipline, which critically, coherently and systematically deals with the principles, assumptions, procedures and practices of every other discipline or intellectual activity undertaken by man... In this sense, philosophy as a discipline can be simply defined as a conscious, rational, critical and systematic study of the existence of things around us, and place of man in the universe. (pp.5-6)

In a professional sense, philosophy is a rational, critical and reflective investigation of every aspect of reality. It extends its critical tentacle to everything that exists, and subjects such to rational scrutiny. Hence, in this study, philosophy investigates the traditional Igbo ideology of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' critically, analytically and hermeneutically.

TRADITIONAL IGBO IDEOLOGY OF 'EZIOKWU-BU-NDU'

The fundamental question that is scholarly very imperative at this juncture is this: Who and who are the 'Igbo' people? Certainly, 'Igbo' is one of the major tribes or ethnic groups in Nigeria. The term 'Igbo' refers to a group of people and at the same time the language spoken by such people. The Igbo people are located mainly in southern part of Nigeria (precisely south-eastern part). They are generally very hardworking and enterprising. In the words of Mbaegbu (2012):

With the thirty-six states in Nigeria and Abuja Federal Capital today, this territory (Igbo land) in the West includes parts of Delta state namely, parts of Aboh, Asaba and Agbo. While in the East, the heart of the Igbo world includes Anambra, Abia, Enugu, Imo states

and parts of Rivers and parts of Akwa-Ibom states. (p.91)

There were many sages or wise men in the traditional Igbo society. The proponents of philosophic sagacity insisted that such sages in the traditional Igbo society were philosophers despite the fact that they were not literate. They further argued strongly that literacy is not a necessary pre-requisite for philosophical reflection. However, the issue of whether literacy is a necessary pre-requisite for philosophical reflection or not is completely outside the scope of this study. The sages or wise men in traditional Igbo society expressed their thoughts in speeches. Hence, according to Onwubiko (1991), "Language expressed in speech is an important vehicle of thought and culture. People express their thought in speech and both are determined, to a great, by their culture". (p.29) Through the instrumentality of the sages in traditional Igbo society, traditional Igbo people have come up with valuable ideologies that are very significant in the contemporary society. Among such are: 'Igwe-bu-ike', 'Njiko-ka', 'Udo-ka-mma', 'Ibu-anyi-danda', 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu', 'Udo-bu-ike-ora', 'Onye-aghana-nwanne-ya' etc. Some of these traditional Igbo ideologies have been given great attention by some scholars in the contemporary era. However, it seems that 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' has not been given sufficient as well as detailed philosophical attention in the contemporary period. This necessitated the choice of Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' in this study. This topic has immense relevance in our contemporary society where truth is relegated to the background, and falsehood as well as manipulations seem to be the order of the day. It becomes necessary to revive the ideology of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' in order to rescue our contemporary society from impending doom and destruction.

Truth is a very prominent concept in traditional Igbo society. In fact, it occupies a fundamental and central position in Igbo worldview. Attesting to this, Ejeh (2019) states:

Truth is paramount in Igbo life and they believe it is what gives life to any society. Hence, the traditional Igbo society is built on truth and the basis of this is trust which is primarily dependent on the ability of the individual members to tell the truth to one another. It is the basis of their faith in God and in the people. Truth is the foundation of any Igbo community. (p.7)

Traditional Igbo people usually make reference to truth all the time. The Igbo word for truth is *Eziokwu*. According to Ejeh (2019): "In addition to *eziokwu*, the Igbo also describe the truth of a statement with the expression *Ihe mere eme or ihe mere*, which means what really happened or what happened" (p.5). Thus, truth for the Igbo people, means statement of facts as they are without mutilation or distortion of any sort. In this perspective, truth implies that which conforms to reality or that which is in line with reality. For the traditional Igbo people, any statement that does not conform to reality cannot be said to be a true statement.

Truth, for the traditional Igbo people entails sincerity of thoughts, words and actions. Though human thoughts may not be easily visible, sincerity of thought is the most fundamental. This stems from the fact that it is human thought that gives rise to human words and actions. Traditional Igbo people had high regard for truth such that they equated

truth with life; hence, the expression 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' (Truth is Life). For the traditional Igbo people, life is of greatest value, and this explains why they came up with these expressions: 'Ndubuisi' (Life is supreme), 'Ndubueze' (Life is king), 'Ndukaego' (Life is greater than money) etc. The fact of equating truth with life demonstrates the value of truth among the traditional Igbo people.

Elderly people and titled men were seen as the custodians of truth in traditional Igbo society. Attesting to this, Onwubiko (1991) states: "...the Igbo people say: He who listens to an elder is like one who consults an oracle. The oracles are believed to give the infallible truths, thus the elders are also believed to say the truth and their words and instructions are heeded to for the promotion of good behavior among the young." (p.28) This partly explains why 'respect for elders' is one of the cultural values of the traditional Igbo people.

In the traditional Igbo society, truth has also moral dimension. Those who used to say the truth always were seen as morally good as well as upright people, and were highly regarded by the people. Such people were categorized as ancestors after death. The traditional Igbo people used to invite them to participate in Kola nut rituals. Contrarily, those who lived in falsehood or known for falsehood were regarded as morally bad people and cannot be categorized as ancestors after death.

EXAMINING THE CONDITIONS FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF PHILOSOPHY OF 'EZIOKWU-BU-NDU'

The philosophical methods of hermeneutics and analysis play dominant role in the articulation of philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu'. Hence, philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' becomes possible through hermeneutical and analytical investigations of Igbo traditional ideology of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu'. However, rationality remains at the root of this investigation. This stems from the fact that philosophy is fundamentally a rational activity. It investigates rationally every aspect of reality.

Analysis is generally understood as breaking down of complex concepts into simpler parts or units for better understanding. Articulating what analysis is all about, Umeogu (2007) states that "Analysis deals with logical clarification of concepts, involves functional relation, breaking the whole and rebuilding it. It is highly critical." (p.10) It is obvious that a non-philosophical issue can become philosophical issue through philosophical analysis. Analysis is a very important instrument of philosophy in its investigation of reality. No aspect of reality is excluded from philosophical investigation. Through philosophical analysis, the concept of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' would be broken down into smaller units for proper understanding and appreciation of the concept.

This study is a philosophical investigation of the cultural ideology of the Igbo people. Okere (1983) studied the relationship between culture and philosophy, and discovered that culture in itself is not philosophy, but can provide the background as well as materials for philosophical reflection. Hence, though philosophy is quite different from cultural ideology, there is a deep relationship between them. Articulating the relationship between

philosophy and culture, Okere (1983) states:

This basically is the relationship between any philosophy and its culture. Since philosophy is the interpretation of reality within a culture, we can see that the relation of culture to philosophy is governed by the dialectics of background to foreground, of presupposition to explicit statement, of prejudgment to judgment in which culture plays the role of background, presupposition and prejudgment whereas philosophy plays the role of foreground, thematic statement and explicit judgment. (p. 65)

The questions that constituted serious source of worry for Okere are: How can culture give rise to philosophy? What is the link between culture and philosophy? How can cultural issues be objects of philosophical reflections? In response to these questions, Okere (1983) argued that the link or mediator between culture and philosophy is nothing but hermeneutics. Thus, he maintains that African culture can give rise to African philosophy through the process of hermeneutics. In his words: "it is only within the context of hermeneutics that African culture can give birth to African philosophy". (Okere, 1983, p.15).

Obviously, through hermeneutics, Igbo culture can give rise to philosophy. This is possible through philosophical interpretations of traditional Igbo ideologies, proverbs, symbols etc. Okere (1983) argues consistently that hermeneutics (interpretation) plays prominent role in philosophical investigation. Fundamentally, hermeneutics has to do with interpretation. Okere (1983) articulated the meaning of hermeneutics from etymological perspective thus:

Hermeneutics comes from the Greek "ermeneuein", which can mean either to express, to explain, to translate, or to interpret. Hermeneutics, therefore, originally means the investigation of realities whose meaning is not immediately evident.⁸ As a problem of interpretation, hermeneutics is as old as the oldest literally traditions. (p.19)

The researcher quite agrees with Okere (1983) that a cultural or non-philosophical issue can become philosophical through hermeneutical investigation. It becomes obvious that 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' which is a cultural ideology of the traditional Igbo people can become philosophical through hermeneutical investigations. The method of hermeneutics would bring out very clearly the possible interpretations of the concept in order to unravel its hidden meanings, and at the same time lay bare or expose its intrinsic conceptual structure. Thus, the philosophical methods of analysis and hermeneutics are the necessary prerequisite for the possibility of philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu'. Through philosophical analysis and hermeneutical investigation, philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' becomes a reality.

PHILOSOPHY OF 'EZIOKWU-BU-NDU' AND ITS FEATURES/PRINCIPLES

'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' is a combination of three Igbo words: 'Eziokwu' (truth), 'Bu' (is), 'Ndu' (life). Literally, it can be translated into English language as 'truth is life'. 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' unravels the ontological status of truth in human existence. Reflecting hermeneutically and

analytically on the expression 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' (truth is life), one sees immediately the relationship and connectedness between truth and life. If truth is life, it invariably implies that falsity is death (Okwuasi-bu-onwu). Attesting to this, Ejeh (2019) states:

For the Igbo, to be is to be true to what one really is. The Igbo puts this ontological principle in the maxim: Eziokwu Bu Ndu (Truth is life; life is truth)... In the ontological order, the true is the living. Truth is authenticity, (Ugwu ndu). Not to be in the truth is not to be in life, in dynamism, self-manifestation and the vital energy. It is to die. Only the true lives. The untrue disappears into the false-hood of non-being.(pp. 4-5)

Certainly, life and death are polar concepts, just as truth and falsity are polar concepts. The existence of life implies the existence of death, just as the existence of truth implies the existence of falsity. They are opposing concepts. The fact that certain things are true brings to our consciousness that certain things are false. Also, the fact that certain things are alive brings to our consciousness that certain things are dead. Life is the greatest possession of every human being. It is only when one is alive that one can function. The researcher is philosophizing as he writes this article because he is alive. Hence, the Latin expression, 'Primum vivere deinde philosophare' (Life first before philosophizing). Bearing in mind the fundamental position of life, one wonders why the traditional Igbo people equated truth with life through the expression 'eziokwu-bu-ndu'. Such demonstrates the central position as well as the importance of truth in the thought pattern and ideology of the traditional Igbo people. It also demonstrates that truth is fundamental in human existence such that the authenticity of human existence depends on truth. Furthermore, truth is inseparable from human life, and at the same time, it is pre-eminent in all dimensions of human life. Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' unravels the fact that truth is the life-affirming principle. Consequently, development in all dimensions of human life lies in truth. Also, Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' discloses the unchanging nature of truth, and upholds the objectivity of truth. It contradicts the pragmatic notion of truth as a relative concept.

Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' establishes that truth is indispensable in human life. Just as human nature or essence is one, truth is also one, though it has many dimensions. Ajah (2014) approaches *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* from the perspective of meaningfulness of life and human existence. Hence, it is truth that brings out the meaningfulness of life. In his words:

Thus, eziokwu (truth) b? (is) nd? (life) could still be re-interpreted to mean that truth is the only principle that makes life meaningful. This last interpretation would mean that the Igbo expression “eziokwubundu” establishes an inevitable and ontological link between 1) knowledge (for instance: self-knowledge, self-understanding, world-understanding, how what is known and understood is handled and used to reveal or conceal reality, and so on) and 2) the mode of existence of a subject (person or society). To ignore this principle (truth) or to attempt to conceal it, would therefore mean to have worked (or to be working) against the primary principle for meaningful existence-the primary condition for fruitful assessment of

facts and situations. (p.538)

The implication of this is that without truth, human life loses its meaning. This stems from the fact that life without truth is completely focusless.

Obviously, human life has many dimensions such as physical, biological, spiritual, intellectual, social, mental, psychological and moral dimensions. These dimensions of human life are inter-related and inter-connected such that they affect one another. They are just like different parts of the same human body such that problem in any of them automatically affects others. Though truth is one, it has also these dimensions of human life. Just as there are different dimensions of human life, there are also similar dimensions of truth. From this perspective, truth is life in all its dimensions.

ESSENTIAL FEATURES/PRINCIPLES OF PHILOSOPHY OF 'EZIOKWU-BU-NDU'

1. **Truth is the Fundamental or Underlying Factor of Human Existence:** Philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* maintains that truth is at the root of human existence. It occupies an essential and central position in human existence. Authentic human life should be based on truth.
2. **Truth is Inseparable from Human Life:** Philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* emphasizes the connection and relationship between human life and truth such that they should not be separated from each other. Hence, human life should not be separated from truth.
3. **Truth is Pre-eminent in all Dimensions of Human Life:** Human life has many dimensions such as social, psychological, physical, spiritual, moral, intellectual, political, aesthetic dimensions etc. Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' maintains that truth is the most important factor in all dimensions of human life. It is of greatest standard or value in all dimensions of human life.
4. **Truth has Ontological Relationship with Human Life:** Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' upholds the view that truth is linked to the beingness of human being such that human life is intimately related to truth. Hence, it becomes an inherent contradiction for humans to be untruthful. From this perspective, truth becomes an essential part and parcel of human life.
5. **Authenticity of Human Life Lies on Truth:** The issue of authenticity of human life is a very controversial issue among a group of philosophers known as existentialists as demonstrated in the later part of this work. Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' argues and insists that authenticity of human life is based on truth. Hence, it is truth that can make human life to be real.
6. **Truth is Life-Affirming Principle:** Since truth has ontological relationship with human life, it follows that truth vivifies and promotes life. Hence, truth is life-affirming principle, while falsity is life-denying principle.
7. **Development in all Dimensions of Human Life Lies in Truth/ Truth Leads to Development in all Dimensions of Human Life:** When human life is based on truth, all dimensions of human life function properly and optimally. Obviously, this leads to development in all dimensions of human life. From this perspective, truth

propels development in all dimensions of human life.

8. Truth is One, But has Many Dimensions: Truth is truth, hence truth is one. Despite the oneness of truth, it has many dimensions. Just as human life is one, but has many dimensions, also truth is one, but has different dimensions. Truth occupies a central position in all dimensions of human life.

9. Truth is Unchanging: What is true today cannot be false tomorrow. If something which was held to be true was later discovered to be false, this implies that there was error in the process of acquisition of human knowledge. It does not in any way imply that truth has changed. Truth remains the same, waiting to be discovered. Hence, philosophy of 'eziokwu-bu-ndu' rejects completely pragmatic concept of truth that sees truth as a changeable phenomenon. Truth does not depend on workability or successfulness of any idea as pragmatists uphold. Philosophy of 'eziokwu-bu-ndu' rejects the pragmatic view that truth is a relative concept, but rather an objective concept.

10. Truth is the Bedrock or Foundation of Justice-Truth is fundamentally related to justice such that one cannot talk of justice without truth. In fact, it is truth that gives rise to justice. Truth is the bedrock or foundation of justice in the sense that justice is built on truth, and it is truth that gives meaning to justice. Without truth, there is no justice. Any society that neglects truth automatically neglects justice.

PHILOSOPHY OF 'EZIOKWU-BU-NDU' AND THE ISSUE OF AUTHENTICITY OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

The question of authenticity of human existence is a very controversial issue among philosophers. Philosophers have varied and even conflicting views on what constitutes authenticity of human existence. Generally, authenticity has to do with being real to oneself or one's nature. According to Varga and Guignon (2023):

The term 'authentic' is used either in the strong sense of being “of undisputed origin or authorship”, or in a weaker sense of being “faithful to an original” or a “reliable, accurate representation”. To say that something is authentic is to say that it is what it professes to be, or what it is reputed to be, in origin or authorship. But the distinction between authentic and derivative is more complicated when discussing authenticity as a characteristic attributed to human beings. For in this case, the question arises: What is it to be oneself, at one with oneself, or truly representing one's self? ... On the one hand, being oneself is inescapable, since whenever one makes a choice or acts, it is oneself who is doing these things. But on the other hand, we are sometimes inclined to say that some of the thoughts, decisions and actions that we undertake are not *really* one's own and are therefore not genuinely expressive of who one is. Here, the issue is no longer of metaphysical nature, but rather about moral-psychology, identity and responsibility.(para. 1)

Authenticity is very necessary in human existence. It could be said that one who is

authentic to himself or herself truly represents himself or herself. The issue of what constitutes the authenticity of human existence was given a more detailed and scholarly attention in the contemporary period of philosophy by existentialist philosophers. Existentialism is a philosophical school of thought or orientation that focuses on the nature and characteristics of human existence in the universe. Martin Heidegger was very much concerned with the issue of authenticity of human existence in his philosophy, though he was basically interested in the issue of 'Being'. Thus, he distinguished between authentic and inauthentic existence, and argued that authentic existence lies in the ability to stand out such that one will not be swallowed by the group and routineness of life. Commenting on Heideggerian idea of authentic existence and inauthentic existence, Igwe and Ekemezie (2021) state:

...authenticity of action is one which is taken from the reality of human individuality, freedom and responsibility. It is a life that strives to distinguish the self from the unanimous crowd. It is a self that stands on the part of what is true, pure and dignifying to human condition, even if it warrants standing alone, it is a life of self-affirmation. Human being, at every point in time, must make effort to choose a course of action devoid of public opinion but through self-conviction that this action defines me and would help me in actualizing all my possibilities before death comes extinguishing my being. For him, if Dasein makes no choice, and allows himself to be carried away by an undefined public, the 'nobody', 'everybody' and 'they' factors, Dasein "ensnares himself in inauthenticity" (Heidegger, 1962, p.268) (p.93)

Hence, one who lives an authentic life owns one's life, and becomes a person of a particular kind. Such a person is unique, and is not carried away by the crowd.

On his own part, Jean Paul Sartre insists that authenticity lies in a life that is based on freedom. Sartre is a strong advocate of human freedom. He insists that freedom characterizes human existence, and as such, one's choices in life define one's nature. From this perspective, it is one's choices that determine one's essence. Authenticity lies in making choices as a free being, and accepting the responsibilities of the choices. Hence, Sartre argues and insists that one lives authentically when one determines one's essence or identity through free and responsible choices.

Karl Jaspers approaches the issue of authenticity from the perspective of 'self-consciousness'. Khan (2007) states that "Jaspers advocates that the ultimate end of human existence is the achievement of an authentic existence gained through a deeper and wider self-consciousness..." (p.114). This demonstrates that achievement of self-consciousness is at the core of authentic existence in Karl Jaspers' conception.

Simone de Beauvoir tackles the problem of authenticity from the point of view of 'self-creation'. According to Cleary (2002):

But for Simone de Beauvoir- a brilliant 20th-century French philosopher, novelist, and activist- authenticity isn't something you find. Authenticity is something you create. Authenticity is a

process of intentionally choosing who you become. Authenticity is a perpetual adventure toward self-creation and self-renewal.
(para. 2)

The implication of this is that one should not have fixed identity or fixed ideas about oneself. Authenticity, for Simone de Beauvoir, becomes what one creates for oneself. At this point of the discourse, one should ask this fundamental question: What is the contribution of philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' to the ongoing debate on the issue of authenticity of human existence? It is very obvious from the discourse on the features/principles of philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' that truth is the fundamental factor in human existence, and at the same time, truth is inseparable from human existence. Consequently, truth is the most important factor in the discourse on the issue of authenticity of human existence. Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' implies that authenticity lies in living a life that is based on truth in all dimensions of human life. Every dimension of human life should be governed and directed by truth. From this perspective, it is truth that gives meaning and direction to human life. Thus, human life that is not based on truth in all its dimensions is completely inauthentic.

EVALUATION

Attempt has been made in this study to examine philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' and the issue of authenticity of human existence. 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' is one of the ideological legacies of the traditional Igbo people. In the course of this study, the researcher identified the features/principles of philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu'. Those principles are of great importance in understanding the tenets of philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu'. They portray the deep relationship and connection between truth and human life. The fundamental question that is scholarly very pertinent in this discourse is this: Is it possible or rather practicable to uphold truth in all dimensions of human life? This question is very necessary in our contemporary society where falsehood has become the order of the day. Besides, some people are very pessimistic with the things that concern truth. The researcher argues strongly that it is possible and at the same time practicable to uphold truth in all dimensions of human life. One only needs to be conscious of the central as well as fundamental position of truth in one's life, and make conscious effort to live accordingly. This stems from the fact that truth is an essential aspect of human life. Falsity, which is a negation of truth, is an aberration. Hence, falsity is a distortion of human nature. It destroys the unity and harmony of human life. Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' is indispensable in our contemporary society where falsity has become very fashionable in all human endeavours.

Furthermore, Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' makes significant contribution towards the understanding of what constitutes authenticity of human existence. On the issue of what constitutes authentic human existence, the argument of philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' is very clear. It is truth that constitutes authentic human existence. Hence, authenticity of human existence does not lie in Heideggerian idea of one's ability to stand out, and distancing oneself from the crowd. Also, it does not lie in Sartrean idea of determining one's essence or identity through making free and responsible choices in one's life. Authenticity of human existence lies in living a life that is based on truth in all dimensions of human life.

Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' champions the pre-eminence of truth in all dimensions of human life.

CONCLUSION

It is obvious from the discourse above that truth is the fundamental and indispensable principle of human existence. It is inseparable from human life. Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' is a philosophy of liberation. It is only truth that can liberate humanity from everlasting distortion and decay. Truth is a vivifying element. Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' is an invitation for all humans to uphold human dignity in all dimensions of human life. Certainly, truth is part and parcel of human life. Separation of truth from human life is automatically a destruction of human nature. It is only truth that can make human life worth-living. This implies that any human life that is not based on truth is not worth-living. Also, it is truth that constitutes authentic human existence as demonstrated in the earlier part of this article. Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' and its principles, if well maintained, will lead to the actualization of the potentialities in human life. Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' is not only a philosophical orientation, but also a social movement for total transformation of the contemporary society.

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