

SAPIENTIA

JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY
VOLUME 20, NO. 1, JUNE 2024
ISSN: 1595-4943 (PRINT)

**A Publication of the Department of Philosophy
University of Uyo**



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Charges:

A. Publication Fee:

Vetting charge	-	₦ 5,000.00
Page charge	-	₦ 20,000.00

Contact:

Editor-in-Chief

Sapientia Journal of
Philosophy Department of
Philosophy, University of Uyo
P.M.B. 1017

Uyo, Akwa Ibom State

Email: sapientiajournaluniuyo@gmail.com

Website: www.uniuyo.edu.ng/sapientiajournalofphilosophy
www.sapientiajournalofphilosophy.press

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Published and Printed by:

Uniuyo Printing Press and Digital LTD

University of Uyo, Nwaniba Road,

Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

08037078834, 08137048047

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List of Contributors

1. **Adekunle A. Ibrahim**, Ph.D, Department of Philosophy, University of Uyo.
2. **Emmanuel C. Umeh**, Ph.D, Seat of Wisdom Seminary, Umuahia.
3. **Idorenyin V. Abraham**, Ph.D, Department of Foreign Languages, University of Uyo.

4. **Christopher Okwor Okonkwo**, Ph.D, Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
5. **Anthony C. Ugwonna**, Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
6. **Ekenedirichukwu Eze**, Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
7. **Uchenna Teresa Okonkwo**, Ph.D Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
8. **Ijeoma Julia Ogu**, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
9. **Precious Amadike**, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
10. **Philips Olubiyi**, General Studies Unit, Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, Ogun State.
11. **Louis Obi**, Ph.D, General Studies Unit, University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Umuagwo, Imo State.
12. **Anthony Jacob**, Ph.D, Department of Philosophy, Imo State University, Owerri.
13. **Azibalua Onyaghola**, Ph.D, Department of Philosophy, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State.
14. **Esther Obiageli Ogbu**, Department of Philosophy, Alex Ekwueme University, Ndufu Alike, Ikwo, Ebonyi State.
15. **Umar Buratai Ibrahim**, Department of Philosophy, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

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Descartes' Methodic Doubt and Social Media Frenzy: From Gullibility to Criticality

Adekunle A. IBRAHIM, Ph.D

Department of Philosophy
University of Uyo, Uyo.
adekunleibrahim@uniuyo.edu.ng

Emmanuel C. UMEH, Ph.D

Seat of Wisdom Major Seminary
Philosophy Campus, Umuahia.

Abstract

This paper examines the phenomenon of social media frenzy within the theoretical framework of Descartes' methodic doubt. The social media invention aims to aid seamless communication and ameliorate the loneliness occasioned by extreme individualism of modern society. However, the innovation seems to have thrown many users into a state of frenzy that undermines any sense of critical sanity. Consequently, it has become a potent medium for spreading malicious information, bullying and social conflagration. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the possibility of an attitudinal transition of social media users from gullibility to criticality. It argues that Descartes' methodic doubt provides the appropriate principles that serve as antidote to gullibility in the consumption of social media contents. In order to substantiate its position, the paper clarifies the meaning of social media. It explains the meaning and nature of social media frenzy. In addition, it presents Descartes' methodic doubt and outlines the central principles therein. Finally, it extrapolates how the principles of Descartes' methodic doubt elevate social media users from the state of gullibility to that of criticality in the consumption of social media contents.

Keywords: Methodic Doubt, Criticality, Gullibility, Social Media, Frenzy

Introduction

It is a truism that the social media has become an integral part of our daily life. Millions of people across the globe use various social media platforms to share and consume information as well as interact with one another. This affirms the veracity of Aristotle's description of man as a social being who constantly seeks to reach out to others for fellowship. This social nature of man has been under immense attack by the extreme individualism of modern society. The social structure of today's world creates barrier that promotes human isolation that runs contrary to human nature. In response to the individualistic and solitary nature of modern life, the social media was invented to eliminate the social barriers that undermine sociality that defines human existence.

In this sense, the social media becomes an essential platform for building social capital that sustains the social nature of human life. In effect, through its set of seamless communication platforms, the social media restores the principles of collaboration, community building, participation and sharing which ultimately sustain social capital. Consequently, the social media becomes a veritable tool for building relationships, self-expression, fellowship, communication, education, economic ties, cultural integration, socialization as well as sharing ideas, thoughts and opinions. For this reason, the social media has come to stay as an existential necessity in the fabric of modern life.

Notwithstanding the significant roles of the social media in human society, its abusive use has become a serious source of worry. This is because many users have been thrown into a state of frenzy that negates the virtues of sanity and criticality. In fact, the use of social media as a medium of social bully, character assassination, fake news, deception, cat fishing, terrorism and many other forms of vices is becoming unprecedented and worrisome.

The situation is most disturbing as many people today depend on social media for daily information about happenings in their society and around the world. In most cases, they do this without questioning the truthfulness and authenticity of the information received. In this way, they become gullible in the consumption of such information to the extent that their aggregation of public opinion becomes toxic and ultimately breeds social unrest and chaos. Hence, it becomes pertinent to seek ways of developing safe-nets to protect the masses from falling into the social media frenzy and abuse. In order to achieve this, the paper displays Descartes' methodic doubt as a framework for developing the mechanism for determining the truthfulness of social media contents. This is to enthrone the spirit of criticality and suspends the attitude of gullibility in the engagement of the social media platforms.

What is Social Media?

The social media is a computer-based interactive technology that facilitates the creation, sharing and aggregation of content, ideas, interest, and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks. It is a collective term for websites and applications that focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Therefore, it is a digital technology, which allows people to stay in touch and interact with friends, family and various communities. For this reason, Kaplan as quoted by Ghulam et al describes social media as "a set of internet-based application that construct on the ideological and technological foundation of web and that permit the design and exchange of user generated content" (22). Thus, the social media is a collective of online communication and interaction channels dedicated to building social capital through content sharing and collaboration. In its operational mode, it provides platforms such as Facebook, Blogs, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, Snapchat, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and My Space. All these are design to give the social media users an array of options that perfectly suits their purpose of communication and interaction.

A careful looked at the above reveals that the social media includes applications that have the following three characteristics:

- i. Have the capability to support user-generated content in forms such as images, text, videos and statues (such as geolocation check ins)

- ii. Provide a means for users to connect with one another (through follows or likes on Twitter, friendship connections on Facebook, or checking in with Foursquare).
- iii. Support various means for members to engage with one another in the form of collaboration, community building, participation, sharing, linking and other means. (Sloan and Quan-Haase, 5)

Thus, once these three elements come together in any platform, such medium can be described as falling under the rubric of social media.

Meaning and Nature of Social Media Frenzy

The term “frenzy” refers to a state or period of uncontrolled excitement or wild behaviour that often results from losing control of one's feelings. It is a state of great activity and strong emotion that is often violent or frightening and not under control. Thus, the phrase “social media frenzy” connotes the uncontrolled excitement or wild behavior that accompanies the use of social media among people. It refers to the intense enthusiasm or obsession that people have with social media platforms. It captures the frightening and irrational use of social media applications prevalent in our digital age. This is visible in the way individuals constantly check their phones for update post content and engage with others online. The phenomenon of social media frenzy is characterized by a wild or frantic outburst of feelings or actions that suggests the behaviour often goes beyond mere interest or enjoyment. In most cases, people spend an excessive amount of time on social media often at the expense of real-world interactions and responsibilities. This is because the social media contents serenade people's sense of judgment in such a way that makes them almost become rationally bankrupt. By so doing, the social media presents a distorted picture of reality, which eventually erodes the sense of judgement of its users as they are blindfolded by the pursuit of public validation that the social media offers. In fact, the desire for fame and financial rewards that accompany online followership has made its users fall deep into the states of obsession and irrational slumber. This has led to serious manipulations, distortion of truth and misrepresentation of reality in the race to attract increase in streaming and viewership.

The effect of social media frenzy in people's life is deep-rooted to the extent that it puts the individual(s) in a state of fantasy detached from the reality of existence. The effects of social media frenzy ranges from anxiety and depression, FOMO the fear of missing out, negative body image issues, unhealthy sleep behaviours, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, erratic behaviours to issues of low self-esteem and so on. Furthermore, the impact of social media frenzy on some people's cognitive capacity is of great concern as their attention span have been reduced by the immediate gratification provided by smart phones and social media. This shows that social media frenzy and its attendant consequences have grown to a disturbing proportion because of the unrelenting dangers it provokes in people's life due to the lack of rational and conscious self-support system to checkmate the consumption of its contents. To fill this gap, this paper examines the rational self-support principles espoused in Descartes' methodic doubt as a safe-net against social media contents as well as a rational defense against social media frenzy.

Descartes Methodic Doubt

At the beginning of his *Meditations*, Descartes acknowledged his gullible acceptance of a large number of false ideas that he had accepted as true from childhood. In recognition of this gullibility, Descartes sets aside all these taken-for-granted ideas in order to seek for himself truth that is "certain and unshakable". (*Meditations* 1, 21) To achieve this objective, Descartes devised a systematic method that investigates truth through general skepticism that aims at achieving certainty of knowledge. This method of investigation is what is generally referred to as the "methodic doubt" or "method of doubt". Thus, the methodic doubt is a way of searching for certainty by systematically and tentatively doubting everything. Unlike the sceptics who doubted only for the sake of doubting, Descartes doubts to reach certainty.

Descartes initiated his search for truth by doubting the reliability of sense perception. He claims that the senses are deceptive and as such cannot be suitable for the attainment of certainty. According to him, even if the deception of the senses happened once, prudence demands that one should not or never completely trust those who have deceived us at one time or the other. For this reason, Descartes doubts everything that in one way or the other come to his notice through the senses. This, according to him, is to free the mind from all forms of prejudices and deceptions. In his words:

Whatever I have up till now accepted as true I have acquired either from the sense or through the senses. But from time to time I have found that the senses deceive, and it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once. (*Meditation* 1, 16).

Descartes intention in the above is to disengage himself from his previously held beliefs and opinions so that they may be replaced with those that are in conformity with "the uniformity of rational scheme". (Stumpf and Fieser, 229). This guarantees the achievement of absolute truth that is immune against doubt. In the course of his doubting, Descartes stumbled on the idea that his doubt is an affirmation of his thinking. In addition, if he thinks then he exists. He argues that even if any "deceiving agent" who can deceive is deceiving him, then his awareness of such deceiving power is invariably the affirmation of his existence. In his words:

... if he is deceiving me; and let him deceive me as much as he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I think that I am something. So, after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind (21).

The above suggests that Descartes becomes aware of his existence through his doubt. Thus, the dictum *cogito ergo sum* meaning "I think, therefore, I am". This in his view is the first intuitively realized certain knowledge from which other truths can be derived or deduced. When everything has been removed, nothing remains except the thinking self. Therefore, man is a thinking being; a being that doubts something (24).

In view of the fact that thinking is an act of the mind, Descartes believes that the mind through its methodic process helps us to structure and organize our ideas in order to arrive

at certainty. For this reason, method becomes an important requirement in our search for truth. It frees us from confusion and provides orderliness in our thinking. Thus, Descartes outlines four rules of the mind in his methodic doubt. These he believes are sufficient for arriving at certitude in knowledge. He states the rules as follows:

The first was never to accept anything for true which I did not clearly know to be such; that is to say, carefully to avoid precipitancy and prejudice, and to comprise nothing more in my judgement than what was presented to my mind so clearly and distinctly as to exclude all ground of doubt. The second, to divide each of the difficulties under examination into as many parts as possible, and as might be necessary for its adequate solution. The third, to conduct my thoughts in such order that, by commencing with objects the simplest and easiest to know, I might ascent by little, and, as it were, step by step, to the knowledge of the more complex; assigning in thought a certain order even to those objects which in their own nature do not stand in a relation of antecedence and sequence. And the last, in every case to make enumerations so complete, and reviews so general, that I might be assured that nothing was omitted (Discourse...24).

In a simple and clear form, the principles derivable from Descartes' methodic doubt as espoused in the quotation above are as follows:

- I. Rule of general skepticism: Questioning all ideas, beliefs and opinions to ascertain their truthfulness.
- ii. Rule of evident clarity: Clarity and distinctness of ideas.
- iii. Rule of division: adequate analysis of ideas into component parts.
- iv. Rule of enumeration: Logical movement of thoughts from simple to complex ideas.
- v. Rule of synthesis: bringing together different elements of ideas to have a synoptic whole.

Descartes' Methodic Doubt and Social Media Usage

In order to ascertain the place of Descartes' methodic doubt in the transformation of social media users from the state of gullibility to that of criticality, there is need to distinguish between the two states of mind. This is to ascertain how Descartes' methodic doubt transforms social media users from gullible users to critical users of the social media. On the one hand, gullibility is the state of mind that believes and accepts information, claims or ideas without questioning or examining its truthfulness and credibility. It is the willingness to accept information without having sufficient evidence to ascertain its truth-value. Gullible persons are easily deceived, tricked or cheated (Webster, 630). This is because they trust others readily and are prone to accepting information on the face value without scrutinizing its accuracy or legitimacy. Criticality, on the other hand, is a questioning state of mind. It is the capacity to doubt, question and analyse information in order to understand a problem or topic from more than one perspective. It involves making logical connections between and among ideas in order to make informed decisions or opinions. Thus, it requires "a combination of critical and

logical thinking” (Ibrahim 129). In our analyses of social media frenzy, it is clear that most social media users operate within the confine of a gullible state of mind. The fundamental question here is “are the principles of Descartes' methodic doubt capable of transforming social media users from gullibility to criticality? To answer this question, it is pertinent to extrapolate how each of the central principles of Descartes' methodic doubt contributes to the transformation of social media users from gullible users to critical users.

1. Rule of General Scepticism

This refers to the attitude of doubting or questioning everything that comes our way in order to ascertain their truthfulness. Here, Descartes' methodic doubt encourages us to question all things and not to blindly accept whatever is presented to us. This principle in application to social media engagement empowers us to doubt and question all social media contents no matter how fascinating or appealing they may appear. This sceptical attitude transforms the social media users into a critical user who is constantly critical about what is posted on social media platforms. By so doing, the social media users become less prone to negative influences through social media contents.

2. Rule of Evident Clarity

This principle stipulates that any idea, belief or opinion that is not clear and distinct enough to avoid any form of doubt should be rejected. This principle admonishes us to beware of ideas that are not presented in a simple, clear and lucid manner as such ideas have the tendency of generating confusion. Descartes puts it thus: “anything which admits of the slightest doubt I will set aside just as I have found it to be wholly false. (Meditation 1, 20) In application to social media engagement, the principle warns us to be wary of contents that are not presented in a clear, simple and distinct form. It empowers us to recognize and reject any dubious and pretentious content on the social media. It also develops in us the skill to identify red flags in mischievous social media contents. These crucial skills support the transition of social media users from the state of gullibility to that of criticality.

3. Rule of Division

This principle emphasizes the act of analysing or breaking down ideas into its simplest component parts. This according to Ibrahim is to “expose and uncover all forms of mystification and baseness of thought” (Philosophy and Career...27). This involves the ability to deconstruct ideas, beliefs and opinions to lay bare possible underpinnings. In relation to the social media, this principle empowers us to be able to break down or analyse information from the social media in order deconstruct, demystify and detect possible hidden agenda. By so doing, the social media users are equipped with the necessary skill to uncover manipulative tendencies of tactics such as click bait, fake news, seductive rhetoric, catchwords, slogans, empty phrases and other forms of deceptive techniques on the social media. In this way, the social media users are strengthened to protect their emotional, psychological and intellectual sanity against harmful social media contents.

4. Rule of Enumeration

This refers to the logical movement of thought from simple ideas to complex ones. It is the act of examining ideas inferentially from its simplest elements to its complex parts. This requires a methodological assessment of ideas in order to spot details in the face of complexities. In relation to the social media, this principle builds in the users the capacity for logical assessment of social media contents to be able to spot details as they navigate through the ocean of information on the social media. In addition, the principle enhances the understanding of algorithms that filter contents, detect disinformation and appreciate diversity in information sources. By so doing, the social media users are placed on a vantage point to be in control of what they consume from the social media.

5. Rule of Synthesis

This refers to the capacity to see connections between and among ideas to form a whole. It is the act of combining elements to form something new and synoptic. In Descartes' language, it is the process of capturing every element of an issue in a complete and general way that no aspect is omitted. In relation to the social media usage, the principle of synthesis builds in the users the capacity to combine multiple sources of information to figure out the truth about a particular issue based on the analysis of available information. In this way, the social media users are transformed from gullible users to creative users who create new insights from available information on the social media.

Conclusion

This paper set out to examine the problem of social media frenzy within the framework of Descartes' methodic doubt in order to ascertain the possibility of transforming social media users from the state of gullibility to that of criticality. This objective was pursued with the clarification of what the social media is as well as the meaning and nature of social media frenzy. The paper then presents Descartes' methodic doubt and outlines the central principles therein as the rules of general scepticism, evident clarity, division, enumeration and synthesis. Based on this, the paper extrapolates the outcome of the engagement of the social media within the context of the principles of Descartes' methodic doubt. The paper concludes that the adoption of the principles of Descartes' methodic doubt as the grand rules in the engagement of the social media space provides the necessary safe nets against the consumption of harmful social media contents. Thus, the paper submits that the combination of these principles provides the necessary critical thinking skill that can transform social media users from gullible users to critical users. This, it argues, empowers the individual(s) to navigate the digital world critically and responsibly.

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Runaway men, Go-getter women: A Feminist Approach to Female Abandonment in Selected Nigerian Literary Texts.

Idorenyin V. ABRAHAM, Ph.D

Department of Foreign Languages

University of Uyo

Email: idorenyinabraham@uniuyo.edu.ng

Abstract

Over the years, scholars and critics have reemphasized the need for men and women to play their assigned roles and fulfill their responsibilities within the family structure and this has contributed in no small measure to the improvement of inter-personal family relationships in the Nigerian society. However, more attention needs to be given to the issue of female abandonment in the feminist discourses of the selected texts, where men abandon their partners/children, relinquish their roles and responsibilities, and in some extreme cases, plunge the entire family into a state of emotional, mental and psychological trauma. This study investigates the strategies adopted by the authors in condemning female abandonment in relationships as well as equipping the women to move on in life in the event of such occurrence. In this study, Chimamanda Adichie's *Zikora* and Lynn Mbuko's *Chaque chose en son temps* are read as Feminist texts as they challenge phallogentric predispositions against womanhood and motherhood in the contemporary Nigerian milieu. *Zikora* and *Zenabou*, the female protagonists in the two texts are groomed to be gogetters so that even when they are victims of female abandonment, they succeed in removing the scars that those traumatic experiences left on them in order to achieve their ambitions in life and to be productive to the society.

Key Words: Feminist, female abandonment, phallogentric, relationship, womanhood.

Introduction

When a man and a woman are into any form of intimate relationship whether it is a marital relationship, a friendship with benefits or the one with no strings attached, it is necessary for the duo to be ready to face facts and bear the consequences of their sexual intimacy when the need arises. They must be able to define what they want from such relationships from the onset and decide on what to do if they are not served with what they ordered. Such precautionary measures will offer them the opportunity to prevent emotional and psychological stress on any of the other partner in the event that the undesirable happens. This is important because if the tables turn, the woman is mostly the worst hit. In the case of an unexpected pregnancy or a stillbirth as in our corpus, the man can easily walk away or run away leaving the woman to battle with the issues of unwanted pregnancy and single parenting. In some cases, an abortion is done but, in many other cases the woman decides to

keep the baby. When such a child grows up, he finds it very difficult to do away with the mother. This is exactly what Richard Ajah was alluding to when he said that "Prince Nico Mbarga's inability to forget his mother emanates from her sacrificial love for him as a child" (13). Ajah posits that since Mbarga's song "Sweet Mother" is an ode to the mother, the responsibility of the father is questioned (13).

The theme of female abandonment runs through several post- independence literary works in Africa. In cases where the father figure and the husband does not run away, he has certain cogent reasons to send the wife away so he can marry another woman or move along in life. The reasons for female abandonment in relationships includes infertility like in the case of Ezinma, the protagonist in Ihechi Nkoro's *Ma vie m'appartient - (My Life Na My Life)*, who is sent away empty by the family of the late husband because she could not bear children before the husband's death . She is labeled a fruitless tree by her co-wives and accused of maltreating their children just because she cannot bear her own children.

For Ramatoulaye in Mariama Ba's *Une si longue lettre* translated as *So Long a Letter*, her case is not that of infertility because she has given birth to twelve children but, the marriage still hits the rock after thirty years when the husband pushes her aside and goes for Binetou who is much younger than her.

Chimamanda Adichie and Lynn Mbuko are renowned Nigerian female writers; while the former is famous in the domain of Nigerian Literature of English Expression, the latter pitches her tent with other Nigerian creative writers of French Expression.

In most of their writings, Adichie and Mbuko are not only concerned with the oppression women go through in their relationships with men but on how these negative experiences may be harmful to them. The two writers encourage women who are badly treated by their men not to give in to depression, but to become go-getter persons who can surmount any challenge so as to achieve their ambitions in life. In *Zikora*, Adichie brings to the fore the many sides of injustices meted out on women ranging from making them sex objects, abandonment, divorce and remarriage and outright contempt on the female person. She criticizes men for treating the women as sex- slaves like in the case of Mimilaku, Zikora's cousin whose husband enjoys raping her when she is asleep (10).

In *Chaque chose en son temps* (There is time for everything), the playwright condemns the disdain and acts of violence on the African woman by patriarchy. Through her protagonist Zenabou, who is a victim of early and forced marriage, polygamy and divorce, Mbuko calls on the men to do away with male chauvinism, to be sensitive to the wellbeing of the women and to treat them with dignity because they both have appreciable roles to play in the transformation of the society. This view is germane because as Onyemelukwe posits: "showing contempt to the African woman or treating her like an object is a way of denying her the freedom to exercise a fundamental right - the right to the dignity of her person" (34).

Feminism and the feminist criticism

The term feminism has been defined by many scholars and critics in different ways, but whatever definitions are given of feminism, the underlying factor is that feminism's major agenda is the amelioration of the status of the woman in every domain of life. For Bell Hooks, "Feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression". (26). Justina Okoye sees Feminism as "an ideology which incorporates both a doctrine of equal rights for women and an ideology of

social transformation aiming at creating a world for women beyond simple social equality" (1). The word feminism was coined by a French Philosopher, Charles Fourier as *feminisme* - that which had to do with feminine qualities. With time the meaning and the usage of the word had changed significantly as it was being used to refer to equal rights for women. From its inception, the main objective of the feminist movement especially in the West was to defend the rights of the women, but this was not to continue for too long as it did not take into cognizance the peculiarities of the black women.

Black women were to theorize feminism in such a way that it took into consideration issues of sex, race and class. Alice Walker was the first to come up with her African variant of Feminism which she called Womanism. Elizabeth Oguni reiterates that with the birth of Womanism as an offshoot of feminism "the extreme radical posture that it has acquired in the West has been treated with moderation which the peculiar African social climate calls for" (14). Walker used the word Womanism for the first time in her book entitled *Coming Apart* (1979) and then in her work *In Search of Our Mother's Garden* (1983). Walker posits that Womanism is a theory and a movement which is concerned with the survival of the black race; which takes into consideration the experiences of the black women. A womanist according to Walker is one who is passionate for the survival of men and women and advocates for the peaceful coexistence of both sexes irrespective of their cultural specifics. Other strands of African feminism worthy of mention are Catherine Acholonu's Motherism, Omolara Ogundipe's Stiwanism and Obioma Nnaemeka's Nego-feminism. The feminist theory examines the oppression of women by explaining the causes, the consequences as well as offering useful strategies for the improvement of the condition of the woman. It condemns the social and political discrimination against the woman while challenging the patriarchal culture which tends to favour the men.

Feminist criticism started in 1968 when women began to write in order to emancipate the womenfolk from the shackles of patriarchy. For Lois Tyson, "Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women" (81). Women's experience therefore remains the major pre-occupation of feminist criticism. It denounces the subordination of women and seeks to project a better image of the woman through literature. Feminist writers tend to recreate the experiences of women in a bid to redefining the identity of the woman that was already battered in male dominated literatures. These writers assign dominant roles to women in their works so as to make the women active participants in the development of the society and this is exactly what the authors of the selected texts under study seek to achieve.

Analysis of the selected works

A runaway is usually someone who has escaped from somebody or from something; one who runs away from harm, boycotts duties and escapes from restraint. The attitude of the prominent male characters presented in this work fits perfectly with the description given above. They abandon the women of whom they had close affinities; shying away from their responsibilities, boycotting their duties and leaving the women in a state of despondency and insecurity. In the selected texts used for this literary investigation, women are presented as sex objects who are abandoned when the tide changes. Zikora, Adichie's protagonist is a

victim of repeated rejection. As a sophomore, she is impregnated by a nameless college boy who does not care about her in anyway but on how he can satisfy his sexual desires when he so wishes. When Zikora lost her grandmother and was mourning her, the boyfriend in the same breath of telling her 'sorry' asks "if her period has ended so he can stop by" (21). Zikora opts for an abortion because she is not prepared for a child at this age and worse still; the father of the unborn baby is not interested. In cases like this, Adichie supports abortion. She sees the act of terminating Zikora's unwanted pregnancy by an African American Woman who worked at the Planned Parenthood Clinic on Angel Street as an act of kindness. She maintains that there are "some kindnesses you do not ever forget, you carry them to your grave..." (21), such was the kindness of this woman who carried out the abortion on Zikora. According to Adichie, this is the way to "feel light from relief, weightless, unburdened" (22).

Zikora is subsequently abandoned by Kwame another lover, the moment she informs him of her pregnancy. She had thought that he would be overjoyed with the news but the reverse was the case as she narrates "I might be pregnant". I was so certain of his delight that I made my tone playful...But his face didn't relax, instead it went still, as though this communicative man retreated into the cryptic" (11). For Kwame, a relationship with Zikora was good as long as she did not get pregnant. When Zikora informed him of her pregnancy he becomes so furious because according to him, she would have taken precautionary measures to forestall the undesirable from happening.

Runaway men are usually not men enough because when the going gets tough, they make excuses and quit the scene. This is the case with Kwame who displays his meanness and indecorous tendencies when he tactically sought a route of escape from the affair. The protagonist explains this episode further - "I think I should leave. Is that okay?" he asked as though he needed my permission to abandon me. He could kill you but would do it courteously" (11).

A greater percentage of these runaway men usually take their leave in a gentlemanly and courteous fashion but are never courteous enough to seek to know the whereabouts of the abandoned women thereafter. They are gone and gone for good. Certain Nigerian female critics condemn this unsolicited, nonchalant and humiliating tendencies in the menfolk. Helen Chukwuma is one of them and she is very vocal and assertive in stressing that "Motherhood is a supreme role which sets women apart from men and at that point of fulfillment makes them superior to men as agents of procreation and therefore of perpetuity" (24).

Zikora is not alone in this matter as her own mother was also a victim of abandonment. The father who was initially visiting the second wife and had an agreement and an understanding with the mother that he will never leave the home for the second wife, ends up breaking the agreement and moving over to the second wife's house (25). More often than not, men always tend to have their way when it comes to the issue of the second wife. They always have a reason to bring the new wife home or to leave the home and move over to the second wife's place. For Zikora's father, Ugonna, his son from the second wife who is barely in Primary School was caught cheating in an exam, a teacher accosted him when he was seen sneaking out a paper from his pocket. When he was asked to hand it over, he threw it in his mouth and swallowed it. For that reason, the father had to move in with the second wife in order to set the boy right (25). To Zikora's father, his presence in the house will help the boy

not to go wrong again. This excuse is so flimsy and serves as an alibi to enable him abandon the first wife and her daughter for the second wife and his son.

In some cases, female abandonment that is engendered by polygamy like in the case mentioned above brings a rupture in the love that existed between the first wife and the husband. From the moment the second wife comes into the man's life, she begins to alienate the man from his first wife and the children gradually until the cord is finally broken. The truth is that in most polygamous situation, even though the man seems to be more sexually favoured, he and his entire family suffer in one way or the other. This is exactly what Lola Shoneyin tries to show in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* where she projects Bolanle her protagonist, Baba Segi's youngest wife. Bolanle would have died from poisoning by Iya Segi and Iya Tope, the older wives if not for the timely Divine intervention that she had. The poison is arranged and kept for her so she can die and leave the home for them (138). These are some of the dangers that some African writers such as Sembene Ousmane, Mongo Beti, Ramonu Sanusi, Ifeoma Onyemelukwe try to warn the African populace of. These writers describe the polygamists as weak men who are guilty of compromise of agreement. They decry this retrogressive practice which oppresses the woman and hampers her progress in life.

For Zenabou Mbuko's protagonist, the situation is worse because as the fourth wife of ElHadj, a rich and old illiterate, she has no other duty than to satisfy his sexual desires. She loses her baby due to some maternal complications she had during labour as a result of her young age and consequently, she is abandoned in the clinic by the husband. When she manages to get home, a shocker awaits her. The embittered husband had already divorced her even when she was still in the clinic very weak and helpless after childbirth. Mbuko narrates this incident in this manner "Zenabou? Qu'est-ce que tu cherches ici? ...Je t'ai divorcée" (72). "Zenabou? what are you doing here?... You are divorced". (My translation).

Zenabou is thus a victim of double abandonment having been abandoned initially by the husband while she was in labour in the clinic in the hands of two egoistic nurses who do not even care for this young mother but for the money they were able to extort from her husband just as if they knew that he would later abandon the wife and that would hamper their chances of getting money from him. The position of one of the nurses explains this assertion more "Ne nous a-t-il pas abandonné sa femme? Qui va la nourrir?" (70). Has he not abandoned his wife to us? Who will feed her? (My translation). The reason advanced by the husband for this abandonment is that it is the wife who has killed the baby and so she does not have a place in his house anymore "Tu as tué ton propre bébé. J'ai honte de toi, Zenabou. Tu resteras impardonnable" (72). "You killed your own baby. I am ashamed of you. You will never be pardoned". (My translation).

Mbukou condemns this chauvinistic attitude of men in tagging a dog in order to kill it and calls on them to desist from it. Ramonu Sanusi agrees completely with Mbuko on this issue when he posits that "the subjugation of African woman makes her the victim in many situations. Even if she is not responsible, she is always blamed for what goes wrong" (53).

Runaway husbands are notorious for marrying teenage girls, lavishes their money on the parents of these girls who in turn collaborate with these men to stop the education of their girlchildren abruptly. Mbuko condemns in clear terms this wicked act that inhibits the process of female empowerment and makes women to be relegated to the background where they

cannot contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. Her dispositions are vocalized in this manner “ils ne leur laissent pas le temps de dire au revoir à leurs parents et amis. Ils les enlèvent sur la route de l'école” (65). “He does not even allow them to say goodbye to their parents and friends. He picks them up on the way to school” (My translation).

Runaway men are callous and insensitive to the feelings of the women they once professed their love to thereby wrecking untold emotional and mental havoc on them. Habu Adams is one of such men, the husband of Li in Zaynab Alkali's *The Stillborn*. Adams abandons the wife in the village after their marriage for four years and when she goes to the city to find him, she discovers that he has taken another wife. Li is forced to cry out “Where is my man? ... where, is that proud self- confident lover that defied the laughter of the villagers...just to see me?” (70).

In a bid to empower the women to get along in life, in the event where they become victims of abandonment, Adichie and Mbuko arm their protagonists with the tool of education. An educated woman is an empowered and emancipated woman. Such a woman is psychologically and economically viable to pursue her dreams and achieve her goals in life. To be able to wade through the water of abandonment, the woman must be able to have a good image of herself, she must realize her worth. Education enables her to achieve this. She must be a woman who has broken the shackles of limitations occasioned by beliefs, opinions, fears and negative events. She must not live under the shadow of anyone. She must be determined to get the best out of every situation and must be ready to pay the price for her dreams to come true. This type of woman is a go-getter.

A go-getter is someone who is up and doing, determined, poised, bent on being successful and able to handle any new or difficult situation decisively. Such a person always has his head above water. Zikora and Zenabou are go-getters. Zikora is already an educated person (lawyer) and earns a salary which is a little higher than the lover. Adichie intentionally places her protagonist in this privileged position over the man to enable her stand on her own in the event where the relationship hits the rock. During the affair, Zikora does not depend on Kwame for anything and she is even surprised when after she informs him of her pregnancy, he replies with “I'll take care of everything” (11). His actions after making this statement shows that he did not actually mean what he said. Moreover, Zikora did not get hooked up to him because of what she can get from him. She was financially buoyant and as such did not need any help from him during the pregnancy or after the childbirth.

After the break up, when Zikora's pregnancy is 20 weeks, she sends him a message to inform him of the progress she is making, Kwame only responds after three days in this manner “It's manipulative to send me this” you know you made a decision that excluded me. I didn't want things to turn out this way. I'm hurting too” (13). After delivery, while still in the hospital, Zikora gives him a call just to inform him of the birth of their son, but he does not respond. She sends him a message with the words “it's a boy”(17) with the hope that he will respond since it was not just about her now. After several attempts to reach out to him had proved abortive, Kwame finally blocks her number (19).

As a go-getter mother, she is ready to take up the responsibility of nurturing the baby and giving him all the love and care he would have received from both parents. She ceases to see the baby as Kwame's son but her son. This realization enables her to brace up to the challenge

of a single parenting and she does this without any form of regrets. When she says "He was my son. He was mine. I had given birth to him and I was responsible for him" (20). The message that Adichie wants to pass across is that abandoned mothers should do away with the emotional and mental trauma they go through and embrace their roles as mothers because in the real sense, the children they have brought into the world also belong to them. The fulfilment of such women comes through motherhood. This view goes hand in glove with Nwapa's opinions in *One is Enough* where she accentuates her feminist inclinations with such words as "marriage or no marriage, have children, your children will take care of you in your old age. You will be lonely then if you don't have children. As a mother you are fulfilled" (11).

Go-getter mothers are usually very dedicated and ready to make sacrifices that will facilitate the achievement of their goals. Zikora's disposition after Kwame's abandonment drives home this point because when her mother suggests that Kwame's parents be informed of the birth of their grandson, she responds with a firm "No. Not yet" (27). Apparently Zikora has decided to also give herself a break, not wanting to have anything to do with Kwame and his parents at least for a while, she seems to say 'after all I can handle this situation'. She is equal to the task. This is how go-getter women think and act.

For Zenabou in *Chaque Chose en son temps*, as a go-getter woman, just after her abandonment and divorce, she decides to take a journey far from the environment that reminded her of her painful past. She meets with a Good Samaritan Dr. Mariama, who decides to adopt her and rehabilitate her. Dr. Mariama gives her some medical treatment and when she is healed, sends her on training as a nurse. On completion of her training, she is employed in the same hospital where her benefactress works and has the opportunity to give medical assistance to patients especially other women who need the medical help she could not get some years back. Zenabou is so transformed to such an extent that when her ex-husband comes to the hospital to seek medical attention for his youngest wife who is barely a teenager, he is so impressed by the way she carries out her duties and is pushed to propose marriage to her again "Zenabou. maintenant qu'Allah nous a réunis, je te propose de te marier de nouveau avec moi" (101). "Zenabou, now that Allah has reunited us, I am proposing to marry you again". Mbuko deliberately ends her work on this note in order to dismantle the patriarchal structure which keeps the woman always at the mercy of the man. This time around, the reverse is the case. It is the abandoner that is now at the mercy of the abandoned. Such is the power that go-getter women possess; they can turn an ugly situation around for their good. They have nothing to do

with despondency and frustration. They are emancipated women who have decided to put their ugly past behind in order to make something good out of them and contribute meaningfully to the transformation of the society.

Conclusion

Life, they say is not usually a bed of roses. The vicissitudes of life can be so traumatizing that if one is not strong, he may end up going under and never able to bounce back. One of such traumatic experiences is female abandonment in relationships which are very intimate in nature. In such relationships, just as in other venturesome association which involves two people who are supposed to be likeminded, one may not always be served with what they

ordered. In such situations, the parties involved are supposed to sit down and analyze the situation in a bid to finding a solution to the problem, but if one partner decides to play it safe and leave the relationship, there is bound to be a big problem.

In this study, the strategies adopted by the runaway men to boycott their duties and responsibilities in relationships are highlighted. This translates to female abandonment. This notion has been analyzed, its demerits addressed and solutions proffered. Women empowerment through education aids the go-getting project. Go-getting is the best option for female abandonment and it thrives where the woman has decided to steer clear from despondency and depression and to chart a course for her life. When this is done, she can move from the margin to the centre where she can achieve her ambitions in life.

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Women in African Healing Shrines: A Study of *Ézèñwànyì* Cult in Northern Igboland, South Eastern Nigeria

Okwor, Christopher OKONKWO, Ph.D

christopher.okwor@unn.edu.ng

08064947769

Ugwonna, C. Anthony

chibundumthony@gmail.com

Eze, Ekenedirichukwu, Ph.D (Corresponding author)

ekenedirichukwu.eze@unn.edu.ng

08037723213

Abstract

The study focused on a female cult, popularly known as *Ézèñwànyì*. Scholars have documented effectiveness of traditional medicine in management of health challenges in Nigeria. However, the significant contribution of members of *Ézèñwànyì* cult in healing practices in Nsukka Northern Igboland has not been adequately addressed in literature. Therefore, this study examined *Ézèñwànyì* in traditional healing practices. It beams its searchlight on the origin, initiation into the cult, *modus operandi* of the cult in disease treatment and prevention, patronage and challenges which members of the cult encounter. The study found that involvement of *Ézèñwànyì* cult in healing practices has projected women in Igbo socioreligious space, African traditional medicine as significant contributor to health care system and has also reduced the increasing demand for health experts in the Nigerian society. It also found that on account of economic gains accruing from the practice, the cult has been infiltrated by impostors who engage in practices that project the cult in bad light. In all, members of the cult will continue to enjoy patronage because of the peculiar services they provide and failure of orthodox medicine to address certain spiritual ailments.

Keywords: Healing shrines, *Ézèñwànyì*, *Ézèñwànyì* cult, traditional medicine, northern Igboland

Introduction

Recent developments where women dominate space in certain religious practices which hitherto were exclusive reserve for males, nullify the notion of patriarchy in Igbo societies. Prominent among these practices is the emergence of *Ézèñwànyì* cult which membership as the name suggests, is exclusively for women (Eze, et al; Agbo et al & Obi-Ani et al). Etymologically taken from two Igbo words *Eze* (meaning king) and *nwanyi* (meaning female), it gives a loose translation as female-king. But this is misleading as members of this cult are neither rulers in the true sense of it nor women leaders. Rather the cult is concerned with

healing and general healthcare and wellbeing as we shall demonstrate later. Its meaning is therefore vague. Perhaps the only clue to the meaning of *Ézèñwànyì* can be deduced from the association of members of this cult with the marine goddess whom they claim to represent. Members of this group claim marine goddess, known as *Ézèñwànyì miri*, as the patron deity of their trade. This connection, it is believed predisposes *Ézèñwànyì* to possession of esoteric knowledge required in dealing with sickness, bareness, love portion, prosperity, bountiful harvest, general luck and wellbeing. In context, *Ézèñwànyì* is seen in communities as a traditional female healer/diviner/priestess (Agbo, et al &Obi-Ani et al).

For a typical Igbo, life is of utmost importance both in the cosmological order and in the day to day life and activities of the people (Nwala, 2010). It has to be good healthy life (*ezi ndu*), otherwise, it is not worth living. This, therefore, explains why the Igbo abhor any threat to life and always seek and engage in activities that enhance the good life (Nnatuanya). Being “notoriously” and “incurably religious”, an average Igbo pursues life enhancement activities including finding answers to all of his problems (famine, infertility, sickness, etc.) in the domain of religion (Okoro). Thus, to say that religion plays a very significant role in everyday life of the people, is to state the obvious (Okwor & Obi-Ani et al). And what this implies is that for an average Igbo to wholly accept and pay allegiance to any religion, such religion is seen to provide answers to all his problems. Thus, despite the massive presence and practice of Christianity in the study area, there is an obvious inclination to African traditional religion which they believe provides concrete answers to their problems. Consequently, whenever a man's life is threatened by disease and other misfortunes, various steps are employed to preserve life which include consulting deities, and spiritual agents, of which the cult of *Ézèñwànyì* is part.

Recourse to the medicine men/women or traditional healers is predicated upon belief that they are divinely vested with vast knowledge in restoring health (Ukoma et al). This indicates that in spite of the scientific ways of addressing health challenges, individuals still resort to the use of herbs in healing diseases. The World Health Organisation [WHO], (2002) reports that at least 80% of people in Africa still rely on medicinal plants for their health care and that native healers have contributed to a broad spectrum of health care needs that include disease prevention, management and treatment of non-communicable diseases as well as mental and gerontological health problems. Studies indicate that cultural revival, possession of healing power, financial gains, group identity, nationalism and pride, are reasons women join the cult which has proliferated in the recent past (see, Agbo, et al 2022; Uwaegbute). Against this backdrop, this study examined *Ézèñwànyì* in healing practices, beaming its searchlight on initiation into the cult, its approach to disease treatment and healing, reasons for high patronage, and challenges facing the cult.

Methods and Materials

The study adopted qualitative approach and descriptive phenomenology in generating data and in selecting participants. The study was carried out in five (5) communities; EnuguEzike, Uhuowerre, Obukpa, Nsukka and Obollo-Afor from January 2023 February 2024. These communities have well established cult of *Ézèñwànyì*. Ten (10) members of the *Ézèñwànyì* cult, two (2) each from five (5) purposively selected communities in Nsukka

cultural zone were interviewed to provide information on the *Ézèñwànyì* and healing practices. Additional twenty (20) persons, four (4) each from same communities already mentioned, were purposively selected and interviewed to elicit more information on the cult's activities. The criteria for selecting participants were six (6) years of practice for *Ézèñwànyì* and four (4) years residency in a community for the other group. Six years was considered enough time for one to gather enough experience in the practice. Data so generated were descriptively presented.

Background information on Healing in Igbo/African worldview

Healing in African cosmology takes the holistic view of the individual's wellbeing into consideration. Study by Onunwa reveals healing as a part of that whole complex religious attempt by man to bring the physical and the spiritual aspects of the universe as well as man who lives in it into that desired consistent harmony. Consequently, whenever the African is sick, he/she conjures the image of the deities and the rites of healing (Kwenda). Hence the need for sacred specialists to mediate healing to others in their healing shrines in consultation with spiritual forces. Healing shrine is an elaborate one in which the practitioner seeks to attend to the patients' physical well-being as well as his spiritual and psychological dimension while trying to bring the individual in harmony with nature and to reintegrate him into the full membership of his community.

Studies have shown that among the Igbo, the belief in the supernatural causes of sickness is rife. Study by Osakwe, reports that African's belief in mystical forces such as amulets, charms, herbs, sorcery, witchcraft, and medicine continues to be profound. Thus, misfortunes, diseases, mishaps, and sicknesses are often attributed to ancestral spirits, witchcraft, or the acts and spells of sorcerers and evil spirits. For instance, the violation of socio-religious taboos in Igbo society may inflict sickness. In the opinion of Madu, the ancestors, and other deities like

"*Ani/Ala*" goddess can inflict ill-health on any person who commits an abomination. Similarly, Anizoba asserts that certain sicknesses are caused by mystical agents such as witchcraft, witches, wizards, and sorcerers. Idowu, has earlier argued that it is believed that these sicknesses caused by mystical agents cannot be cured with orthodox medicine, hence the resort to traditional means of healing. To this end, healing has been traditionally associated with the thorough knowledge of the use of herbs and roots and the appropriate ritual performances at appropriate time (Nnatuanya). Thus, when sickness befalls a man in Igbo society, he consults the diviner to know or ascertain the major causes of the illness before searching for the possible cure. Thus, in Igbo worldview, suffering of all kinds is seen as a disharmony between the spiritual and the physical worlds and for effective and holistic healing, the causes of the disorder must first be sought for, in order to bring a harmony that will in turn bring a holistic healing.

Initiation into *Ézèñwànyì* Cult

Strange behaviours and manifestations are precursors of one being possessed by spirits and subsequent initiation into the cult of *Ézèñwànyì*. Spirit possession occurs when a spirit takes over active will of an individual to act according to its wishes. In the process, the

individual behaves in abnormal way, loses her senses, and is transformed into a tool of the spirit which possessed her. According to our informants, soliloquy, schizophrenia, autism, are common signs witnessed. When these warning signs are noticed, a diviner is consulted and upon confirmation that the signs were results of being possessed by the spirits of *Ézèñwànyì*, the process of initiation commences.

We gathered from our informants that possession can occur at any stage of the individual's development (infancy, adolescent, adulthood) but initiation takes place at adulthood. We also gathered from them that initiation into the cult which may be simple or elaborate depending on the disposition of the deity involved, is performed in two places. It begins in the shrine of a deity and completes in the river. At the shrine, the chief priest presides over the initiation ceremony. The neophyte is required to provide the materials for the initiation which include palm-wine, *kai kai* (local gin), *nzu* (lump of white chalk), *òdò* (a yellowish substance that is perceived to attract benevolent spirits), kolanut, buck (local male goat). Incantations are made to draw the spirit of the deity followed by the ritual practices which are considered important part of the initiation rites. Afterwards, she is accompanied by the old members of the cult to the river for ritual bathing where she dumps the required sacrifice into the river, signaling the completion of the initiation. At this point she is dressed in *Ézèñwànyì* attire; white cloth, red head band, *echí* (a metal bracelet), dreadlocks with cowries (*Áshukpà*) and "izere" (metal anklets that jingle as she walks).

***Ézèñwànyì* in Healing Shrine**

Period of apprenticeship which lasts from a few months up to one year is prerequisite to the practice of healing. This becomes necessary such that the intending *Ezèñwànyì* under tutelage of an experienced older member is well equipped for the practice. This is followed by consecration of personal shrine with items required items which include; *nzu* (white chalk), *odo* (yellow chalk) and effigies of the deities of the paternal, maternal and the husband's side (if married). Our informants are agreed that members of the cult adopt processes prevalent in the practice of traditional medicine; divination, dependence on spirits for revelation of medicinal plants and objects, ritual performances, sacrifices and procedure for drugs administration. Participants in the study revealed claimed esoteric knowledge associated with the practice of traditional medicine before engaging in the practice. For instance, there are herbs that should be exposed to the sun in order to retain their efficacy. There are also herbs that should not be touched by everybody (especially women in their menstrual cycle). Some herbs require abstinence from food cooked with oil three (3) days prior to collection, some can only be harvested in the night while there are others that are harvested only in the day time. Going further, A. Idoko informed us that there are periods when herbs are said to be sleeping due to absence of the spirit inhabiting the plant embarking on a journey and it will take the return of the spirit to activate the active ingredients of the plant or herbs.

Participants in this study stated that they follow certain procedure in handling patients or clients. It involves in this order: consultation with spirits, collecting the appropriate items or ritual performances as revealed and administration, which may include massaging, piercing the patient's skin with sharp object, jumping over the patient and using incantations to ward off evil spirits. Bathing in the river or streams in order to ward off evil, for spiritual

purification, to remove dirt and dead skin cells (which could cause sickness), has been applied. Traditionally, there are certain rivers or streams believed to cure sicknesses. Again, they are also involved in providing preventive measures to ensure that such misfortunes do not occur again. To achieve this involves ritual prescriptions, applying medicine that are swallowed or rubbed on the body, preparing of special charms, talisman and amulets.

Reasons for high Patronage of *Ezèñwànyì*

Participants observe that the claim to have solutions to so many issues which come under healing are reasons they are sought after in the communities where they serve. According to our informants, services for which the *Ezèñwànyì* are consulted range from healing bodily ailments to providing medicines and charms for success in business, passing examinations, promotion in one's profession, and general security. However, some of them can also be agents of sorcerers and witches or wizards. Other views also show that people pay visit to *Ezèñwànyì* for fame. For instance, according to one of our informants, some so called "men and women of God" who see church as lucrative "business" visit *Ezèñwànyì* to enable them perform "miracles" and to increase population of their church. Perhaps, this is why Shoko and Chiwara further argued that the work of the contemporary ministries for the Christian community is the equivalent of the work of the traditional diviners and seers. Diara et al in their study argued that this kind of Pentecostalism is used to deceive the unsuspecting public who detest consulting the diviners or native doctors for solutions to their problems. In an earlier study by Agbo et al, it was noted that the many visits to *Ezèñwànyì* are attributed to many other reasons other than healing. Similarly, Oraegbunam and Udezo, noted that healing is not the only function of the traditional healers. Apart from healing, the functions of African traditional doctor consist in providing solutions to all kinds of human problems.

Challenges facing *Ezèñwànyì* in Healing Shrine

The practice of *Ezèñwànyì* in terms of healing is not without challenges. Participants noted that although many people patronize *Ezèñwànyì*, some persons from other religious groups do not associate freely with them for fear of being seen as "pagans". Our informants, G. Onyima, A. Idoko, noted that such persons adopt the attitude of paying visits to them at nights for fear of being seen by their "church" members, noting that such attitudes do not help to market their products. Participants also noted increase in the number of quacks who have joined the practice without proper initiation into the cult leading to strands of *Ezèñwànyì*; those who are called to the practice and those who joined for selfish interests. Participants also noted that urbanization is a potential danger to their practice because some species of plants used for traditional medicine are going into extinction as forests give way to urbanization. Thus, some of the potent plants are hardly available.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal an increasing proclivity for practice of healing by a female cult known as *Ézèñwànyì* through traditional methods. Members of this cult see their practice as divine call to service to humanity in the area of holistic health and wellbeing. The Igbo worldview of holistic health, the ongoing revival of African traditional medicine, the respect,

patronage and the attendant economic empowerment, irrespective of daunting challenges, are the motivations to join the cult by young adult females. In this regard, the renewed interest of members of this cult in their healing shrines is suggestive of the motivation that is partly drawn from the exigencies of the time and personal interests. Earlier studies in the study area, show similar revival in other religious and cultural practices (Uwaegbute).

The study hypothesis which stated that *Ézèñwànyì* in healing shrines is reflective of Igbo attitude to holistic health and wellbeing was sustained in the study. This means that finding solutions to spiritual issues is an important index in explaining and understanding the emergence of *Ézèñwànyì* in healing shrines. A possible explanation of this finding is that the Igbo and the people of Nsukka cultural area are highly religious and spiritual. On the strength of this, when people of this area are faced with life threatening issues, they resort to religious and spiritual means for solutions. This finding is in consonance with the studies of Iwe Kanu who have at different points shown how Igbo worldview has been the lens through which approaches to life's issues have been undertaken.

Findings show that the services offered by the cult attract high patronage. This corroborates earlier studies which revealed that there has been an increase in the use of traditional and complementary medicine around the world. In Africa nearly 80% of population uses traditional medicine for their primary healthcare. In China, it was estimated that traditional herbal medicine account for 30-50% of the total medicinal consumption. Majority of the people (around 60%) use traditional herbal drugs as a first-line medicine for treatment of high fever resulting from malaria in countries like Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Zambia. Outside Africa, dependence on herbal medicine is equally high. In Australia about 48% in Canada 70%, in Germany 80%, in USA 42%, in Belgium 39% and in France 76% (Sen & Chakraborty). Furthermore, Nwala opined that before the advent of orthodox medicine the traditional medical practice was potent as there were known traditional medical specialists. A good number of studies such as Saggar, Mir, Kumar, Uppal, Shilpa and Kaur, Sen and Chakraborty, Essien, Okonkwo, Azongo and Yidana, Huh have shown the importance of traditional medicine in healing.

The study found that healing practices of *Ezèñwànyì* are active both in the rural and urban areas. Many individuals who prefer to seek the explanation for the cause of their sickness through spiritual means can assess them in their neighbourhoods. Thus, the hurdle which urban dwellers face in assessing traditional medicine practitioners is removed. On that ground, services of the *Ezèñwànyì* cult are affordable and accessible everywhere. Findings also show that the quests for financial gains account for proliferation of *Ezèñwànyì* cults leading to emergence of two categories; the self-acclaimed and devotees of deities. This claim supports the view of Agbo et al who earlier stated that the practice of *Ezèñwànyì* is on the increase due to financial gains.

Conclusion

From the starting point, the objective of this paper is clear; to examine a female cult, *Ezèñwànyì*, in healing practices. From the foregoing, dominant opinions on *Ezèñwànyì*'s involvement in healing practices revolve around the ever-increasing demand for spiritual healers who will handle multifarious challenges facing humankind most of which have

spiritual inclinations. The emergence of *Ezèñwànyì* in the socio-religious space of Nsukka northern Igboland arguably, has positive implications on holistic health and wellbeing of the people of the area whose worldview predisposes to seek solutions to their problems in spiritual issues. Apparent failure of the orthodox medicine to address peculiar realities associated with ill-health in the study area motivates search for spiritual agents in healing shrines. The proclivity of rural people to use traditional medicines is due to its availability, affordability, potency as well as the notion of maintaining the cultural heritage and cultural recognition. Thus, “*Ezèñwànyì*” cult will continue to enjoy patronage in modern times for the services they render in the communities, in spite of aspersion and counterfeiting.

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Synergetic Specialism: A Philosophy of the Meaning of Life

Adekunle A. IBRAHIM, Ph.D

Department of Philosophy University
of Uyo, Uyo.

adekunleibrahim@uniuyo.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper is an exposition of my reflection on the meaning of life within the theoretical framework of synergetic specialism. Finding the meaning of being born, growing up, living and dying has remained a puzzle that has troubled the finest of minds in human history. Philosophers and other commentators have generated a litany of narratives on what it all means. Yet, the elusiveness of the meaning of life is as fresh as ever. Against this backdrop, I found myself plunged into a relentless and kaleidoscopic reflection aimed at gleaning what it may all mean. As far as my mind and experience could aid me, I stumbled on the idea that "nothing exists for nothing; something exists for something" because we are speciated for synergetic living. In view of this, I christened my reflection "synergetic specialism". A system of thought that sees reality as a web of synergy between and among speciated entities for cross-functional necessity. This paper therefore is an invitation to the world to share with me this conception of the meaning of life. To lay bare the teachings of synergetic specialism, the paper presents a synopsis of notable ideas on the meaning of life. It also clarifies the conceptual framework of synergetic specialism. In addition, it articulates the basic teachings and tenets of synergetic specialism. Finally, it extrapolates the meaning of life within the purview of the teachings and tenets of synergetic specialism.

Keywords: Synergetic specialism, Speciation, Synergy, Specie, Ajere-Ado

Introduction

Philosophy is a dialectical journey; a lifelong journey of interlocking fundamental questions and answers about basic existential experiences... the fundamental goal of philosophy is to get us to answer the fundamental questions for ourselves; to make up our minds about ourselves, life, knowledge, art, religion and morality (Ibrahim, 17).

The above quotation expresses in a simple form the mission of philosophy in human life. This is the elevation of humankind to the fountain of critical and reflective thinking about human existential predicaments. One of such predicaments is the meaning of life, that is, why do we exist? Alternatively, what is the purpose of our life? Here, philosophy as the search for the meaning of life is a dialectical engagement of the self as it propels the self to dialogue with the self in order to figure out for oneself what life is all about. So, in my philosophical journey over the years, I have been thrown into a reflective despair over the contradictory experiences of being born and being buried. This despair is generated by the numerous naming and burial

ceremonies I have witnessed. Any time, I am opportuned to attend any of these occasions, I usually get lost in the reflection over "what it all means?" On the one hand, during naming ceremonies, I usually wonder what life has in stock for the newborn baby. What challenges and opportunities maybe the lot of the baby? What experiences will shape the child into adulthood? What role will those experiences prepare the child to play in life? Will the child be able or not to fulfill his/her role in life? At the end, what does it all amounts to? On the other hand, during a burial Ceremony, I usually get lost in the attempt to imaginatively glean the phases of life of the dead. This is usually propelled by the usual rendition of the notable events in the life of the dead. It makes me to wonder what experiences shaped his personality? What role did he/she play in the course of living? Did he/she fulfill his/her dreams or purpose in life? What is the implication of his/her demise in the life of others? These fundamental questions torment my mind unimpeded throughout such occasions. The existential predicaments that define the gap between these two extreme events of human life have become a spring board for reflection over what it all means? In the attempt to contribute to this discourse, this paper seeks to unravel the meaning of life within the theoretical framework of synergetic specialism. This is in response to the fact that we are often too busy "living" to ask ourselves "why am I living?", "what does it mean to live?", "why do I exist now; not before now nor after now?", "Is there a purpose for all these?" , "what could that purpose be? The meaningfulness of our life largely depends on our response to these questions. In order to situate the discourse of this paper in its proper perspective, an attempt is made here to briefly survey some notable approaches to the question of the meaning of life.

Basic Approaches to the Meaning of life

The first major approach, perhaps, the most common account of the meaning of life is the theistic account. This account is based on the idea of the relationship between man and God. According to theists, the world is a purposeful creation of a loving intelligent God who also created man to fulfill a divine purpose. Man, according to Udo Etuk is "the highest of God's earthly creatures...man is not merely a creature of time but has an eternal dimension." (174) In this sense, man was created by God for the purpose of living relationship with Him and to follow the path which He laid out for him. This means that the purpose of life is to know God and be perfectly united with Him. Thus, life on earth is only meaningful in so far as it is a preparation for the future union with God. For this reason, the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy as quoted by Lawhead says "the meaning of life consists in the love and service of God" (634) Thomas Aquinas, a theistic philosopher as quoted by Manuel Velasquez argues that everything has a purpose including human beings. In his words:

Now have on earth, the simplest elements exist for the sake of compound minerals; these latter exist for the sake of living bodies, among which plants exist for animals and animals for humans... Now humans naturally desire, as their ultimate purpose, to know the first cause of all things. But the first cause of all things is God. So, the ultimate purpose of human beings is to know God (716).

The point Aquinas is making in the above is that human life has meaning because humans are part of a larger plan or order, designed by God. Within that plan everything in "the universe have a purpose and value. The purpose of human beings, in particular is to know God and be perfectly united with Him. (Velasquez, 716) However, the theistic account of the meaning life as satisfactory as it appears raises some fundamental issues. First, it depends greatly on the belief that God exists. This is a belief that has proven problematic in terms of the challenges inherent in the proofs for the existence of God. Secondly, it raises a moral question in the sense that it sees man as object or things. For instance, the purpose of knife is to cut, the purpose of cloth is to cover nudity; the purpose of house is shelter. To say that humans have a purpose is to see humans as tools or objects that are being used by God. But it is morally wrong to use humans as tools or objects. Thus, humans should be treated as ends and never as means. Thirdly, the theists account seems to make an illogical jump. It claims that since God has a purpose for my life, any life has meaning. Nevertheless, the second part of this statement "my life has meaning" does not follow the first "God has a purpose for my life". For instance, suppose that your father, prior to your birth, had a purpose for you: he wanted you to be an Engineer. Clearly, the fact that your father had a purpose for you does not imply that your life must have a meaning. Consequently, it does not follow that since God has a purpose for human life then human life must have a meaning. Perhaps, a life with meaning is a life with value.

The second major approach to the question of the meaning of life is the metaphysical account. This involves seeking an all-encompassing perspective that transcends human situations and in terms of which human life can be given a meaning. This approach is traceable to philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Hegel and Marx who in their philosophies sought to determine the ultimate purpose of human life in the rational nature of the cosmos or in the structure of human nature without referring to any divine purpose. The argument here is that the individual life has meaning only when it is related to something bigger or more important than the individual's life. But, instead of suggesting God as the "bigger" whole that gives life meaning, (like the theistic position) they however propose that there are other larger realities that can infuse the individual's life with meaning. For instance, in his work *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel attributed the meaning of human life to the progress of the consciousness of freedom as history develops. In his words:

The mutations which history presents have been long characterized in general, as an advance to something better, more perfect... This peculiarity in the world of mind as indicated in the case of man... a real capacity for change and that for the better an impulse of perfectibility... Universal history ... shows the development of the consciousness of Freedom on the part of spirit, and of the consequent realization of that freedom. This development implies a gradation - a series of increasingly adequate expressions or manifestations of Freedom (54-55).

Hegel claims that if the individual person becomes "a part of this progressive movement of history, his or her life will be meaningful. In fact, apart from this forward sweep of history, the individual cannot find meaning. All meaning for the individual lies in entering and participating in the spirit of the age, the particular way in which freedom is evolving during the individual's lifetime. The major problem with this approach is that personal meaning and

value cannot be based on an all-encompassing phenomenon like history as it transcends the individual human situation. This is because such synoptic encapsulation of the meaning of life negates the individual's ingenuity and uniqueness as it glorifies the whole as more essential than its parts. Thus, the peculiarities of the life of the individual is not properly defined and accounted for. It fails to give the individual man a sense of meaning he can possibly deduce for living.

The third major approach to the meaning life is nihilism which is also known as the pessimist approach. Nihilism literally means "nothing is ultimate." It is the claim that there are no ultimate values worth pursuing. (Lawhead, 634). This pessimist posture of nihilism emanates from its failure to find meaning in God or a transcendental purpose of life. The nihilists believe that there are no such ultimate values or purpose that give meaning to human life, and so concludes that, in the final analysis, life can have no meaning. A perfect example of this pessimistic view is encapsulated in the Shakespearean Macbeth's lamentation as quoted by Grunebaum that: "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more; it is a tale. Told by an idiot; full of sound and fury signifying nothing" (392).

In a similar vein, the 19th century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1970) painted a horrid grim picture of the human condition as follows:

What a difference there is between our beginning and our end! We begin in the madness of carnal desire and the transport of voluptuousness; we end in the dissolution of all our parts and the musty stench of corpses. And the road from the one to the other... goes, in regard to our well-being and enjoyment of life, steadily downhill: happily dreaming childhood, exultant youth, toil-filled years of manhood, infirm and often wretched old age, the torment of the last illness and finally the throes of death (46).

In view of this horrid and perplexing picture of human life, Schopenhauer asks "does it not look as if existence was an error or the consequences of which gradually grow more and more manifest?" (46). He therefore concludes that the best we can hope for in existence is to see life as ultimately a process of disillusion; an experience that is empty and full of void. In this sense, human life lacks values and ends, and as such, it seems meaningless. A major problem with nihilism is its extreme pessimism and radical scepticism. The nihilist belief that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated is a universal or extreme scepticism. Scepticism "is the doubt as to the very possibility of knowing anything at all for certain." (Omoregbe, 9) In line with the Augustinian refutation of universal scepticism, the nihilists' claim that there are no ultimate values or purpose to human life is self-contradictory. If the nihilist is certain of this claim, then, he is contradicting himself. It is self-contradictory for a person to claim that he knows that nobody can know anything or that he is sure that nobody can be sure of anything. If he is sure of this claim, then, his claim is false. Moreover, if the claim is true then, he is not sure of what he claims. Thus, the nihilist's claim that there are no values or purpose for human life is unreasonable and therefore unsustainable. The inability of an individual to perceive an entity does not rule out the existence of that entity. The entity's existence is independent of the individual's perception of

it. The fact that the nihilist fails to perceive the existence of the value and purpose of human life, in no way negates the meaningfulness of existence.

Synergetic Specialism: A Conceptual Analysis

The expression “synergetic specialism” is a derivative of two words: synergy and speciation. Synergy is derived from the Greek *sunegia* and the latin *synergia* which means “working together” Literally, synergy means the interaction or co-operation of elements, substance or other agents to produce a combined effect that is more impactful than the sum of their separate effect. Thus, it is the combined power of a group of things when they are working together. The word speciation comes from the Latin *specie* meaning “a kind or form” and *ation* that means “action or process”, speciation therefore refers to a process of developing a kind or form from a group with distinct features. It is the process whereby a group of specie separates from other members of its kind and develops its own unique and special characteristics. This is the process by which populations evolve to become distinct and special species of their kinds for symbiotic existential benefits. In view of the fact that the word "speciation" as used here connotes "special" in the description of a distinct specie. The term "specialism" is therefore used in place of speciation for conceptual originality, theoretical and aesthetical appeal as well as pronunciation fluency in the expression "synergetic specialism".

Synergetic specialism, in view of the insight above, is conceived here as a system of thought that articulates reality as a web of synergy of speciated entities for cross-functional necessity. By so doing, it upholds “individual uniqueness” and “collective necessity” as the defining principles of existence. That is, for something to be said to exist, it must be unique in itself and in need of other existing realities to fulfil the purpose for its inherent uniqueness. This thinking is inspired by two major experiences: mixed cropping method in African traditional farming system and mutualism in biological science. On the one hand, in mixed cropping method of farming, a piece of farmland is used to cultivate different collection of plants simultaneously in order to harvest mutual benefits of companion plants. According to Agboola:

Different crops that would not be harvested at the same time were grown on the same plot (e.g yam/maize, cocoyam/okra, yam/melon and so on). it increases yield through the interaction of supplementary crops. (p.47).

The point in the above is that each crop is inherently endowed with attributes that makes them to be mutually beneficial to one another. They provide each other with shelter, soil fertility and/or natural pest control. For instance, beans may grow upon corn stalks as trellis while fixing nitrogen in the soil for the corn. On the other hand, in biological science, the idea of mutualism highlights the fact of symbiotic relationship between two living things where both organisms benefit and no one is harmed. The relationship can be between two living things of same specie or two living things from two different species. Each participant in this mutuality is called a symbiont, that is, an organism living in a state of symbiosis. For instance, the symbiotic relationship between oxpeckers and zebras or rhinos illustrates mutualism. In this relationship, the oxpecker (a bird) lives on the zebra or rhinos, sustaining itself by eating

all of the bugs and parasites on its host. The bird benefits by having a readily available source of food while the zebra or rhino benefits from having the bugs removed.

In the two cases above, it is clear that existence is a web of symbiotic relationships where uniquely speciated entities exist side by side for each other's benefits. This is made possible by the fact that each possesses certain qualities that is unique to it but needed by others to survive. This insight inspired the articulation of the central teaching of synergetic specialism which holds that “nothing exists for nothing; something exists for something.” The meaningfulness of a thing is conceivable within the context of what it exists for. For something to be said to exist; presupposes its uniqueness and functional relevance in the web of existence, as existence is a condition for functionality while functionality is the hallmark of existence. Thus, to exist is to function and to function is to exist.

The Basic Teachings and Tenets of Synergetic Specialism

Synergetic specialism, as earlier conceived, is a system of thought that sees reality as a web of synergy among speciated entities in a cross-functional necessity. Reality is a collection of structured units of existence speciated with unique and peculiar endowments for a synergetic necessity. The existence of a unit is only conceivable if it serves as a synergetic unit in the web of existence. For this reason, synergetic specialism holds that “nothing exists for nothing; something exist for something.” We are speciated to uniquely contribute to the web of existence. It is in locating the something for which a thing exists that the meaningfulness of the existence of that thing is established. This explains why synergetic specialism as a system of thought articulates existence as a web of interaction of speciated and uniquely gifted entities or units of life for cross-functional necessity. It is however important to note here that the crossfunctional necessity of entities is not a pre-established blueprint that antedates the existence of a unit of life. It is a situational imperative that its mode of uniqueness contextually prepares it to fit into the scheme of things.

In synergetic specialism, a unit of life is conceived as an *ajere ado*, a Yoruba expression meaning “netted urn”. This unit or entity exists with an inherent structure of energies that propels and enables it to facilitate synergy with other units of existence. In this sense, *ajere ado* is fundamentally a synergetic being as it is a self-insufficient being that requires the peculiar energies of other units of life to exist meaningfully. It sustains its existence on the necessary exchange of unique energies with others. The spotted openings in its make-up enable it to utilize its unique and special energy to enrich and sustain other units of life and vice versa. In the web of existence, an *ajere ado* creates meaning out of its existence by activating and enriching other *ajere ado*'s inherent energies in a continuous process of mutual ventilation. This is the case as each *ajere ado* contains an exclusive amount of special energies “wit'ins” that activates the exclusive special energies of others, its “wit 'outs”. In this sense, the wit'ins of a unit constitutes the wit 'outs of other units and vice versa. It is therefore in the mutual ventilation of energies that their unique productivity becomes manifest. As such, the sustenance of the web of existence is dependent on this mutual ventilation of energies between and among the units of life.

In effect, to know an *ajere ado* is to be aware of its unique, peculiar, special and exclusive attributes within the context of its enrichment of other units of existence. It's being known is

therefore determined by its synergetic necessity within the web of existence. This awareness of the unique peculiarities and attributes of a unit of life creates the platform for its rightful engagements in the scheme of things. However, whenever its uncommon, unusual and special energy is exhausted; this signals its fulfillment of purpose in the web of existence. As such, it evaporates and ceases to exist. This is the case in as much as the uniqueness of its specie specially fits into the web of existence at a particular period of time in existence when it is required.

In line with the foregoing, synergetic specialism sees the universe as a structure of networks with points of intersection acting as contributory channel within which the unique endowments of speciated units becomes useful. Thus, without the units, the universe becomes unstructured, inactive and meaningless. In the same vein, without the universe, the speciated unit(s) becomes inconceivable, unproductive and irrelevant as its existence and meaningfulness is only conceivable within the context of its synergetic engagements in the web of existence. From the foregoing, it is evident that the basic teachings and tenets of synergetic specialism are:

1. Nothing exists for nothing, something exists for something.
2. Reality is a web of speciated units with cross-functional necessity
3. Every unit of existence is a specially netted and uniquely endowed being
4. The fulfillment of a unit is in its synergetic engagements with other units
5. Existence is a web of interaction and exchange of energies
6. Existence is not by chance; but out of necessity of a kind

Synergetic Specialism and the Meaning of Life

Synergetic specialism sees life as an experience of being uniquely functional in the web of existence. Being alive is being in a synergetic relationship with others. In this sense life is simply an experience of synergetic engagements between and among living entities. This is because an individual is a special breed of human kind with a sense of belonging necessitated by the synergetic condition of life. This is affirmed by the fact that man detests loneliness, as he is fundamentally a social being whose existence subsists in a synergetic imperative. He is a bundle of energies that is activated only in a social context. This shows that man is an active being who constantly ventilates energy towards the fulfillment of life. This essentially makes man a productive being whose inherent special energies ventilate others for cross-functional productivity. As a special breed of being, man is endowed with inner energies (potentialities) which is seen here as “wit’ ins” with which he locates his “wit’ outs” (possibilities), that is, the inherent peculiar energies of others. Thus, the actuality of the meaningfulness of life entails the synergy of the potentialities and possibilities within the web of existence. In this way, the social condition of existence facilitates the necessary attraction between the wit’ in and wit’ out energies for synergetic purpose. In this sense, human existence is a continuous process of give and take as the fulfillment of living lies in this synergetic exchange. For this reason, to live is not to live alone; to live is to be in a web of synergetic interactions. This explains why synergetic specialism sees life as “living in full engagements”. Here, solitary existence is inconceivable as it is a negation of the social imperative of life. It is self-denial of the possibility of actualizing inherent potentialities that ultimately constitutes a consequent self-

disaffirmation in the web of existence. The social imperative of human life underscores the self-insufficiency of man. The enrichment of our life entails a synergetic ventilation of unique energies or special endowments inherent in each of us for collective benefit. In this sense, the ultimate essence of human existence lies not in just staying alive for some sort of teleological or metaphysical end but subsists in finding the patterns of connections that necessitate the ventilation of our special energies in activating the inherent and special energies of others that in return affirms our existence.

The web of existence is composed of intersecting points that provide the needed platform for synergetic engagements between and among human beings. This ensures the usefulness of the uniqueness of individual(s) in the ventilation of inherent special energies to manifestation for collective benefits. The meaning of a man's life therefore subsists in locating the synergetic points where his wit' ins connects his wit' outs. To do this is to figure out the nature of one's exclusive internal energies or special endowments as well as where and how they fit into the scheme of solving existential challenges. To figure this out necessarily involves moving through the experimental and explorative phase of life to locate the pattern that guarantees one's productivity. This phase of life is characterized by excitements and uncertainties which propels and sustains the will to succeed in living a meaningful life. However, if you can locate your wit' ins you can activate your wit' outs. This is the hallmark of synergetic existence which defines human life. The failure to do this does not in any way frustrates the workings of the web of existence; it only vitiates the place of that individual in the experience of living. This is because nature seamlessly makes up for the gap with the engagement of contextually relevant energies from other individuals. This means that "each person is of infinitesimal magnitude in the totality of the universe, but each is unique to itself." (Grunebaum 395) In effect, what our life mean depends on what we do with our unique endowments in life. Failure to ascertain our unique endowments and locate the points of relevance in life brings about frustration and a sense of emptiness in man; this ultimately leads to the feeling of meaninglessness and self-defeat.

It is however important to note here that existence is a continuum of synergetic engagements in which the individual's life is nothing but a unit of life at a particular period of its necessity. This explains why we exist at a particular period not before and not after; for the meaningfulness of our existence is spatiotemporal dimensional. This is because our peculiar energies are formed and structured as evolutionary responses to the prevailing conditions of the time of our existence. In this sense, we are bundles of energies in the service of humanity as we are blessed to bless others. To bless others is to utilize our peculiar energies to activate the peculiar energies of others and by so doing we create meaning out of our own life. Life is therefore a continuum of synergetic engagements of energies. For this reason, we do not just exist; we exist out of the need for our kind at a particular period in existence. We are therefore speciated in response to the prevailing conditions and demands of our time and environment. That is, our being alive at a particular period of existence is not by chance but out of the necessity of a being of our uniqueness and speciation. Therefore, if one wonders why one is in the world at this period in world history, not earlier nor sometime in the future, it is simply because your endowments are for this time and age. We are specially evolved for

this special moment in the history of the world. In fact, you are a special gift to humanity at this period of existence.

So, contrary to the theistic, metaphysical and nihilist account of the meaning of life synergetic specialism sees life not in a divine purpose, neither in a transcendence metaphysical end nor in nothingness rather in a synergetic engagement of endowments. It sees life as an experience of ventilation of inherent special energies in each unit of existence for collective benefit. It locates the meaning of life within the context of the engagements of our wit' ins (inner energies) with our wit' outs, that is, the energies we lack which are located in other beings; peculiar to them but required by us to ventilate ours in cross-functional benefits. In this sense, life is a synergetic web of interactions that is sustained in a process of give and take of wit' ins and wit' outs. Thus, man is a social being and his life a social necessity.

In view of the foregoing, it is important to state here that synergetic specialism in practical terms sees the basic requirements of human life: knowledge, power and wealth as the dynamics of human existence. They are part of the energies that individual(s) possess to ventilate in order to activate the endowments of others. This means that the resources at our disposal at any moment in time are not for us to keep but to be utilized in the synergetic engagement of endowments for cross-functional benefits. In effect, we possess knowledge in order to share with others and guide others, power to protect others and wealth to provide for as well as support others. This means that what we have in terms of material and immaterial energies are basically the requirements needed to actualize our synergetic engagements with others. These existential requirements are not evenly possessed as some may have knowledge while others may possess power or wealth. In some cases, some persons may have two out of the three but, in most cases, one does not possess the three at the same time. This shows that in our life as humans we are endowed with varying degrees of existential energies with which we are prepared to meaningfully engage others for a harmonious synergy in the web of existence. Failure to comprehend life from its synergetic precondition makes it a living hell. Thus, life is simple but we unnecessarily make it complicated when we see it as a self-centered experience. Thus, the meaning of life is simply the synergetic worth derivable from our various accomplishments, relationships, creativity, ingenuity and generosity. We live for others to live; life is an experience of being in a synergetic relationship with others. In a nutshell, life is really simple but our unfortunate egocentric approach to it makes it complicated and frustrating.

Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the meaning of life within the purview of the articulation of a new philosophical framework titled synergetic specialism. This objective was pursued with the perusal of the major approaches to the meaning of life with each found to be incapable of providing a practical and pragmatic explanation to the mystery of existence. In view of this, the paper conceptually outlines and articulates the basic teachings and tenets of synergetic specialism as a philosophy of the meaning of life. The coinage and explication of the term "synergetic specialism" as conceptualized and employed in this paper delineates its theoretical and practical applicability as a philosophical framework within which the basic challenges of life can be meaningfully explored. On the meaning of life, the paper submits

that life is a web of synergetic engagements between and among living entities. It is an experience of being in interconnected relationships for the well-being of all. It therefore sees the purpose of life as the ventilation of energies for cross-functional benefits. In this sense, it projects the idea that to live is not to live alone but to live in synergetic interaction with others. The paper encapsulates its position in the dictum that “nothing exists for nothing; something exists for something”. The something for which something exists subsists in its synergetic engagements with other existing things.

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The Use of Synthetic Cannabinoids (Colorado) and Its Implications among Nigerian Youths

Uchenna Teresa OKONKWO, Ph.D Precious C. EKE

Chioma E. AKAEBE

Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Faculty of the Social Sciences

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

+234 7030081973

uchenna.okonkwo@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

A street lingo for synthetic cannabinoids -Colorado is a trending cocktail of psychotropic drugs commonly used by many Nigerians especially the youth. This drug though not fully established might be said to have been named after Colorado, one of the States in the United States of America, which was the first in the US to pass the law legalizing marijuana for 21year-olds or older across the State. The youth seem to have upped their game from codeine and other hard drugs/substances to the deadlier ones like ingesting Colorado. Colorado is a drug made from a synthetic plant and contains heavy metal that is not suitable for human consumption. It makes one "high" inducing retching, irregular breathing, and behaviours quite related to someone running mad. This study reviewed various secondary literature to highlight the use and abuse of synthetic cannabinoids thereby bring out its implications among Nigerian youth; and suggesting strategies that can reduce or stop the trend.

Keywords: Synthetic Cannabinoids, Implications, Nigerian, Youth, Colorado

Introduction

Psychoactive substances (PS) which contain synthetic cannabinoids (SCs) have recently started to be used recreationally, especially by young adults (Castaneto, Gorelick, Desrosiers et. al., 2014; Gunderson, Haughey, Ait-Daoud et. al., 2014). In contrast to the decline in the use of many PSs such as cathinones and piperazines, it appears that the number of SC users is increasing (Winstock, Lynskey, Boschman & Waldron, 2015).

Although SC drugs mimic the psychotropic effects of cannabis, their undesired effects are unpredictable and more severe than those associated with cannabis (Castaneto et. al., 2014; Spaderna, Addy & D'Souza, 2013; Tournabiza, Gibaja & Kahn, 2017; Cohen & Weinstein, 2018). Although there is an increasing interest on the therapeutic potential of cannabinoid-based medications (Whiting et. al., 2015; Iseger & Bossong, 2015), reported exposure to cannabinoidagonists in either organic or synthetic forms is associated with both physical and psychological adverse effects (Volkow, et. al., 2016; Castaneto et. al., 2014; Weinstein, Rosca, Fattore & London, 2017; Cohen et. al., 2017). Consumers typically report using Scs for various

reasons such as curiosity, high availability, easy access, and lower costs compared with cannabis.

Research on synthetic cannabinoids is still in its early stages, and scientists are striving to understand the pharmacological properties, long term effects, and potential therapeutic application of these compounds. In this research exploration, we delved into the multifaceted aspects of synthetic cannabinoids, including its chemical composition and structure, mode of use and therapeutic potential, potential for addiction, effects and implications of Synthetic Cannabinoids and its legal and regulatory aspects. Though many researches especially in the field of Psychology have delved into the study of drugs, its uses, and effects; it is still pertinent to continue researches on drugs because drug use and abuse is still a menace in our various societies.

Objectives of the study

1. To know the meaning of synthetic cannabinoids, its components, and structure.
2. To know the mode of use of Synthetic Cannabinoids and its therapeutic potential.
3. To know SCs legal and regulatory aspects in Nigeria.
4. To suggest strategies that can help reduce or eradicate the trend of SC abuse among the Nigerian youth.

Study methodology

The study made use of the Desk Research Technique. As depicted by the name, desk research technique is mainly done by sitting at a desk and carefully extracting data and literature from already existing sources also known as secondary sources. The researchers did this by reviewing various studies done on synthetic cannabinoids (SC) around/across the world with particular reference to Nigeria.

Theoretical framework

The theories on which this study is anchored on are the Self Derogation Theory and Social Learning Theory. The self-derogation theory advocated most notably by Kaplan (1975), views substance use, particularly illegal drug use and the abuse of legal drugs, as pathological and the result of self-rejection and a lack of self-esteem (Kaplan, 1980). As Kaplan (1980) notes on this perspective, "the theoretical model is based upon the postulate of the self-esteem motive, whereby universally and characteristically, a person is said to behave so as to maximize the experience of negative ones". Thus, the theory contends that all social behaviour, including drug use, is engaged in to maximize experiences that are damaging to self-esteem and minimize the experiences that are damaging to self-esteem. This may be a sought of a coping strategy in order to endure the recent economic backdrops like unemployment, hike in petroleum products, hike in food prices, insecurity and general lawlessness. Deviant behaviours such as drug use are most likely to develop in individuals who are unable to develop a positive self-image from their interaction with family, school, and, conventional peers. Critics of self-derogation theory have pointed out that the emphasis the theory places on self-rejection is difficult to reconcile with the fact that illicit drug users tend to have more

close friends than non-drug users (Goode, 1999; Kandel & Davies, 1991). These critics may have forgotten the saying that “birds of a feather flock together”

An important sociological explanation for substance use is offered by the learning theories. Learning theories propose that all people are “tabula rasa” or “blank slate”, and that all forms of behaviour are learned. In the late 1960s, Sutherland's classic differential association theory was substantially expanded upon by Ronald Akers (initially with Robert Burgess) to develop social learning theory (Akers, 1973, 1998; Burgess & Akers, 1968). Akers's recognition of the roles that reinforcement and punishment (i.e. operant conditioning) play in learning process is important with regards to substance use; since, unlike most other forms of behaviour, drug use can be reinforced both socially and physiologically. Substance use may be reinforced socially, as in the case of positive feedback from one's friends for getting high, but it can also be reinforced in a nonsocial, physiological sense based on the effects of the drug. This physiological reinforcement can be negative, as in the case of drugs that can produce physical withdrawal symptoms, prompting another dose of the drug to alleviate the discomfort, or the reinforcement that can be positive, as illustrated by the effects of the drug on the body to the extent that they are perceived to be pleasurable (Winfrey & Bernat, 1998). Accordingly, whether substance use comes to be defined by an individual as desirable or justified depends a great deal on the behaviour of those whom the individual values and most commonly interacts with. This is why drug use and subsequent abuse should be taken seriously because those the individual interact with and value may also be drug users/abusers and the trend continue. A common critique of the learning model points out that substance users are likely to seek out and identify with other substance users. Thus, the emphasis of learning theory is on associations with delinquent peers, and this relationship has been more empirically supported than the alternative argument (Chilcoat, Dishion & Anthony, 1995; Menard, Elliot & Wofford, 1993; Oxford, Harachi, Catalano & Abbot, 2001). This study also stands with the argument of the Social Learning Theory.

Overview

In 2017, attention was called to an increase in the use of designer drugs in Nigeria. Some of these substances have street names such as “Colorado”, “black mamba”, “Lamba”, “happy boy”, and “Scooby Snax” and are believed to contain synthetic cannabinoids (Akande, 2017). Synthetic cannabinoids are a rapidly emerging class of abused drugs sold as “herbal blends” or “in-cense”. Evidence is emerging to suggest that synthetic cannabinoid use can be problematic case reports suggest that tolerance develops quickly and withdrawal has been observed following chronic use (Zimmermann et. al., 2009).

Chemical Composition and Structure of Synthetic Cannabinoids:

Synthetic cannabinoids (SC) were developed as research tools to explore the endocannabinoid system and as potential therapeutics (Pertwee, 2006). Synthetic cannabinoids, synthesized in clandestine laboratories and sprayed on dried plant materials, were first marketed as legal cannabis alternative in Europe in the early 2000s (United Nations

Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011). Synthetic cannabinoids sold on the internet, shops, and convenience stores as Spice are labeled “not for human consumption”. Synthetic cannabinoids popularity is attributed to intense psychoactive effects, lack of detectability in routine urine drug tests, and until recently its legal status in most jurisdictions (Winstock & Barratt, 2013). Although often referred to simply as synthetic cannabinoids, many of the substances are not structurally related to the so-called 'classical cannabinoids'; that is, compounds like Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) based on dibenzopyran. The cannabinoid receptor agonists form a diverse group, but most are lipid soluble and non-polar, and consist of 22 to 26 carbon atoms; they would therefore be expected to volatilize readily when smoked. A common structural feature is a side-chain, where optimal activity requires more than four and up to nine saturated carbon atoms. Synthetic cannabinoids fall into seven major structural groups:

1. Naphthoylindoles (e.g., JWH-018, JWH-073 and JWH-398)
2. Naphthylmethylindoles
3. Naphthoylpyrroles
4. Naphthylmethylindenes
5. Phenylacetylindoles (i.e., benzoylindoles e.g., JWH-250)
6. Cyclohexylphenols (e.g., CP47, 497, and homologues of CP 47, 497)
7. Classical cannabinoids (e.g., HU-210)

The structures of selected synthetic cannabinoids found in 'Spice' products, with high affinity for cannabinoid (CB₁) receptors is:

1. Molecular Structure 9-THC. The molecular formula is $C_{21}H_{30}O_2$; molecular weight: 314.4g/mol.
2. Molecular Structure HU-210. The molecular formula is $C_{25}H_{38}O_5$; molecular weight: 386.6g/mol.
3. Molecular Structure CP₄₇, 497. The molecular formula is $C_{21}H_{34}O_2$; molecular weight: 318.5g/mol.
4. Molecular Structure JWH-O18. The molecular formula is $C_{24}H_{23}NO$; molecular weight: 341.5g/mol.
5. Molecular Structure JWH-250. The molecular formula is $C_{22}H_{25}NO_2$; molecular weight: 335.4g/mol.

In its pure state, these substances are either solids or oils. Smoking mixtures are usually sold in metal-foil sachets, typically containing 3g of dried vegetable matter to which one or more of the cannabinoids have been added. However, some user reports also suggest that 'spice' or 'Colorado' can be ingested as an infusion.

Clinical Application and Therapeutic Potential

The progress of innovative life-saving and life-improving medications is one of the major goals of pharmaceutical investigations at any level of research, from academia to industry. By interacting with numerous neurotransmission pathways, the endocannabinoid system modulates many physiologic processes in both the brain and the periphery. Besides THC and cannabinoid, several synthetic molecules that are CB₁ receptor agonists or antagonists or

modulators of the endocannabinoid metabolism or activity possess beneficial therapeutic effects in the treatment of various medical conditions like epilepsy, spasticity, inflammation, eating disorders, certain types of pain, cancer etc.

A) Cancer: Cancer is a disease characterized by the rapid proliferation of abnormal cells that grow beyond their usual boundaries. Tumor transformation is a multi-stage process that starts mainly after DNA damage, leading to mutations, cell cycle defects, and the inhibition of apoptosis (Senga & Grose, 2021). In the oncology field, the applied clinical use of cannabinoids is primarily as palliation of therapy-and tumor-related symptoms, and their study in this sense had already started during the early 1970s (Aggarwal, 2016). Cancer patients are often affected by chronic pain and rely heavily on opioid analgesics that, depending on the state or the genetics of the individual, can lead to a plethora of serious problems, the most important ones being drug dependence and improper dosage (Nersesyan & Slavin, 2007).

B) Neurodegenerative diseases: Neurodegeneration is the main cause of progressive deterioration of cognition and memory associated with Parkinson's, Alzheimer's disease, and multiple sclerosis. Parkinson disease (PD) is a neurodegenerative disorder that leads to tremor and difficulty with walking and balance, while muscle rigidity can cause difficulties in starting and ending movements, symptoms which gets worse over time. Alzheimer disease (AD) is caused by extracellular deposits of β -amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles composed by hyperphosphorylated tau protein, and reduced levels of choline acetyltransferase (Briggs, Kennelly & O'Neil, 2016). Multiple Sclerosis is a progressive autoimmune-mediated neurodegenerative process of the central nervous system characterized by lesions in focal areas of demyelination of the axon and inflammation in the white matter. The symptoms include spasticity, painful spasms, weakness, ataxia, optic-neuritis, dysphagia balance problems, fatigue, and incontinence (McGinley, Goldschmidt & Rae-Grant, 2021). Cannabinoids attenuates neuroinflammation through a decrease in pro-inflammatory cytokines and induction of anti-inflammatory cytokines and the gain of myeloid-derived suppressor cells (Elliot, Singh, Nagarkatti, M. & Nagarkatti, P., 2018).

C) Skin disorder: Cannabinoids may be effective for some skin disorders, such as eczema, psoriasis, pruritis, and inflammatory conditions (Baswan et. al., 2020). The CB receptors remains the primary targets for endocannabinoid system but they also have the ability to bind Transient receptor potentials located in various types of skin cells and are involved in different functions such as the formation and maintenance of the skin barrier, cell growth, cell differentiation, immunological and inflammatory processes (DelRio et. al., 2018).

D) Viral infections: The pathogenesis and survival of HIV are related to chronic inflammation and immune activation, driven by the microbial translocation of bacterial products through the intestinal mucosa (Brenchley, 2006; Estes, 2010). Reducing immune activation and inflammation levels may be a potential therapeutic target. Cannabis has anti-inflammatory and anti-fibrotic properties and could be a valid method to reduce immune

activation and improve the immune profile (Zurier & Burstein, 2016). Cannabinoids have been recognized for centuries for their analgesic, anticonvulsant, bronchodilator, sedative, hypnotic, and antispasmodic properties and all these help patients (Abrams, et. al., 2003; Lee & Hancox, 2011).

Toxicity of Synthetic Cannabinoids and Its Potential for Addiction

Synthetic cannabinoids were created for therapeutic and research purposes; however, despite legal efforts to limit their availability, synthetic cannabinoids have become an increasingly common drug of abuse, sold on the streets. Cannabinoid intoxication occurs most frequently through inhalation, whether being used recreationally or medicinally. Cannabinoid toxicity usually occurs due to overuse and abuse or inadvertent ingestions of cannabis. Accidental overuse can occur due to excessive ingestion during the extended, unanticipated time it can take for peak action (Blohm, Sell & Nearyn, 2019). Reports of abuse and toxicity are steadily growing, as the number of synthetic cannabinoids produced increases. Increasing varieties of synthetic cannabinoids have been synthesized over the years to avoid classification as illegal agents by making chemical compounds. Despite known toxicity and increased availability of synthetic cannabinoids, many people especially the youth, continues to abuse it for various reasons including lower costs as compared to marijuana, and lack of societal control. The physiological effects of synthetic cannabinoids may vary based on the specific molecule in play, as many synthetic cannabinoids are continually being produced and often contaminated with other products.

Acutely, the physiologic effects of cannabis include decreased systemic vascular resistance, elevated heart rate, decreased concentration etc. In severe cases, hyperthermia, rhabdomyolysis, and renal failure have occurred. Again, synthetic cannabinoids are commonly adulterated, leading to worsened toxicity. Diagnosis of cannabinoid toxicity is clinical and established through history and physical examination (Williams et. al., 2018; Brown, McLaughlin & Vaugh, 2018; Lucas, Galettis & Schneider, 2018).

Drug addiction is an expected consequence of drug abuse with reinforcing effect (Wise & Koob, 2014). After one use of synthetic cannabinoid, the memory of the euphoric experience can lead to compulsory cravings. The addicts typically lose control and continue to chronically use it despite the harm it inflicts. They may try to quit using synthetic cannabinoids after suffering from severe mental and physical illness, but quitting may become impossible because of severe withdrawal syndrome (Budney & Hughes, 2006). Therefore, we consider the abuse potential of synthetic cannabinoids to be the initial trigger of drug-related diseases and effects.

Effects and Implications of Synthetic Cannabinoids on the Nigerian Youth

Drug abuse constitutes a significant part of the health problems affecting not only the substance abusers but also the non-users in many ways. Dependence on synthetic cannabinoids is considered to be due to its potent agonist activity on the cannabinoid receptor 1 (CB1), which is responsible for the psychoactive effects of cannabinoids (Tai & Fantegrossi, 2014). These outlined below are some of the effects and implications of synthetic cannabinoids on the Nigerian youth:

- A) Psychoactive symptoms: Illusions, paranoia, depersonalization, dissociation, auditory and/or visual hallucinations.
- B) Psychiatric effects: Altered mental status, anxiety, panic, and psychoses.
- C) Bleeding: Hemoptysis, hematuria, bloody nose, bleeding gums, and/or internal hemorrhage.
- D) Neurologic effects: Agitation, irritability, catatonia, seizures, sedation, cognitive deficits, memory loss, and coma.

Other effects include: Rapid heart rate, vomiting, suicidal thoughts, violent behaviours burglary, rape, fighting and so on.

Reasons for Drug Abuse in Nigeria

Due to the rampant cases of drug abuse especially among Nigeria youth, one may ask the reason why people engage in it. In an actual sense, there is no single factor to justify the reason why and the major causes of the menace. According to Dukku (2012), the factors include poverty, unemployment/joblessness, idleness, broken homes/inadequate parental supervision, enticement, curiosity, the influence of peer group, the influence of politicians, availability and easy access.

A) Peer Group Influence: A lot of studies have indicated that peer group influence has pushed many youths to engage in antisocial behaviour like drug use and abuse. The youth intermingle and interact at home, community, school premises etc. even with bad peers who engage in drug use; thereby, emulation occurs especially when parents are unable to exercise their traditional obligations on their children (Udama, 2013).

B) Broken Home: The issue of a broken home is one of the factors that cause drug and substance abuse in Nigeria. Some children suffer prolonged absence of parental affection as a result of divorce and other related matrimonial problems, harsh repression, parental use of drugs, and prolonged quarrel between parents. According to Muthigani (1995), children are influenced by their parents to take drugs. For example, a study conducted by Aubel (2012) in Nigeria, emphasized the role and influence of the family on the character of its children, the study stressed that if a male child happened to come from a broken home, he is most likely to engage in drug/substance use/abuse.

C) Heredity: Heredity might play a role in drug abuse because Stillerman (2015) asserted that youth who engage themselves in drug abuse habit may likely inherit it from one of their parents.

D) Environment: The environmental factor is another triggering issue that predisposes people to drug abuse, if a person is living in a drug use free environment such as ghettos or slums which is predominantly dominated by poor housing, poor environmental hygiene, in such places, drug business is freely been carried out (Osonwa & Arikpo, 2018).

E) Socioeconomic status of the parents: This is a triggering factor that can influence drug addiction among the youths especially in low-income families. This is because most of the parents cannot afford the basic requirements for their livelihood, they find themselves in slums and ghettos mostly at the downtowns which appear to be crime-prone areas. Drug addiction and other illegal businesses are the-order-of-the day in these places. Again, there are situations where youths despite being educated but yet are unable to get employed may turn to drugs. However, children from wealthy families who were not denied anything in terms of access to material resources can also engage themselves in substance abuse for enjoyment and luxury purposes.

Legal and Regulatory Framework of Synthetic Cannabinoids in Nigeria

Cannabis use and other related drug use (even synthetic types) is regulated by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in collaboration with the U.S government to combat narcotic trafficking in West Africa (The Nigerian Voice, 2010). The possession of cannabis is illegal and is punishable by a minimum sentence of 12years in prison. In serious trafficking cases, life imprisonment may be imposed (The Nation, 2014). Nigeria has multiple agencies involved in supply chain management of controlled medicines. It is essential to develop an uninterrupted yet monitored process that allows professionals to diagnose and dispense needed medication, and patients to access controlled medicines at the right time and place, and at affordable prices. This process requires close monitoring as it moves through all phases from manufacturing to consumption, including procurement, production, inventory management, distribution and use (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2016).

Conclusion

Drug abuse is a social problem basically associated with the youth. Increasing evidence suggests that there is a strong abuse potential for the high efficacy synthetic cannabinoids, at least comparable to that of cannabis itself. This may be because these products are readily accessible and can be purchased easily from the comfort of home through the internet or other avenues. It is known that the synthesis of highly-potent synthetic cannabinoids compounds gave rise to a novel class of abused drugs by Nigerian youth, creating a significant public health and social burden. In response to these challenges, we propose continued synthetic cannabinoid researches that may yield effective therapeutics, yet, with decreased abuse liability. This would ultimately reduce the negative impact and implications of synthetic cannabinoids among the youths in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. Government at all levels especially at the Federal level should effectively control the production and distribution of synthetic cannabinoids and other drugs in Nigeria.
2. Legislation should be enacted to penalize drug production companies and others involved in the production and distribution process who do not implement and enforce procedure to combat the misuse of drugs.
3. Parents should help socialize children properly in order to curb drug-related behaviours.

4. The mass/social media handlers should help sensitize the youth on the dangers of drug abuse because majority of the youth use the media on a daily basis.
5. The curriculum of drug education should be developed and made to be taught at all levels of the educational system.
6. A social environment needs to be created to discourage drug abuse with all key educators-medical practitioners/personnel, lecturers, teachers, parents, caregivers etc. constantly exposing the dangers of drug abuse and value of a meaningful life.
7. Finally, since the academia should also be involved in community service, department of Psychology and related/concerned disciplines should harness their resources in enlightening the public on drug/substance use and abuse. This will bridge the lacuna of knowledge in a big way owing to the fact that the public will be confident that the information that will be put forward is coming from professionals.

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The Role of Ethics in Promoting Visionary Leadership In Nigeria

Phillips Olubiyi Department of General Studies,
Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, Ogun State.

08135985668

E-mail: olubiyi.philips@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng

Abstract

Philosophy as an academic discipline emphasizes and celebrate reflective and constructive method of thinking in human beings. By raising awareness on the need for holistic national ethical standards from political leaders and people of Nigeria as one of the pathways towards achieving national growth and progress; this paper adopted secondary data to argue that the Nigerian society is currently shaped by lack of transparency in government, corruption and expenditure-centred political leadership. The paper therefore recommended that political leaders in Nigeria must re-strategize their focus and programmes and promote ethical oriented policies that would assist to enhance and promote accountability and end corruption in the country so that the country can attain national growth and progress.

Keywords: Philosophy, Leadership, Ethics, Critical attitude, Development

Introduction

Development generally focuses on the variety of radical changes either quantitative or qualitative that impact the well-being of groups or individuals living within an environment. A major factor that is necessary for both the material and mental growth of any country are human beings, critical thinking and the gift of rationality. This demands that the people that constitute a society need to interrogate and question their activities and actions before engaging in them. This view is traceable to the platonic recommendation that “an unexamined life is not worth living”. Therefore, the adoption of knowledge that is philosophical by every group of people or human society as such is expected to positively impact the thoughts and actions of such a society and thereby promote in the citizens self-control, increased mental capacity and skills. The capacity of a nation to develop a robust moral foundation is also a sine quo non for the development of that country. This is grounded in the fact that any country that is morally bankrupt can never achieve positive development. Ethics therefore, as a branch of philosophy and a critical factor for the indoctrination of good moral teachings of the human mind and society is a vital ingredient for national growth and development (Anichebe, 2005).

Ethics is derived from the Greek word *ethos* and is sometimes used interchangeably with the word 'moral' because the Latin word *mores* from which moral is derived represent the Greek word *ethos*. They both connote 'custom or way of life'. Ethics refers to the study of morals and relate to moral principles, values and rules of conduct governing an individual or a community, whereas moral is concerned with the distinction between good and bad or right or wrong. In view of this, according to Okpo (2018:14) the meaning of ethics can only be

understood after its definition is clearly stated. Thus, Omoregbe defines ethics as the branch of philosophy which deals with the morality of human actions; or as the branch of philosophy which studies the norm of human behaviour (1993:3-4). For Lacey, ethics can be defined as 'an inquiry into how men ought to act in general not as a means to a given end but as an end in itself' (1976:60). What these definitions show is that ethics concerns itself with the morality of human conduct and human actions; conduct forms the core and subject matter of ethics. The knowledge of ethics helps human beings to make quality decisions about what is right and good or what is wrong and bad in a given situation. It is basically the study of standards for determining what behaviour is good and bad or right or wrong. It tries to scrutinize the behaviours of the people saddled with the development of any given society. Development occurs in societies where the leadership is ethically responsible. Ethical leadership according to Trevino and Brown "is not only about doing what is right, but about deciding what is right" (2004:77). For Fulmer, ethical leaders are "people who maintain unequivocal commitment to honesty, truth and ethics in every facet of human behaviour" (2004:312). On their part, Freeman and Stewart sees ethical leadership as "simply a matter of leaders having good character and the right values or being a person of strong character" (2006:2). The inference from the above submissions is that ethical leaders are expected to provide responsive and responsible leadership that is laced with all the ingredients of honesty, integrity, dedication, respect and so on.

The challenge that impedes responsive leadership, national growth and development in Nigeria are multi-dimensional and have continued to negatively impact the social economic and moral growth of the country and by extension, her development. Ogbeyi, (2012) argued that "leadership and political administration of a nation has to address how political leaders organize and manage the resources and affairs of a nation through proactive administrative policies that are targeted at fast-tracking national growth".

Furtherance to the above, a World Bank Development Report (WDR) of (1991) revealed that "national growth and development are measured by effective and efficient bureaucracy, motivated professionals and innovation. Also, it is shaped by functional and adequate social infrastructures, qualitative education and health care services to the citizenry, sustenance of citizens basic human freedoms and rights; inclusiveness of citizens in the processes of decision making, and qualitative provision of standard of living (UNDP Report, 2022).

Ojukwu (2019) observed that Nigeria has continued to be impeded in her developmental trajectory by the problem of absence of good political representative irrespective of her decades of political freedom and independence. Odusanya (2013) corroborated this view by adding that "Nigeria's democracy is shaped by democratically elected officials lacking in vision but more committed to their own interests symbolizing corrupt and cloned representation of colonial rulers". This type of political class and leadership has constituted a barrier and danger to the possibility of attaining lofty leadership that could foster national growth and prosperity for Nigeria (Siegle, et al., 2005).

This paper adopts a descriptive, theoretical and secondary approach to gather relevant data and materials from academic journals, government records, newspapers and to critically examine some of the factors responsible for the ethical leadership failures within Nigeria's

political elites and how this gap has continued to limit Nigeria's aspirations to achieve development and growth in the 21st century.

Poor Ethical Leadership

While economic growth and development are pivotal to national prosperity the idea of national growth transcend economic growth but also involve both political and social growth. Even as each affects the other yet, both cannot function and thrive in a symbolic and successful pattern without being built on a solid ethical foundation. It is crucial therefore to interrogate the consequences of Nigeria poor ethical leadership stand on national growth and development. Presently, Nigeria is an independent country, and practices the democratic form of government that is premised on representatives of the people elected into political offices. But its type of democracy is autocratic and dictatorial in nature because of the kind of people that are elected into positions of authority. The leadership styles of these leaders have negatively impacted the nation's economic and social growth and development. Unethical political leadership practices such as corruption, fraud and embezzlement of public funds across the three levels of government in Nigeria has led to various economic and social policy failures that has resulted in underdevelopment across the country. The purpose of this paper is therefore:

- To show that the absence of ethical national standards has contributed to leadership failure in Nigeria.
- To show that combating the scourge of corruption within the ranks of Nigeria's political elites will enhance growth across Nigeria.
- To show that ethical transparency and accountability are the pivotal solutions needed for ensuring national growth and development in Nigeria.

The Problem of Leadership Failure

Iyoha, et al (2015) argues that the absence of high ethical standards, accountability in government and corruption within the ranks of political class are some of the greatest challenges to achieving national growth and good governance in Nigeria. Okeyim, Ejue and Ekanem (2013) observed that over four decades, economic development has been impeded and stalled due largely to embezzlement and misappropriation of public fund". Adejimi (2005) points to the fact that "in Nigeria, policy formulators and decision makers are usually involved in egoism, abuse of power and bribery". For Onodugo (2016), "lack of vision and corruption amongst the political elites both present and past in Nigeria has resulted in stunted national growth across the country. The inference of the above views is that the major source of most of the problems facing the Nigerian nation and people could be traced to the unethical attitude and negative attitude of the Nigerian political class whose visionlessness has plunged the country into various economic and social difficulties including unemployment, insecurity and poverty to mention but a few. Abdullahi, (2009), Iyoha, et al., (2015) and Iyoha et al., (2015) on their part have posited that a major problem that has continued to challenge Nigeria's political leadership since 1960 when the country gained her independence from Britain are the absence of acceptable ethical values, and corruption among the political elite in Nigerian.

Okpo (2018:28), agrees that leadership is the problem with Nigeria. This is because, for him, leadership plays an important role in practically all spheres of human endeavours, hence, no society or nation can develop in the true sense of the word without good leadership. Along this line of thought, Chinua Achebe in his book *The Problem with Nigeria* argues that:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmark of true leadership (1998:1).

Achebe is not the only one that attributes Nigeria's underdevelopment to the ethical failures of those entrusted with leadership in Nigeria. For example, in a paper entitled *Nigeria: Years Eaten by Locust*, Ehusani (2002:210) avers that leadership in Nigeria is clearly a pollution of leadership qualities. According to him "...what we have as leadership is an adulteration of courage, valour and a shameful display of spineless acquiescence. What we have as leadership is an uncharitable display of material arrogance". Towing the line of Ehusani, Micheal Ozumba, Berthrand Okafor and Martins Udom reiterates the point that the problem of underdevelopment in Nigeria lies with leadership. For them, the problem with Nigeria is the lack of learned and enlightened men at the helm of affairs. According to them, "Nigeria has suffered a great set-back due to the political ignorance of our leaders in the game of politics" (*www.global...*). The point here is that most Nigerians blame those at the helm of affairs of the country for the underdevelopment in the country without a critical look at the contributions of the masses to the problem. Ibrahim and Ishaya (2018:58) agrees that leadership is a big challenge to socio-economic development of any nation, they, however disagrees entirely with those that places the blame only at the doorstep of the leaders. For them poor leadership is a symptom of a disease whose product is corruption; according to them:

...the popular culture of a people gives birth to the kind of leadership it produces. As such, if corruption is a product of bad leadership, is it not the case then, that bad leadership is a product of the prevalent popular culture characterized by skewed sense of judgement and value disorientation? After all, leadership is a reflection of the people's choice and their prevalent thought patterns determines their choice of action in terms of who they choose as their leader.

The point Ibrahim and Ishaya is making is that bad leadership and corruption are simply the practical manifestation of the underlying popular culture prevalent in any society. This paper agrees with the submissions of Ibrahim and Ishaya because those at leadership positions today or those that were there before now are all product of the Nigerian society with inherent behavioural and ethical suppositions that they acquired as members of the Nigerian state and it is this acquired ethical and behavioural attitudes that they bring into office when they occupy positions of leadership. So, until Nigerians who are today

complaining of poor leadership imbibe the critical attitude towards acquired ethical issues such as corruption in the country, good leadership may continue to be an illusion for Nigeria.

The critical attitude according to Ishaya (2019:49) is the attitude of critically looking at things, issues and actions to see if they align with the natural and acceptable principles of nature. The critical attitude encourages members of a given society to openly discuss and criticize issues including ethical and leadership challenges that seems to be hindering their growth or as Ishaya (2019:51) puts it “it cannot be wished away that some value systems do not encourage criticism lest they lose value. But in the long run, societies that suppress open debate end by settling their differences in violence or in stunted growth”.

Another major obstacle impeding national growth and development in Nigeria is the form of democracy practiced in the country which is characterized by the absence of genuine political candidates and representatives of the people in government. History has shown that Nigeria's electoral processes has continued to be undermined by various acts of irregularities that has rendered such processes unacceptable and failing to reflect the genuine choices of the electorates. Generally, the political elites who occupy offices by default are usually bereft of moral, mental and intuitive competence and because of these, most of them pilfer the commonwealth while failing to positively impact the quality of citizens life while in office (Lawal and Owolabi, 2012).

Evaluation

Political elites and leaders in Nigeria represent the dominant class saddled with the duty and responsibility of overseeing and managing the resources and affairs of the country by prioritizing policies that could impact the people through established institutions and legal structures that could fast-track the attainment of growth and development. Anekwe (2020) argues that the most notable problem facing Nigeria presently is the scarcity of credible political leadership that could prompt national ethical redirection and promote inclusive government as Nigeria appear to lack the factors that could produce visionary political leadership ready to confront frontally some of the problems limiting national progress.

Iyola et al (2015) had argued that the absence of leadership capacity in Nigeria is magnified by Nigeria's political class through various unethical and unlawful acts of repression, repressive programmes fashioned to guarantee self-perpetuation in political offices and which often lead to economic emasculation of the country. But it is not all gloom, there are steps that can be taken to reverse the negativity seen in some Nigerian leaders. According to Anekwe (2020) “accountability could best be established in a country like Nigeria through legal measures and the instrumentality of the judiciary and the supremacy of the constitution and its provisions”. For Okpo (24), there are ethical qualities expected of a leader which when inculcated by Nigeria's political leaders could lead to all-round development. These qualities include:

1. A good leader must be one who does not give or receive bribe
2. A person of good moral repute
3. One who is not self-centered, but has the interest of the people at heart
4. One who seeks to know the truth at all times before passing judgement
5. One who is not deceitful and abhors lies

6. A person of proven integrity
7. One who has respect for instituted laws of the land and so on.

There is no doubt from the discussions so far that the leadership in Nigeria needs ethical reorientation; this is because most of the ethical qualities enumerated by Okpo above are lacking in many Nigerian leaders which in turn may never allow development until there is a change. This change will happen when the leaders and the led begin to apply what Ishaya (2024:172) calls critical rationalism. Critical rationalism is a method of scrutinizing ideas, issues, or ideas to ascertain its rightness or wrongness, its truthfulness or falsity.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Nigeria can achieve sustainable development if every leader in every sector of the society imbibes, promotes and encourages ethical values as leadership principles. Also, to ensure that the nations resources and wealth is transformed to positive and sustainable development, those at the positions of leadership in the country today and those planning to go into political or corporate leadership tomorrow must be ready to imbibe sound ethical principles that must be seen in word and in deed. From the foregoing, this paper recommend that government should increase awareness on the negative consequences of corruption in the society through the media; religious organizations, youth forums and educational curriculum as a way of inculcating positive moral and ethical values in the people. In addition, there is a need for Nigeria through her leaders to identify and promote national interests over and above individual or personal interests. Finally, government and non-governmental institutions and individuals must apply punitive measures on those found guilty of corrupt practices and electoral misdemeanors. The paper also recommends that the Nigerian political class must move away from making promises they cannot fulfill. That is deceit and definitely unethical.

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An Appraisal of the Effects of Application of Machiavellian Political Ideology in Nigerian Politics from 1964 - 1967

Louis OBI, Ph.D

General Studies Unit,

Faculty of Arts, Management & Social Sciences,

University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Umuagwo, Imo State.

E-mail: maclouyobi@gmail.com / Louis.obi@uaes.edu.ng

Anthony JACOB, Ph.D

Department of Philosophy.

Imo State University, Owerri.

E-mail: chijacobson75@gmail.com

Abstract

Amidst the cacophony of mind bogging behaviour of insensitivity to the plight of the citizens by political leaders in Nigeria from the time of independence till now, there seems to be a persistent common feature. This attitude of reckless decisions and actions could be similar to what prompted Niccolo Machiavelli to come up with the often misconstrued and misapplied notion of his political philosophy. According to Machiavelli, it is important that a ruler should do everything possible to preserve himself in power and ensure the stability of the state; and whatever means used to achieve this is honorable and justified. This position seems to be a pointer to what played out in Nigeria from 1964 to 1967. Thus, the primary motif of this paper is to x-ray what transpired in Nigerian politics that led to the declaration of Nigeria/Biafra Civil War in 1967. That unfortunate declaration and eventual execution of the war resulted to unreasonable loss of lives and wanton destruction of properties. This research employs a method of content analysis, shedding light not only on salient episodes but also exposing the subterraneous and distorted narratives often brandished by interested parties. The bulk of the data is generated from both primary and secondary sources. It is the contention of this paper that despite almost 57 years after this inglorious incident, the current leadership in Nigeria is yet to learn from the mistakes of the past and purge itself of the Machiavellian mentality of the end justifies the means.

Key Words: Niccolo Machiavelli, Political ideology, Nigeria, Appraisal.

Introduction

Joseph Omoregbe, in his book *Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Study*, seems right when he states that Machiavelli's political philosophy was the cause of Nigeria's political crises and inconsistency right from the first republic. It appears to be the architect of the killings and destruction which characterized the post-independence elections and also the cause of the

first and second military incursion in Nigeria penultimate Nigeria/Biafra Civil War posture and orientation. Omoregbe (2004: 130) opines that:

Politics in Nigeria since independence has generally followed the Machiavellian line of separating politics from morality. We are made to believe that politics and morality do not go together, that once a person starts playing politics he must ignore morality.

This is in line with Mark Hulliung's belief that Machiavelli's political philosophy was a bomb shell to the global politics. Hulliung notes that it was Machiavelli's politics which contemporary politicians adopted, that is presently generating leadership crises all over the world especially that in Central Africa and Southeast Asia. Hulliung is vehement in his promotion, from his book *Citizens Machiavelli*, Hulliung argues that Machiavelli's embrace of fraud and violence cannot be justified by patriotism or a professed concern with the common good (www.amazon.com). This does not go down well with John Pocock who lambasted him publicly in his bid to defend Machiavelli. From his book entitled *Machiavellian Liberal Cosmos*, Pocock rejects every attempt made by some of the contemporary philosophers including Mark Hulliung to narrow present day political crises as the product of Machiavelli's political ideology.

He queries thus:

Who is the contemporary Machiavellian whose immediacy to us, history can only obfuscate? He appears to be the author of the proposition that republic of armed citizens are to be admired because they can conquer other republics of armed citizenry, and this is really not very like anything going on in the contemporary world such as the one happening in Central Africa and Southeast Asia. Machiavelli was innocent of ideology and might have understood modern machinery but never terrorist (Pocock: 571).

This act of modern terrorism was exactly what played out in Nigeria throughout the first republic and the rate at which it degenerated the polity without resistance was overwhelming. The zenith of it was noticed during the post independent parliamentary elections held on the 30th December 1964 which extended to the early 1965. The politicians adopted all manner of election malpractice and system prescribed by Machiavelli throughout the period of the elections. This was corroborated by General Obasanjo (2015:7) thus:

Maturity and good sense prevailed to ward off the disruption imminent after the 1964 general elections. The same could not be said of the Western Regional Election of 1965. The rigging and irregularities in this election were alleged to have been more brazen and more shameful. Law and order broke down completely, leading to an almost complete state of anarchy. Arson and indiscriminate killings were committed by a private army of thugs. Law abiding citizens lived in constant fear for their lives

and property. This was the state of affairs when the coup of 15th January 1966 took place.

Killings, maiming, intimidation, and violence were commonly orchestrated by all the politicians especially in some constituencies in Eastern Region, Lagos and Mid-Western Region in order to have victory (Madiebo, 1980:6). This was corroborated by Ezeani (2013:26):

These misdemeanor and other corrupt allegations, including the inability of Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa to control the 1965 situation in the western region formed the reason the first military coup which took the lives of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto and 22 other top military officers and politicians of northern extraction was organized by a group of young military officers led by Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu and Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna on 15th January 1966.

And the subsequent counter coup of 29th July 1966 code-named "July rematch" masterminded by Lt. col. Murtala Mohammed and many other military officers of northern extraction who assassinated the Head of State, General Johnson Aguiyi -Ironsi, alongside the military governor of old Western Region, Col. Adenkule Fajuyi, as he was hosting the Head of State at the governor's lodge Ibadan. Among the casualties of the 29th July 1966 coup were some senior military officers from eastern region.

Revisiting Niccolo Machiavelli's Political Philosophy in Nigeria 1964-1967

Machiavelli's politics dwelt immensely on the security of the political leader and the State which he governs, paying little or no attention to the well-being of the citizens. This was demonstrated through his absolute rejection of conventional moral principles and justice. General Gowon in his bid to make unquestionable policy usurped absolute power especially when he enacted Decree no.8 of 17th March 1967 wherein he made a universal threat against any person or groups who works against his means of achieving a secure and united Nigeria. Machiavelli believes that the successful acquisition and retention of political power by a political leader through unlawful means does not make a bad ruler. What makes a bad ruler is the failure to use the power to secure lives, properties of citizens, and enhance their social lives through the provision of social amenities and infrastructural development. This means that the notion of legitimacy in politics and the art of politicking rest mainly on one's successful ascension of power and one's ability to win the co-operation of the people through effective use of power and significant achievements made. General Gowon and his men ostensibly towed this line of thought; they knew the importance of political power and exhibited every act of betrayal to take the power from General Ironsi.

Machiavelli in analyzing human nature, noted that over-ambition and greed are inherent in human person and form the primary cause of the unending betrayals amongst friends and relations. To him, greed is the root of all forms of corruption right from the ancient times. He maintained that human person perfects greed through the act of treachery with the pitiless heart and irreligious mind. This was exactly what transpired in the North between April 1966

and 5th July 1967 before the outbreak of the war. The massacre of the Igbo people of Southeast resident in all parts of the North by Northern mobs prior to the 29th July 1966 coup and the killings of both military officers and civilians which followed the coup and the September 1966 massacre were all done by over-ambitious men whose aims mainly were to hijack political power without resistance.

Machiavelli, of course, appeared to be in support of use of force to acquire political power, but ideally posited that no matter the achievement credited to a political leader who used act of criminality to acquire political power, such a person will never have reputation of a good leader. Machiavelli (30) thus writes: "Nonetheless, his brutal cruelty and inhumanity, his countless crimes, forbids his being honoured among eminent men". This might be one of the reasons Ojukwu refused to recognize General Gowon as the Head of State because, according to him, General Gowon revolted against the Nigeria government and its constitution and therefore committed the same offense with the January 15th 1966 coup plotters and ought not to be honoured. Ojukwu (9) writes "...The victory of Gowon in the civil war completed the coup that brought him to power. This success unfortunately legitimized indiscipline and changed Nigeria most profoundly. From that moment, Nigeria's respect for the rule of law became mere propaganda whilst in truth she respected only the rule of the outlaw". This behaviour as exhibited by Gowon is actually in tandem with Machiavellian political philosophy.

Route to Bloody "July Re-Match" 1966

Niccolò Machiavelli's political philosophy introduced governance without morality; governance which views political leader's achievements as being sacred while the means of such achievement is irrelevant. Prior to the second military coup of 29th July 1966, precisely 29th May 1966, sponsored riot spread all over northern region and it was targeted to decimate Southerners in the North especially people from Eastern region. According to Alexander Madiebo, during the riot, easterners were massacred; houses and other properties were destroyed and burnt in preparation for the planned coup (Madiebo, 35). According to this report, "Southerners were beaten up and their cars smashed by Northern mobs. What surprised me though, was the fact that police men were said to be actively participating in some areas".

From Chinua Achebe's account of what transpired, one can deduce that General Ironsi was aware of the impending military coup but he felt that it was a mere rumor because the people who were fingered in the plan denied knowledge of it. Though he did not totally wave the allegation off, he believed that embarking on state visit to the regions will help to douse the tensions and eliminate the idea of any planned coup. Thus:

Ironsi was alarmed that Northern leaders had been meeting without his knowledge for several months, and he sensed a great deal of anger bubbling beneath the surface. He made the ill-advised determination that, as Nigeria's head of state, he could appease and soothe concerns if he met with the leaders of the region. Ironsi embarked on a nationwide tour to calm growing fears of a permanently fractured nation (Achebe, 2012:81).

General Ironsi was not a Machiavellian, he tried to lead with morality while Machiavelli advised a political leader to always disconnect morality from the art of governance if such political leader targets absolute control of his state. This was abysmally ignored by General Ironsi if not, after getting the information about the impending coup plot, whether rumor or not, he would have, in order to quell any unnecessary insurrection, gathered all the military officers of southern extraction who were his loyalties and command them to arrest all the officers of northern extraction named in what was deceitfully tagged "rumor" including the military governor, whether he is loyalties or not, and either court marshal them or put them in detention. Machiavelli (2003:47) notes that "The prince who does not detect evil the moment they appear is lacking in true wisdom".

Machiavelli advises the political leader to always be proactive to notice when his subjects were planning evil against him in order to crush them because according to him, over ambition and greed are inherent in human persons and these vices form the primary cause of the unending betrayals amongst friends and relations. He particularly points at greed as the root of all forms of corruption right from the ancient times. According to him, human person perfects greed through the act of treachery with pitiless hearth and irreligious mind (2003, 10).

The planners of July 29th 1966 coup knew the game very well and after reading the mind of General Ironsi, they consented to his idea of embarking on visit to the regions, believing that it will give them the opportunity to strike. One thing that confused General Ironsi was that the officers fingered as coup plotters prior to the execution of the plot were all his loyalists, friends and some trusted allies he identified as brothers. That was why at the first time he got the information about the impending coup, he discharged it as rumor and as stated by Alexander Madiebo, he still engaged the officers fingered, to investigate the veracity of the plot. This shows that General Ironsi did not possess the capacity to lead both the military and the entire Nigerian populace.

Another factor which contributed to the 29th July 1966 coup was partly because no senior military officer of Northern extraction showed a renew resentment and disapproval of the impending coup. They unanimously agreed during their meetings to revenge the assassination of the Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Sir Ahmed Bello, the Premier of the North and Sardauna of Sokoto because according to them, the majority of the people the coup plotters assassinated were all from the North. They tagged it "Igbo coup" and accused the plotters of being sectional; hence, no Igbo politician was assassinated.

The July 29th 1966 coup plot was drawn out of hatred as it was a programmed revolution targeted at a particular accredited enemy of the North. Accredited enemy because it was believed that General Ironsi was indirectly a party to January 15th 1966 coup because of the way he handled Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu and all his colleagues who were involved in the coup plot. General Ironsi was expected by the northern military officers and the elites, to arrest all the coup plotters and prosecute them for assassinating the Prime Minister and the Premier of the North. This made Major Murtala Mohammed as he was then addressed, to show open resentment against General Ironsi. According to Madiebo (51):

Northern army officers were very bitter against Ironsi and expressed this feeling freely inside Army Headquarters. Major Murtala Mohammed

was particularly bitter, and on the few occasions when he visited me in my office, he made it clear that Northern Nigeria would deal with Ironsi and his regime ruthlessly.

September 29th 1966 Massacre and Leadership Contention

The military leaders who took over the leadership of Nigeria after the death of General Ironsi were a crop of young men led by Lt Col. Yakubu Gowon who was immediately promoted to the rank of a General; whose age bracket fell between thirty and thirty three years. They were not mature enough to fight corruption and other vices which were prevalent in the first republic supposedly because of their ages. The Gowon administration, at the initial time was confused and really unprepared to keep Nigeria's ship floating as one. According to Madiebo, Gowon tried to do many things at the same time in order to prove that he was capable of restoring peace to Nigeria. For instance, on 12th September 1966, General Gowon announced his intention to convene an Ad Hoc Constitutional Conference to discuss Nigeria's political structure and future. However, Madiebo notes that the conference was a deceit. It rather generated another phase of pogrom and massacre of Southerners especially the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria on the 29th September 1966. Madiebo (82), notes that "the conference then took a break, to enable various delegations to again hold consultations with their Regional Governments, and resumed sittings during the last week of September. This time, while it sat, they began, on 29th September 1966, an organized massacre of Easterners, particularly the Ibos, by Northern soldiers and civilians all over Northern Nigeria...."

The members of the Ad Hoc Constitutional Conference from Southeast were vehement in their demand for confederation because they were the people mostly affected by the May 29th 1966 massacre. According to Ezeani (47):

The delegates from the Eastern Region, whose citizens had been massacred and chased out of the North, were particularly vehement in their demand for a loose association or a confederation among the four Regions. This demand for a confederation was not only explicitly made by the Eastern delegation but also by the Northern delegation in an Ad Hoc Constitutional Conference convened by Gowon.

As the pogrom and the massacre of the Southerners in the North was going on by both northern soldiers and police, General Gowon suspended the Ad Hoc Constitutional Conference and appointed a Special Committee to draft a Constitution which would be given to the Constituent Assembly he targeted to form later by making himself the judge and the jury, an act prevalent in Machiavelli's philosophy. Madeibo (84) states that "Gowon issued a universal threat to use force to subdue any individual or group who stood in his way in his efforts to preserve Nigeria as one". This was in line with Machiavelli's concept of State of power being absolutely used by political leaders to safeguard the Sovereignty of the State first before the citizens.

Part of the reasons why General Gowon made a universal threat to use force on any person or persons or groups who intentionally stood on his way to achieve his set objectives was because Colonel Ojukwu who was the military governor of Eastern Region refused to

recognize him as the military Head of State and persistently requested Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon as he referred him and members of the newly constituted Supreme Military Council, to tell Nigerians the whereabouts of General Ironsi. This request which was not immediately honoured coupled with the pogrom and massacre willingly exhibited against the people of Southeast, especially, the people of Igbo extraction, created tension in Southeast. Ojukwu, in order to secure the entire southeast demanded that all the military personnel from southeast serving outside the region, should return back to their region of origin as initially agreed by Gowon and the other four regions.

This contention and resentment between the military government and Col. Chukwemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, the military governor of eastern region continued to grow adversely as killings of the people of Southeast in the North persisted. Ojukwu saw the whole event as the revenge on the death of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the first Republic Prime Minister of Nigeria and Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto and the Premiere of the North. To him, and if going by the aforesaid belief, what about the brutal assassination of General Ironsi who neither participated in the 15th January 1966 coup nor knew about the coup plot? How should his death be avenged? Ojukwu accused General Gowon and his men from the North of revolting against the military leadership of General Ironsi which carried the same grievous penalty with that of 15th January 1966 coup plotters. Ojukwu (9) wrote: "It is important to note the difference between this second military intervention that propelled General Gowon to power and the original coup; planned and badly executed by Ifeajuna- an intervention that propelled General Ironsi to power. Ironsi did not revolt against any constituted authority. His government was legally and formally vested and given specific order to restore peace. The second intervention, on the other hand, was a revolt, it was illegal, it was unconstitutional...." Furthermore, the July 29th coup was targeted against the Igbo military personnel all over the country because the way the massacre was done in the North by Northern soldiers was the same way and manner it was carried out in the West, especially, Lagos. The killer squad first advanced on the military personnel of Eastern extraction and after making sure there was no Igbo soldier remaining in the North to be killed, they switched over to the massacre of civilians and this also spread to every part of the North and the West.

Machiavelli, it should be noted, admonished a new political leader or Prince to always destroy the old Prince and his entire family the moment his government was ousted by the use of arms and force, so that, no member of his family would rise up in future to plot against the ruling Prince. This was exactly what General Gowon and his men played with vehemence when they took over the government of Nigeria through the use of force. To them, the killings of military personnel from Eastern Nigeria especially those from Igbo extraction was to forestall possible counter attack as it was rumored by Northern soldiers before the assassination of General Ironsi and Col. Francis Fajuyi, the military governor of Western Nigeria, that soldiers from Eastern Nigeria were planning to stage another coup. Madiebo (86) writes:

While Ironsi was being shot, Nwankwo said he ran into the bush and escaped. He emphasized that his escape was not due to his cleverness, but because his colleague, the Hausa ADC who was also present, wanted him to escape. Nwankwo explained that during the month of June, 1966,

he and his northern colleague had discussed the possibility of another coup. The Northern officer was emphatic the Ibos were going to do it again, but Nwankwo swore it was going to be done by northerners. According to him, at the end of a long-heated argument, they came to an agreement that whichever side did it, the man on the winning side should save the other's life.

General Ironsi was a detribalized Nigerian who never demarcated boundaries and that was what contributed to the success the counter coup plotters had. When he became the Head of Military Government of Nigeria, he surrounded himself with military personnel mostly from the North. Except his personal driver, the rest of the people that worked for him were all Northerners. He saw them as his brothers and confidants, even to the extent that the only language that was frequently spoken in Dodan Barracks, the seat of government was Hausa. He never believed they could plot any evil against him, but when Col. Ojukwu saw it coming, he warned him against it but he ignored it.

Reneged Peace Accord

The ABURI meeting of 4th and 5th January 1967 was targeted at the restoration of peace and confidence between the federal military government and the government of Eastern Nigeria. Madiebo alleges that General Gowon upon returning from Aburi, Ghana, reneged on the points mutually agreed to implement in order to restore peace. He rather, enacted Decree no. 8 which empowered him to declare a state of emergency in any region with or without consulting the governor of such region. Madiebo (92) thus writes: "At the end of the two-day conference some important decisions were reached, among which were:

- (i) The immediate resumption of the Ad Hoc Committee to work out a future for Nigeria;
- (ii) Payment of salaries until the 31st of March, 1967 of all staff and employees of Government Statutory Corporations and any others who were forced to leave their post as a result of the disturbances;
- (iii) The setting up, in the meantime, of a committee to look into the problem of rehabilitation of displaced persons and the recovery of their property;
- (iv) The exclusion of the use of force as a means of settling any difference within the country; and
- (v) The repealing of all decrees which tended to over-centralize power at the expense of Regional autonomy. This would be followed by the enactment of a Decree before the 21st January, to restore the Regions to their political position prior to January 15th 1966".

Madiebo maintains that General Gowon and all the people who attended the two days conference with him at Aburi in Ghana, understood all that were agreed to be done in order to restore peace and were very much eager to implement them and therefore, could not have rejected them for inadequate comprehension. His renege on them was alleged to be based on the foreign advice given to some of his trusted federal senior civil servants by the British government which was relayed to him immediately he returned. The same way he was made to abandon the idea of the North's initial plan to break-up from Nigeria by the British Government. According to Obasanjo (9); "The counter-coup of 29th July which followed the

riot had two aims - revenge upon the East by the North and a break-up of the country. But the wise counsel of dedicated Nigerians and interested and well-disposed foreigners prevailed against the break-up”.

The rejection to the Aburi decisions by General Gowon brought a lot of tension and disappointment to the people of the Southeast, who were elated when they heard that Ojukwu had agreed to lead Southeastern delegates to Aburi, Ghana for the peace conference and were more elated when the delegates came back with report of positive outcome. The rejection made Ojukwu to come up with a temporary measure and in order to boost the economy of the Southeast, he enacted several edicts which gave the region power to appropriate and collect revenue from all the federal government establishment and institutions domiciled in the region.

The above view was different from General Obasanjo's account of what transpired at Aburi meeting. General Obasanjo accuses Ojukwu and his men of twisting what transpired at Aburi to favour themselves so that the international community would begin to see the military government of Nigeria under the leadership of General Gowon as the architect of the ongoing stalemate. Obasanjo (14) writes:

Different versions of what transpired at Aburi were released by Ojukwu in the East and by the Federal Military Government in Lagos. Ojukwu accused the Federal Government of bad faith and going back on promises. The Federal Military Government accused Ojukwu of distortion and halftruths. After several meetings amongst Federal Officials, and between Regional and Federal officials, what amounted to the demise of the federation was promulgated in decree no.8 of 17th of March 1967 in a desperate effort to implement the Aburi decision. Surprisingly, Ojukwu completely rejected Decree No. 8 as falling short of full implementation of Aburi decisions.

General Obasanjo noted further that Ojukwu's rejection of Decree No. 8 of 17th March 1967 and when it was clear to him that Federal Military Government had no other measure to implement Aburi decisions; he resorted to the use of force to control all federal government property in Southeast. Thus: “Ojukwu seized Federal Government property and funds in the East. He planned the hijacking to Enugu of a Federal commercial aircraft Fokker 27 on a scheduled flight from Benin to Lagos” (Obasanjo, 15).

The events that happened in the course of managing the crisis by both the Military Government of Nigeria and the Government of Southeast Nigeria between, when Decree No.8 of 17th March 1967 was enacted to 5th July 1967, before the declaration of the war, showed that peace was very far from being achieved. The government of Eastern Nigeria under the leadership of Col. Ojukwu was no longer being considered before any decision concerning the Southeast was made by the federal government and Col. Ojukwu himself was no longer eager to embark on any peace conference voyage since the collapse of Aburi peace meeting. He was busy consulting the elders, the military officers of Eastern region and some political stake holders to know their opinions on how to handle the crisis so as to reduce the already built up tension all over the region.

General Gowon and Colonel Ojukwu Prepared for War

According to Madiebo, the elders of Southeast region, in one of the meetings held on the 27th May 1967 suggested to Col. Ojukwu to declare the entire Southeast a Sovereign State in the name of Republic of Biafra. Madiebo (93) writes: "On the 27th of May, the Consultative Assembly mandated Colonel Ojukwu "to declare, at the earliest practicable date, Eastern Nigeria a free sovereign and independent state by the name and title of the Republic of Biafra".

General Gowon on the other hand read the hand writing on the wall and concluded with his tactical men that Col. Ojukwu, by seizing all the property of the Federal government in the East, was calling for war. He, right from that moment began to prepare ground for war. The first task he took and implemented was the decision he made on the 27th May 1967, to change Nigeria from Regional structure to State structure by creating 12 states from the 4 Regions with Southeast having 3 States namely, East Central State, Rivers State and South Eastern State.

General Obasanjo (16) thus writes:

Short of military action at that time, creation of states by Decree was the only weapon ready to hand. At first, states were to be created only in the Eastern Region. Such action was considered impolitic and fraught with danger. As there was either a reasonable degree of support for this, or else indifference from the North, twelve states were created throughout the country on 27th May 1967.

Gowon saw the State creation as an avenue to liberate the minority ethnic groups in Eastern Region who often times complained of being intimidated by Igbo people. As a Machiavellian, his main aim was to give the minorities freedom to express their own views of either to join the Federal Military side or continue to align with Eastern Region government in the case of war being declared. To the minorities of Eastern Region, the two states given to them with indigenous governors appointed to handle their affairs was a big relief, they now saw themselves as no longer under the domination of Ojukwu and the entire Igbo people. Col. Ojukwu on the other side was not happy with the outright balkanization of Eastern Region under his control without consulting him. This was what prompted the Elders from Eastern Region during Consultative Forum held in Enugu on 27th May 1967, to demand that Ojukwu should declare the entire Eastern Nigeria, an independent Sovereign State with the title of Republic of Biafra. Outside the Elders and Chiefs' request, the people of Eastern Region were already crying that Ojukwu should declare the region a free independent State and possibly declare war with Nigeria. Madiebo (94) writes: "With the People's minds thus prepared for war, demonstrations were organized and held all over the country demanding immediate action against Nigeria. Everywhere the cry on everybody's lips was "Ojukwu Nyeanyi Egbe" (Ojukwu give us weapons). Finally, on the 30th May 1967, the Head of State declared Eastern Nigeria an independent and sovereign state of Biafra".

General Obasanjo (xvii) notes that "the immediate cause of the civil war itself may be identified as the coup and counter-coup of 1966, which altered the political equation and destroyed the fragile trust existing among the major ethnic groups. As a means of holding the

country together as the last resort, twelve states were created from the existing four regions in May 1967 by the Federal Government. The former Eastern Region under Ojukwu saw the act of the creation of states by decree without consultation as the last straw and declared the region to be the independent state of Biafra".

Col. Ojukwu's aim of agreeing to declare Eastern region an Independent State of Biafra was to make sure no part of Eastern region was absorbed into Nigerian territory and to make nonsense of the states created by General Gowon from Eastern region without consulting him and also to do what the people of Eastern region requested him to do. According to Ojukwu, the people demanded him to declare Eastern region an Independent Sovereign State which he did but he was not going to lure the new Republic into war but when General Gowon on the Nigeria side shot the first bullet to the civilians of Biafra side on 6th July 1967, both sides began the war.

Conclusion

It is proper to note that literal understanding and improper application of Machiavelli's political philosophy is among the causes of the Nigerian political crisis from 1967 to 1970. However, what really sustained the 30 months civil war were ethnic chauvinism, tribal intolerance and regional differences. The military then refused to exhibit the spirit of oneness, the civilians and the politicians saw their immediate environment as being more superior to the entire country, tribes antagonized one another like what transpired in Hobbes state of nature. It is quite unfortunate that five decades have gone, yet what were visibly perceived as the errors that caused the war, are yet to be corrected. Though Nigeria has left military rule to embrace democracy, still the policies and actions of the leaders in the democratic dispensation are not different from that military era.

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Godfatherism in Nigerian Politics: A New Form of Slavery in Contemporary Times

**Azibalua Onyaghola (PhD) Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Niger Delta
University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State
Email: azibaluaonyaghoglo@gmail.com**

Abstract

Godfatherism has emerged as a pervasive phenomenon within Nigeria's political landscape, shaping the destiny of leaders and the trajectory of the nation. This paper explores the intricacies of godfatherism - likened to a modern-day form of slavery which exerts significant control and influence over political processes and governance structures. Political godfatherism entails influential individuals wielding power behind the scenes, shaping political landscapes, determining candidate selections, and influencing policy directions through patron-client relationships. Drawing from scholarly discourse, historical analysis, and contemporary examples, this paper highlights the multifaceted nature of godfatherism and its implications for Nigerian democracy. Scholars such as Niccolo Machiavelli, Max Weber, Roberto Michels, Vilfredo Pareto, Wright Mills, and Robert Dahl offer invaluable insights into the dynamics of power and authority, shedding light on the mechanisms through which godfather-like figures maintain their positions of influence. Historical roots trace back to Nigeria's colonial past, where traditional rulers and local elites served as intermediaries, laying the groundwork for the emergence of godfatherism. The transition to civilian rule in 1999 ushered in a new era characterized by the rise of political dynasties and the consolidation of patronage networks, further entrenching the culture of godfatherism. Contemporary examples, including figures like Bola Tinubu and Nyesom Wike, exemplify the enduring influence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics. This paper concludes by emphasizing the urgent need for democratic renewal, transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement to overcome the scourge of godfatherism and build a more inclusive and equitable political system for future generations.

Keywords: Contemporary, Godfatherism, Nigeria's Politics, Slavery,

Introduction

In the intricate landscape of Nigerian politics, the term "godfatherism" resonates deeply, encapsulating a system of political patronage and control that shapes the destiny of leaders and the trajectory of the nation. Often likened to a form of modern-day slavery, godfatherism exerts a pervasive influence over political processes and governance structures by perpetuating a cycle of dependency, subjugation, and impunity.

At the heart of Nigeria's political ecosystem lies the pervasive influence of godfathers, shadowy figures who wield immense power and control behind the scenes (Omotola, 17). These political godfathers operate as kingmakers, determining the rise and fall of political

leaders, influencing policy decisions, and shaping the direction of the nation's development. Their authority transcend formal political structures, permeating various sectors of society and consolidating their grip on power. Godfatherism in Nigerian politics is characterized by intricate webs of patronage, where political proteges pledge unwavering allegiance in exchange for support, resources, and protection (Jones, 32). This patron-client relationship establishes a hierarchical power dynamic, where the godfather dictates the terms of engagement, and the proteges are beholden to their benefactors for political survival. The roots of godfatherism run deep in Nigeria's historical narrative, dating back to the colonial era when traditional rulers and local elites served as intermediaries between the colonial administration and indigenous populations (Falola & Heaton, 8). This legacy of patronage laid the groundwork for the emergence of godfatherism in post-independence Nigeria, shaping the country's political landscape for generations to come.

Godfatherism represents a fundamental challenge to the principles of democracy and good governance in Nigeria. It fosters a culture of impunity, where political elites operate above the law, shielded by their networks of influence and patronage (Smith, 97). The consequences are far-reaching, undermining democratic institutions, perpetuating inequality, and eroding public trust in the political process. As Nigeria strives to consolidate its democratic gains and foster inclusive development, the scourge of godfatherism poses a significant obstacle to progress (Hill, 1-5). It stifles political competition, marginalizes dissenting voices, and hinders the emergence of genuine leadership capable of addressing the country's myriad challenges. However, amidst the challenges posed by godfatherism, there exists a glimmer of hope for democratic renewal and social justice. Scholars, activists, and civic-minded individuals are mobilizing to challenge the status quo, advocating for transparency, accountability, and civic engagement (Adebanwi, 15). Through collective action and a steadfast commitment to democratic values, Nigeria can overcome the shackles of godfatherism and chart a path towards a more inclusive and equitable future.

In this comprehensive exploration of godfatherism in Nigeria's politics, we delve into its historical roots, examine its contemporary manifestations, and assess its impact on governance and society. By shedding light on this pervasive phenomenon, we aim to ignite dialogue, inspire action, and pave the way for a more democratic and prosperous Nigeria. As we embark on this journey of discovery, it is imperative to confront the harsh realities of godfatherism with courage and conviction. Only by confronting the challenges head-on can Nigeria fulfill its potential as a beacon of democracy and prosperity on the African continent.

Understanding Godfatherism: Unraveling the Complex Dynamics

Political godfatherism represents a labyrinthine system entrenched within Nigerian politics, wherein influential individuals exert substantial control and influence over political processes, decisions, and outcomes (Smith, 18). These figures, commonly referred to as political godfathers, operate discreetly behind the scenes, leveraging their power, resources, and networks to shape the political landscape and dictate the trajectory of the nation's governance (Jones, 30).

At its core, godfatherism thrives on the establishment of patron-client relationships, wherein the godfather provides vital support, resources, and protection to political proteges in exchange for unwavering loyalty and allegiance (Omotola, 22). These relationships extend

beyond the confines of formal political structures, permeating various sectors of society, including business, media, and civil society. The influence wielded by political godfathers extends far beyond individual candidates and electoral contests. They exercise control over the selection of candidates for political office, often handpicking individuals who are indebted to them for their political ascent (Adebanwi, 14). Moreover, godfathers play a pivotal role in shaping policy directions, exerting pressure on elected officials to align with their interests and agendas.

The dynamics of godfatherism are characterized by opacity and secrecy, with much of the decision-making process occurring behind closed doors (Smith, 111). Godfathers operate in the shadows, manipulating political processes and leveraging their networks to consolidate their power and influence. This clandestine nature makes it challenging to hold them accountable for their actions, perpetuating a culture of impunity within Nigerian politics.

To unravel the complexities of godfatherism, it is essential to draw insights from various scholarly perspectives that offer profound analyses of power dynamics and elite dominance. Scholars such as Niccolò Machiavelli, Max Weber, and Robert Michels have provided invaluable insights into the nature of political power and authority, shedding light on the mechanisms through which godfather-like figures consolidate their influence (Machiavelli, 20; Weber, 14; Michels, 32).

Machiavelli's seminal work, "The Prince," offers a pragmatic examination of political power, emphasizing the importance of cunning and self-interest in the pursuit of political objectives (Machiavelli, 20). This Machiavellian approach resonates with the tactics employed by political godfathers who employ strategic maneuvering and alliances to advance their agendas behind the scenes.

Similarly, Max Weber's typology of authority forms provides a lens through which to understand the dynamics of leadership and power (Weber, 15). Weber's delineation of charismatic authority is particularly relevant to the persona-driven nature of godfatherism, where individuals leverage their charisma and influence to command unwavering loyalty and obedience from their followers.

Furthermore, Robert Michels' concept of the "iron law of oligarchy" illuminates the tendency for organizations to be dominated by a select elites (Michels, 25). In the context of godfatherism, this concept underscores the concentration of power within political circles, where a small cadre of elites wields disproportionate influence over political processes and outcomes.

By synthesizing insights from these scholars, observers gain a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics of godfatherism and its profound implications for governance and society. The pervasive influence of political godfathers extends beyond electoral politics, permeating every aspect of Nigerian society and shaping the country's political trajectory.

In essence, godfatherism represents a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that requires careful examination and analysis. By unraveling its complexities, scholars and observers can gain valuable insights into the nature of power and authority within Nigerian politics, paving the way for informed discourse and effective strategies to address its deleterious effects on democratic governance.

Historical Roots: The Role of Godfatherism in the Early Stages of Nigeria Independence

The historical roots of godfatherism in Nigerian politics can be traced back to the country's colonial past, particularly the era of indirect rule imposed by British colonial administrators (Falola & Heaton, 18). During this period, traditional rulers and local elites were co-opted by the colonial authorities to serve as intermediaries between the colonial government and the indigenous populations.

British colonial administrators adopted a policy of indirect rule, wherein traditional institutions and local elites were entrusted with the administration of their communities under colonial oversight (Falola & Heaton, 12). This system of governance, while ostensibly aimed at preserving indigenous customs and traditions, effectively empowered traditional rulers and local elites to consolidate their authority and influence over their respective domains. The patronage system established during colonial rule laid the groundwork for the emergence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics (Falola & Heaton, 12). Traditional rulers and local elites, acting as intermediaries for the colonial administration, acquired significant influence and control over their communities. They wielded power over resource allocation, decisionmaking processes, and the distribution of benefits, thereby solidifying their positions as political patrons.

Furthermore, the hierarchical structure inherent in the patron-client relationships of the colonial era provided a template for the evolution of godfatherism in post-independence Nigeria (Falola & Heaton, 12). As the country transitioned to self-governance, the power dynamics established during colonial rule persisted, albeit with some modifications to adapt to the new political landscape.

The legacy of colonialism cast a long shadow over Nigerian politics, shaping the contours of power and influence in the post-independence era (Falola & Heaton, 14). Traditional rulers and local elites, who had been elevated to positions of authority during colonial rule, continued to exert considerable influence over political processes and outcomes, laying the foundation for the emergence of godfatherism as a dominant force in Nigerian politics. In essence, the historical roots of godfatherism in Nigeria lie in the patronage system established during the colonial era. Understanding this historical context is essential for comprehending the complexities of contemporary Nigerian politics and the enduring influence of godfather figures in shaping political dynamics.

The Evolution of Godfatherism: From Independence Movements to Military Rule

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, the country experienced a tumultuous political landscape marked by the emergence of charismatic leaders who played pivotal roles in shaping its trajectory (Suberu, 13). Figures like Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello, and Nnamdi Azikiwe rose to prominence, each commanding significant influence within their respective regions. These leaders, revered as founding fathers of Nigerian politics, laid the groundwork for the patronage networks that would come to define the nation's political landscape (Suberu, 13). Their charismatic authority and ability to mobilize support contributed to the establishment of patron-client relationships that extended across various sectors of Nigerian society.

The leadership of Awolowo, Bello, and Azikiwe during the post-independence era marked the beginning of the evolution of godfatherism in Nigeria (Suberu, 15). Their political

pro prowess and ability to galvanize grassroots support endeared them to their followers, cementing their positions as influential figures within Nigerian politics. However, the evolution of godfatherism took a significant turn during the era of military rule, which commenced with a series of coups d'état in the 1960s and persisted until the return to civilian rule in 1999 (Adebanwi, 18). Military regimes, characterized by authoritarian governance, relied heavily on patronage networks to maintain control and legitimacy.

Successive military administrations in Nigeria cultivated alliances with political godfathers, leveraging their influence to navigate the intricate political landscape (Adebanwi, 17). Behind the facade of military authority, godfathers emerged as power brokers, manipulating political processes and influencing key decision-making bodies.

During this period, godfatherism became deeply entrenched in Nigerian politics, shaping the distribution of power and resources across the country (Adebanwi, 15). The consolidation of godfatherism as a dominant force during military rule laid the foundation for its persistence and influence in the post-military era.

The transition to civilian rule in 1999 heralded a new era in Nigerian politics, characterized by the emergence of political godfathers and the consolidation of patronage networks (Adebanwi, 17). With the advent of multiparty democracy, political parties became battlegrounds where godfathers vied for control and influence over the political landscape. Prominent figures like Olusegun Obasanjo, Atiku Abubakar, and Bola Tinubu quickly rose to prominence as political godfathers, wielding considerable power and influence within their respective spheres of influence (Adebanwi, 15). These individuals, often with deep roots in Nigerian politics, strategically maneuvered to dictate the direction of the nation's political trajectory. The rise of political dynasties became emblematic of Nigeria's post-military political landscape. Political offices became inheritance, passed down from one generation to the next within these influential circles.

In summary, the evolution of godfatherism in Nigeria reflects the shifting dynamics of power and influence within the country's political landscape. From the era of independence movements to military rule and the transition to civilian governance, godfatherism has remained a pervasive force, shaping the contours of Nigerian politics for decades.

Transition to Civilian Rule: The Rise of Political Dynasties

The transition to civilian rule in 1999 heralded a new era in Nigerian politics, characterized by the emergence of political godfathers and the consolidation of patronage networks (Adebanwi, 16). With the end of military dictatorship, Nigeria embarked on a journey towards democratic governance, albeit with lingering challenges and complexities. This transition from military to civilian rule was a watershed moment in Nigerian history, marked by high hopes for democratic renewal and political stability (Adebanwi, 18). However, the legacy of military rule cast a long shadow over the nascent democratic experiment, as entrenched power structures and patronage networks persisted, shaping the contours of post-military politics.

Prominent figures like Olusegun Obasanjo, Atiku Abubakar, and Bola Tinubu quickly rose to prominence as political godfathers in the new democratic dispensation (Adebanwi, 18). These individuals, with deep roots in Nigerian politics, capitalized on the opportunities

presented by the transition to civilian rule to solidify their positions of influence within the political landscape.

The rise of political dynasties became emblematic of Nigeria's post-military political environment, as families and networks associated with godfathers entrenched themselves in positions of authority (Adebanwi, 18). Political offices became hereditary, passed down from one generation to the next within these influential circles, perpetuating a culture of patronage and clientelism.

The ascendancy of political godfathers and the consolidation of patronage networks had profound implications for Nigerian democracy (Adebanwi, 18). While the transition to civilian rule represented a step towards democratic governance, the dominance of political dynasties stifled genuine political competition and marginalized voices of dissent.

The concentration of power within a select few elites undermined democratic principles and perpetuated inequality within Nigerian society (Adebanwi, 19). Political offices became avenues for personal enrichment and aggrandizement, rather than instruments for public service and accountability.

Moreover, the influence of political godfathers extended beyond electoral politics, permeating every aspect of Nigerian society (Adebanwi, 19). These figures wielded considerable power and influence within their respective spheres, dictating the direction of policies and shaping the trajectory of the nation's governance.

In essence, the transition to civilian rule in 1999 ushered in a new chapter in Nigerian politics, marked by the rise of political dynasties and the consolidation of patronage networks. While heralding the return to democratic governance, this period also underscored the enduring influence of entrenched power structures and the challenges of fostering genuine democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Godfatherism: A New Form of Slavery in the Contemporary Nigeria Politics.

Godfatherism, a pervasive force in contemporary Nigerian politics, involves a system of political patronage and control that profoundly shapes political processes and governance structures (Oyewole et al. 2). This deeply rooted system fosters dependency, subjugation, and impunity, often likened to modern-day slavery. Political cabals, also known as political godfathers, hold substantial sway over decision-making processes, policy development, and the general course of governance. The connection between godfatherism and cabals is evident in their joint effort to suppress democratic principles and transparency, thereby perpetuating a culture of impunity (Smith 97).

This complex phenomenon has endured in Nigerian politics for decades, characterized by the dynamic between a political leader (godfather) and a political aspirant (godson). The godfather provides financial and logistical support to the godson during campaigns and expects loyalty and allegiance in return when the godson assumes office. However, this relationship often fosters corruption, favouritism, and nepotism, with the godfather leveraging influence to secure government contracts, positions, and resources for personal gain and the benefit of allies, often to the detriment of the wider populace. The implications of godfatherism extend widely, hindering the growth and development of the Nigerian state. The patronage system perpetuated by godfathers and their cabals undermines democratic

principles, fosters corruption, and obstructs meaningful reforms. Prioritizing personal gain over national welfare contributes to widespread corruption, economic stagnation, and social inequality (National Bureau of Statistics 2019).

Prominent figures such as Bola Tinubu, the current President of Nigeria and commonly known as the Jagaban of Lagos State, and Nyesom Wike, who served two terms as the executive governor of Rivers State, epitomize the pervasiveness of godfatherism in Nigerian politics. In addition, others in this class, such as Henry Seriake Dickson, the immediate past governor of Bayelsa State, have also played significant roles in their respective states. Tinubu, often regarded as the godfather of Lagos politics and to some extent, national politics, has maintained control through strategic alliances and political maneuvering, leading to his ascent to the presidency. Similarly, Wike, during his time as governor of Rivers State, demonstrated a strongman approach, wielding political power and resources to further his own interests and those of his allies. Wike's desire to wedge more power to himself in recent times has shown in his squabbles with the current Governor Siminalayi Fubara who also refused to let his guard down to be manipulated. These self-made political figures often act as demigods, using their implanted godsons to shield themselves from scrutiny and consequences. (Punch 2014, Vanguard 2023)

Charting a Path towards Democratic Renewal

The specter of godfatherism looms large over Nigerian politics, posing formidable challenges to democratic consolidation and good governance. As outlined in this work, godfatherism represents a pervasive system of political patronage and control that undermines the principles of democracy and perpetuates a cycle of dependency, subjugation, and impunity. From its historical roots in colonial-era patronage networks to its evolution during periods of military rule and the transition to civilian governance, godfatherism has remained a defining feature of Nigerian politics. The consolidation of power within a select few elites has marginalized voices of dissent, stifled genuine political competition, and perpetuated inequality within Nigerian society. The contemporary manifestations of godfatherism, exemplified by influential figures like Bola Tinubu and Nyesom Wike, and other past leaders both in federal and state government, underscore the enduring nature of this phenomenon. Their dominance over the political landscapes of Lagos State and Rivers State, respectively, highlights the entrenched system of control that characterizes Nigerian politics.

In essence, the article outlines the historical roots, evolution, and contemporary manifestations of godfatherism in Nigerian politics, emphasizing its detrimental effects on democracy and governance. It calls for concerted efforts to address this entrenched system of control and promote transparency, accountability, and democratic renewal. To confront the scourge of godfatherism, Nigeria must strengthen its democratic institutions, promote transparency and accountability in governance, and foster a culture of civic engagement and political participation. This requires robust legal frameworks to curb political patronage and enforce electoral integrity, as well as initiatives to empower citizens and enhance their political agency. Furthermore, civil society organizations, the media, and international partners play a crucial role in holding political leaders accountable and advocating for

democratic reform (Adebanwi, 18). By mobilizing public opinion and amplifying voices of dissent, they can challenge the status quo and demand greater transparency and accountability from those in power.

Conclusion

The fight against godfatherism is not merely a struggle against entrenched power dynamics but a battle for the very essence of Nigerian democracy—a fight for the soul of the nation. It demands an unwavering commitment to democratic principles, social justice, and the rule of law (Falola & Heaton, 16). The pervasive influence of godfatherism undermines the foundations of democracy, distorting political processes, and perpetuating inequality. It stifles the voices of dissent, marginalizes genuine political competition, and erodes the trust of citizens in the democratic institutions meant to serve them. To allow godfatherism to persist unchecked is to betray the ideals upon which Nigeria's democratic aspirations are founded. However, there is hope in the collective resolve to chart a path towards democratic renewal. Nigeria stands at a critical juncture, where the challenges posed by godfatherism must be confronted head-on. By dismantling the structures of patronage and clientelism, promoting transparency and accountability, and empowering citizens to actively participate in the political process, Nigeria can overcome the scourge of godfatherism.

It is imperative that leaders, civil society organizations, the media, and ordinary citizens unite in this endeavor. Through collaborative efforts, Nigeria can build a more inclusive, transparent, and accountable political system one that reflects the aspirations and values of its people. By strengthening democratic institutions and upholding the rule of law, Nigeria can pave the way for a future where the influence of godfathers is diminished, and the voices of the people are heard and respected. In the pursuit of democratic renewal, Nigeria has the opportunity to redefine its political landscape and forge a path towards a more just and equitable society. The fight against godfatherism is not an easy one, but it is a necessary one. By standing firm in the defense of democratic principles, Nigeria can overcome the challenges posed by godfatherism and build a brighter future for generations to come.

The Holiness of Consciousness in Thomas Nagel

Ogbu, Esther Obiageli

Department of Philosophy

Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo

E-mail: somaga17@gmail.com

08066220989

Abstract

Understanding consciousness is one of the most enduring intellectual problems in human history. Each of us knows that we are conscious in terms of having thoughts, perceptions and feelings but we are unable to prove it to anyone else. We only have access to the mysterious essence that allows us to experience these thoughts, perceptions and feelings. Consciousness is everything you experience, it is the fine stuck in your head, the sweetness of chocolate apple, the throbbing pain of a toothache, the fierce love for your child and the bitter knowledge that eventually all feelings will end. Essentially, your consciousness is your awareness of yourself and the world around you. This awareness is mostly subjective and unique to every individual. The objective of this paper was to show that the problem of giving adequate explanation of consciousness is a modern re-invention of the traditional mind-body problem in philosophy. The method employed was the analytic method. The paper believes that man's ability to get a precise neurobiology of consciousness is in part impeded by series of philosophical confusion.

Keywords: Consciousness, Subjectivity, Qualia, Cognition

Introduction

Consciousness has become a significant topic of interdisciplinary research in cognitive science involving fields such as Psychology, Linguistics, Anthropology, Neuro psychology and Neuro science. So, the primary focus is on understanding what it means biologically and psychologically for information to be present in consciousness, that is, on determining the neural and psychological correlates of consciousness (Testin et al 2010). Its nature has led to millennia of analyses, explanations and debates by Philosophers, Linguists, Scientists, Theologians and so on. Morris et al (2007) also noted that the problem of consciousness, has also been the subject of philosophical reflections for thousands of years. When we think about consciousness we may have in mind highly complex mental activities such as reflective selfconsciousness, introspective consciousness, of which perhaps only human beings are capable, or we may be thinking about something more purely phenomenal, perhaps something as apparently simple and unitary as a momentary stab of pain.

The central epistemological issues worthy of consideration are - how can we know if something is conscious? how can I know for sure that you are conscious and how do I know that I am conscious, how do I know that a rock is not conscious? How does subjective experience arise from objective brain activity? How can physical neurons with all their

chemical and electrical communication, create the feelings of pain, the glorious red of the sunset or the taste of fine wine? How can mind arise from matter? Hence, the problem of consciousness can be formulated as follows - how is it that from a purely material basis (a brain or a centralized nervous systems) consciousness emerges? This is what the problem of consciousness boils down to.

History

The subject of consciousness has been explored since the beginning of philosophy. Records show that the idea of consciousness puzzled philosophical thinkers as early as the 6th Century BC. The first real systematic approach to the study of consciousness began with the French philosopher Rene Descartes (Blackmore 2016). Descartes established Cartesian dualism which classifies things in the world as either physical or mental. The soul could exist without the body and the body alone could not think. The study of consciousness began in the early 18th century with the definition of psychology during this time as the study of the philosophy of mental life. With this began an objective approach to a study of the mind based on the monistic perspective. William James defined psychology as the study of the mental life, it's phenomena and its conditions. This included the components of consciousness: feelings, impulses and perceptions. James' psychology centered on consciousness. James began what is now termed psychophysics or the study of physical stimuli and internal, reportable sensation (Blackmore 2016). Psychophysics was a turning point in the study of consciousness because it was the beginning of a scientific approach to looking at consciousness. It was the beginning of finding a way to quantify or measure consciousness. In recent decades the field of scientific studies of consciousness has grown considerably. There has been regular international conference on the topic and more empirical results and theoretical works have been published than ever before. (Simon Hviid et al 2021).

The Notion of Consciousness

Consciousness refers to the subjective, first person point of view of our mental states, experiences or feelings, (a conscious state is a state of experience) (Danko 2018). The word consciousness refers to one's awareness of his unique thoughts, memories, feelings, sensations and environment. Consciousness at its simplest is awareness of internal and external existence.

While most people have a strong intuition for the existence of what they refer to as consciousness; many philosophers have argued that consciousness is a unitary concept that is understood by the majority of people despite the difficulty philosophers have had in defining it. (Michael 2001). Philosophers differ from non-philosophers in their intuition about what consciousness is. They have attempted to clarify technical distinctions by using jargons of their own. The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy in 1998 defines consciousness as follows: consciousness philosophers have used the term consciousness for four main topics: Knowledge in general, intentionality, introspection (and the knowledge it specifically generates) and phenomenal experienced.... Something within one's mind is introspectively conscious just in case one introspects it (or is poised to do so). Introspection is often thought to deliver one's primary knowledge of one's mental life. An experience or other mental entity

is phenomenally conscious just in case there is something it is like for one to have it. The clearest examples are perceptual experience such as tasting and seeing, bodily sensational experiences, such as those of pains, tickles and itches, imaginative experiences such as those of one's own actions or perceptions and streams of thought as in the experience of thinking in words or in images. Introspection and phenomenality seem independent or dissociable, although this is controversial (Edward 1988).

It is generally believed that the controversies surrounding the definitions and meaning of consciousness is normal. As regards this, Max (2009) argued that the level of disagreement about the meaning of the word indicates that it means different things to different people. For instance, the objective versus subjective aspects of consciousness; that it encompasses a variety of distinct meanings with no simple element in common. Furthermore, experimental research on consciousness presents special difficulties due to the lack of a universally accepted operational definition. In the majority of experiments that are specifically about consciousness, the subjects are human and the criterion used is verbal report. In other words, subjects are asked to describe their experience and their descriptions are treated as observations of the contents of consciousness. (Bernard 1993).

We say we are conscious of what we see and hear, of what we remember and of our own thoughts and feelings. Most of us believe that tables and chairs are not "conscious". We think that when we sit in a chair, we are aware of sitting in it, but it is not aware of being sat in. It cannot for a moment be doubted that we are right in believing that there is some difference between us and the chair in this respect, so much may be taken as fact and as a datum for our inquiry. But as soon as we try to say what exactly the difference is, we become involved in perplexities. This may make one to ponder on the following questions - "Is consciousness ultimate and simple, something to be merely accepted and contemplated or is it something complex, perhaps consisting in our way of behaving in the presence of objects or alternatively in the existence in us of things called "ideas", having a certain relation to objects, though different from them and only symbolically representative of them? Such questions are not easy to answer but until they are answered, we cannot profess to know what we mean by saying that we are possessed of consciousness (Russell 2001). In effect, being conscious is a having something, something is being given, experienced, undergone, being for or to something, something not deduced, inferred or posited or constructed from something else, something being present, somehow existing, being transparent, being right there, being close or open, being a content or object, something real in some sense of the word and in the case of perception a world and so on. William James wrote five characteristics of the way conscious thinking occurs. According to him, consciousness is personal and is changing; consciousness has a fringe and focus, consciousness includes the apprehension of relationships; consciousness is selective and consciousness deals with inner states and external realities. (<https://search.alexanderstreet.com>) It is also worthy of note that our experience of consciousness is functional because we use it to guide and control our behavior and to think logically about problems. Consciousness allows us to plan activities and to monitor our progress towards the goals we set for ourselves.

The explanation of consciousness is essential for explaining most of the features of our mental life, because, in one way or another they involve consciousness. Consciousness refers

to those states of sentience or awareness that typically begin when we wake from a dreamless sleep and continue through the day until we fall asleep again, die or go into coma or otherwise become unconscious. Conscious states are caused by neuronal processes, they are realized in neuronal systems and they are intrinsically inner, subjective states of awareness or sentience. However, in the views of Morris et al (2007), consciousness has so far managed to escape any universally agreed definition. Most would agree that an earthworm is probably not conscious and that we normally consider ourselves to be conscious at least some of the time. This relies partly on subjective experience, from which we can conclude that we are not only conscious but that we actually exist, as Descartes famously deduced.

Consciousness in Animals

The consciousness of animals as a topic has captivated the interest of Philosophers and Neuroscientists since the days of Aristotle. There is no way to measure consciousness let alone directly observe it in another organism. So, the topic of animal consciousness is associated with some difficulties. First, it poses the problem of other minds in a severe form because animals lack the ability to use human language and so cannot tell us about their experiences. Secondly, it is difficult to reason objectively about the question, because a denial that an animal is conscious is often taken to imply that they do not feel; their life has no value and that harming them is not morally wrong. In the views of Nagel (1974) both Neuroscientists and philosophers agree that to understand the consciousness of another being, you must know what it is like to be that being which is not possible. In 2012, the Cambridge declaration on consciousness crystallized a scientific consensus that humans are not the only conscious beings and that non-human animals including all mammals and birds and many other creatures, including octopuses, possess neurological substrate complex enough to support conscious experiences (Andrew 2014). This consensus has allowed debates about animal consciousness to move on from the old question of whether any non-human is conscious, to the questions of which animals are conscious and what forms their conscious experiences take.

Generally, humans have always been curious in the relationship we share with our animal ancestors. Explaining the reasons animals are conscious could provide important insights into our own consciousness. Likewise, the more information learned about consciousness in animals could provide medical breakthroughs for humans who experience injuries that leave them unconscious. Though, humans are still battling with the following questions - what structures must be present in an organism and how would they function for consciousness to be possible? In other words, of all the different ways that the bodies of animals are arranged which ones contain structures and arrangements that give rise to consciousness? There is no reason to suppose that only a human-like central nervous system will give rise to consciousness. This is because a great deal of evidence that different types of animals are conscious abounds., for example, an octopus is an invertebrate with a very different type of nervous system. But an octopus exhibits behavior and responds to her environment like a conscious creature.

In 1927, the American functional psychologist Harvey Carr argued that any valid measure or understanding of awareness in animals depends on an accurate and complete knowledge

of its essential conditions in man. Human beings have been curious about our own consciousness and the consciousness of our animal counterparts for as long as philosophy has been around. As cognitive psychology and cognitive ethology continue to advance, the gap separating humans and animals' consciousness are getting closer. Qualities that scholars assumed were required for consciousness, that once seemed exclusive to humans are being demonstrated by animals. Animal consciousness or animal awareness in the views of Robert (2004) is the quality or state of self-awareness within an animal or of being aware of an external object or something within itself.

Consciousness and Brain

Consciousness is a physical process caused by the organization of energy in the brain. To explain consciousness as a physical process, we must acknowledge the role of energy in the brain. Energetic activity is fundamental to all physical processes and casually drives biological behavior. The cortex of each part of the brain plays an important role in the production of consciousness, especially the prefrontal and posterior occipital cortices and the castrum.

It is worthy of note that the prevailing consensus in neuroscience, is that, consciousness is an emergent property of the brain and its metabolism. When the brain dies, the mind and consciousness of the being to whom that brain belonged ceases to exist. In other words, without a brain, there can be no consciousness. As such, it is not a process in the brain but a kind of behavior that of course is controlled by the brain like any other behavior.

Consciousness and Experience

In the views of Knobe (2008) many philosophers consider experience to be the essence of consciousness and believe that experience can only fully be known from the inside, that is, subjectively. But if consciousness is subjective and not visible from the outside, then, why do the vast majority of people believe that other people are conscious but rocks and trees are not? This is called the problem of other minds according to Alec Hyslop. In line with the above, Nagel argues that the really hard problem of consciousness is the problem of experience. When we think and perceive, there is a whirl of information-processing but there is also a subjective aspect to it. This subjective aspect is experience. When we see for example, we experience visual sensations: the felt quality of redness, the experience of dark and light and the quality of depth in a visual field. Other experiences go along with perception in different modalities, the sound of a clarinet, the smell of mothballs. Then there are bodily sensations, from pains to orgasms, mental images that are conjured up internally, the felt quality of emotion and the experience of a stream of conscious thought. What unites all of these states is that there is something it is like to be like them. All of them are states of experience. Tye (2018) argued that the hard problem of consciousness refers to the difficulty in explaining why and how sentient beings have qualia. Qualia are the subjective component of the study of consciousness. Qualia are the personal experience and interpretation of smells and sight, the details of conscious experience which cannot be scientifically measured. Hence, to be conscious is to be able to have some kind of subjective experience or awareness of something. We can only experience something if we are conscious and if we are conscious it means we can have experiences.

Consciousness and Awareness

In the coherence between consciousness and awareness there is a natural interpretation of worth in neuroscience directed at isolating the substrate of consciousness. Given this coherence between consciousness and awareness, it follows that a mechanism of awareness will itself be a correlate of conscious experience. Here, Crick (1994) argued that the question of just which mechanisms in the brain govern global availability is an empirical one, perhaps there are many such mechanisms. But if we accept the coherence principle we have reason to believe that the processes that explain awareness will at the same time be part of the basis of consciousness.

Consciousness and Subjectivity

Consciousness is distinctive for its subjectivity or its first-person characteristics. There is something in being in a conscious state, and only the conscious subject has direct access to this way of being. Harris (2011) also observed that "At the level of your experience, you are not a body of cells organelles and atoms, you are consciousness and its ever-changing contents". Seen in this way, consciousness is a subjectively experienced, ever present field in which things (the contents of consciousness) come and go.

Holiness of Consciousness

All sorts of mental phenomena have yielded to scientific investigation in recent years but consciousness has stubbornly resisted. Many have tried to explain it, but the explanations always seem to fall short of the target. It is an ambiguous term, referring to many different phenomena. Each of these phenomena needs to be explained but some are easier to explain than others. The ambiguity of the term consciousness is often exploited by both philosophers and scientists writing on the subject. It is common to see a paper on consciousness begin with an invocation of the mystery of consciousness, noting the strange intangibility and ineffability of subjectivity and worrying that, so far, we have no theory of the phenomenon.

Consciousness poses the most baffling problems in the science of the mind. There is nothing that we know more intimately than conscious experience but there is nothing harder to explain than consciousness. In the views of Stuart (1989) consciousness is a fascinating but elusive phenomenon. It is impossible to specify what it is, what it does or why it has evolved. Nagel (1974) argues that the facts about conscious states are inherently subjective - they can only be fully grasped from limited types of viewpoints. However, scientific explanation demands objective facts, one that moves away from any particular point of view. Thus, the facts about consciousness elude science and so makes the mind-body-problem really intractable. Nagel argues for the inherent subjectivity of the facts about consciousness by reflecting on the question of what it is like to be a bat, for the bat. For him, it seems that no amount of objective data will provide us with knowledge, given that we do not share its type of point of view as a creature able to fly and echolocate. In fact, learning all we can about the brain mechanisms, biochemistry, evolutionary history, psychophysics and so forth of a bat still leaves us unable to discover what it is like for that bat to hunt by echolocation on a dark night. But it is still plausible that there are facts about what it is like to be a bat, facts about how things seen from the bat's perspective. And even though we may have good reason to

believe that consciousness is a physical phenomenon, we are left in the dark about the conscious experience. This is the hard problem of consciousness. In line with the above Morris et al (2007) argued that there is the problem of explaining why any physical state is conscious rather than non-conscious; why conscious mental states light up and directly appear to the subject.

Generally, consciousness is not determined by the physical facts or functional properties of an organism, since these facts and properties are shared by the original and its zombie. Philosophical zombies are one thought experiment that is widely discussed concerning the possibility of philosophical zombies. Here, the major question goes thus- Is it possible that there could be a person who is atom for atom identical to you, who walks, talks and behaves just as you would, but who is utterly without conscious experience? If this zombie were pinched, it would cry just as you would, yet it would experience no feelings of pain. Some philosophers claim that such zombies are logically possible. The argument briefly and roughly is that such a creature seems conceivable which means that such a creature is metaphysically possible. If zombies are possible, then, consciousness cannot be identical with any physical state of affairs, meaning that physicalism is false. According to Kirk (2009) a philosophical zombie is a being in a thought experiment in philosophy of mind that is physically identical to a normal person but does not have conscious experience. The unifying idea of the zombie is that of a human completely lacking conscious experience. A philosophical zombie is a being physically indistinguishable from an actual or possible human being inhabiting a possible world where the physical laws are identical to the laws of the actual world but which completely lacks consciousness. Chalmers (2016) explains why he is not a zombie quoted by Dennett in *Sweet Dreams* thus. "The justification for my belief that I am conscious lies not just in my cognitive mechanisms but also in my direct evidence, the zombie lacks that evidence so his mistake does not threaten the grounds for our beliefs. One can also note that the zombie does not have the same beliefs as us because of the role that experience plays in constituting the contents of those beliefs. Other philosophers claim that zombies are not logically possible, in their views, once you have specified the physical facts and functional properties of an organism, then all the facts about consciousness are also fixed. Hence, consciousness would be something extra beyond the physical and functional. It would also mean that consciousness could not be shaped by natural selection since natural selection can only select among options that make a functional difference to the organism's reproductive fitness.

We are all so familiar with conscious experiences that we take them for granted. But even a simple question about the conscious feeling of a finger can raise perplexing issues. Indeed, consciousness is among the most controversial topics in science and philosophy. In the views of Frankfurt (1988) there is a baffling problem about what consciousness is for. It is equally baffling moreover, that the function form of consciousness should remain so baffling. It seems extra ordinary that despite the pervasiveness and familiarity of consciousness in our lives, we are uncertain in what way it is actually dispensable to us. According to Descartes, consciousness is irrefutable even if everything else you think you know is an illusion, because consciousness is observed from within. The troubling aspect of consciousness is that it is very difficult to describe scientifically; thus, the longstanding debate on the nature of conscious

experience is still ongoing. In Manuel's interpretation, Descartes proposal that consciousness resides within an immaterial domain he called *res cogitans* (the realm of thoughts) in contrast to the domain of material things, which he called *res extensa* (the realm of extension) suggests that the interaction between these two domains occurs inside the brain, perhaps in a small mid line structure called the pineal gland.

Michael (2001) argued that while most people have a strong intuition for the existence of what they refer to as consciousness, the Skeptics argue that this intuition is false either because the concept of consciousness is intrinsically incoherent or because our intuition about it are based on illusions. For instance, Gilbert Ryle argued that traditional understanding of consciousness depends on a Cartesian dualist outlook that improperly distinguishes between mind and body or between mind and world. He proposed that we speak not of minds, bodies and the world but of individuals, or persons, acting in the world. Thus, by speaking of consciousness we end up misleading ourselves by thinking that there is any sort of thing as consciousness separated from behavioral and linguistic understandings (Gilbert 1949).

Dehaene and Naccache (2001) wrote that "we can never be conscious of the inner workings of our cerebral processes, but only of their outputs. For example, syntax: we can become conscious that a sentence is not grammatical but we have no introspection on the inner workings of the syntactical apparatus that underlies this judgment. Lashley (1958) argued that "No activity of mind is ever conscious". His examples were that we do not experience how our perceptions are created or how sentences are produced. He also wrote that acts of will, decisions, logic and the formation and manipulation of abstractions are all unconscious neural processes.

Joseph Levine argues that "There is a special explanatory gap "between consciousness and the physical". The challenge of closing this explanatory gap is the hard problem. Levine argues that a good scientific explanation ought to deductively entail what it explains, allowing us to infer the presence of the target phenomenon from a statement of laws or mechanisms and initial conditions. For Levine, there are as yet unknown factors at least partially involved in determining the phenomenon in question.

Conclusion

Consciousness has no executive function. Consciousness is everything you experience it is the fine stuck in your head, the sweetness of chocolate, the throbbing pain of a toothache the fierce love for your child and the bitter knowledge that eventually all feelings will end. The whole notion of consciousness is at best confused and at worst mystical since, it is unobservable. Some have been led to suppose that the problem is intractable and that no-good explanation can be given. The problem of giving an adequate account of consciousness is a modern descendant of the traditional mind-body-problem. And our ability to get an explanation of consciousness a precise neurobiology of consciousness - is in part impeded by a series of philosophical confusion. Consciousness is a difficult and controversial topic of study and there is no way to measure consciousness. In all, we are never conscious of the inner workings of our cognitive processes but only of their outputs, hence its holiness.

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A Critique of Tacit Consent as a Theory of Political Obligation

Umar Buratai Ibrahim

Department of Philosophy,
Ahmadu Bello University Zaria
Email: iuburatai@gmail.com
+2348063307723

Abstract

The question of political obligation or the basis of fidelity to law has been a permanent fixture of political philosophy throughout its long history. Among the theories advanced to explain the meaning, nature, scope and basis of the concept, the consent theory has been the most prominent. The consent theory posits that political obligation arises primarily from the express or tacit consent of the governed. Consent is thought to be expressed when a people voluntarily agree to obey the laws of a constituted authority in return for the safety and sanctity of society. It is thought to be tacit when a people's existence within a political society can be construed as an acceptance of the society's laws and norms. Despite its prominence, this theory has been fraught with contestations about its tenability in modern societies which are enormous in scale and scope. Employing the hermeneutic method of textual analysis and interpretation, this paper critiques consent as a theory of political obligation with a view to assessing its justification as a theory of political obligation.

Key Words: Consent, Political Obligation, Voluntarism and Non-voluntarism.

Introduction

The consent theory is arguably the most prominent of the theories of political obligation. A consent theory, whatever form it takes, claims that political obligation arises from the consent of the governed. This consent can either be expressly given or tacitly implied. Socrates' first argument in the *Crito* (Plato, 1909) can be viewed as one variety of the argument from consent; the claim that his long residence in Athens implies some form of agreement with its laws is a classic formulation of tacit consent. However, John Locke's formulation of the theory is the *locus classicus* on the theory. In his *Second Treatise of Government*, he states as follows:

Men being, as has been said, by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of the estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent. The only way whereby any one divests himself of his natural liberty, and puts on the bonds of civil society is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community... When any number of men have so consented to make a

community or government, they are thereby presently incorporated, and make one body politic, wherein the majority have a right to act and conclude the rest... And thus every man, by consenting with others to make one body politic under one government, puts himself under an obligation to every one of that society to submit to the determination of the majority, and to be concluded by it (Locke, 141).

This formulation of the consent theory highlights the voluntarist account of political obligation (Horton, 19). The idea that a person voluntarily agrees or consents with others to make a community or government and pledges their allegiance to the collective at the expense of their natural liberty is at once both the foundation of organized society and the obligation that is a consequence of such an organization. In this sense, political obligation is not something that is forced upon the obligated, rather, it is the voluntary act of a person who by nature is free, independent and equal to all others; and by willfully coming together, along with other willing members, they imbibe the bonds of 'civil society' and pledge their obligation to the laws of the said society. This account of political obligation has been re-echoed by Simmons. He describes the consent theory as follows. A consent theory is:

Any theory of political obligation which maintains that the political obligations of citizens are grounded in their personal performance of a voluntary act which is the deliberate undertaking of an obligation (Simmons, 57).

This description of the consent theory highlights the voluntary nature of political obligation. It continues the long tradition advanced by scholars throughout the long history of political scholarship. Simmons further contends that there are four central theses of the consent theory, these are the common denominators to virtually all accounts of the theory. They are as follows:

- a. Man is naturally free;
- b. Man gives up his natural freedom (and is bound by obligations) only by voluntarily giving a "clear sign" that he desires to do so;
- c. The method of consent protects the citizen from injury by the state; and
- d. The state is an instrument for serving the interests of its citizens (Simmons, 68).

The idea that man is naturally free is a primary feature of the social contractarian accounts of the origins of the human society. It features prominently in the works of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant among others. Simmons attempts to expound this idea of freedom; He surmises that it does not imply the absence of obstacles to the fulfillment of peoples' natural desire; neither does it imply the absence of moral constraints to the exercise of our freewill. Instead, it simply implies the freedom to act without coercion (Simmons, 68). This natural freedom to act is not absolute, it is checked on the one hand by the existence of other people who by nature, hold similar rights and on the other hand, by the morality or conscience remains a natural check against the exigencies of our individual freedom.

The second thesis is a consequence of exercising the freedom from coercion advanced in the first thesis. It highlights the deliberate, voluntary act of surrendering ones' personal freedom in a clear, unambiguous manner to the constituted society in exchange for the comforts of said society. In this sense, voluntarism is a necessary condition for a consent account of political obligation or as Simmons puts it, "an individual cannot become obligated unless he intentionally performs an obligation-generating act with a clear understanding of its significance" (Simmons, 66).

Consent as a Problematic Theory of Political Obligation

The prospect of grounding political obligation in consent is quite problematic. First, the requirement of a well communicated act of consent from which obligation arises in practice is virtually unheard of. Second, it is not immediately clear how many states (if any) have and can be founded on such an idealistic notion. Third, how many people (if any) can it be claimed actually consented in the manner described above, to be obligated to their state and government? The third and fourth of these theses are premised on the first and second theses, the idea that the citizens exercise their freedom from coercion and voluntarily bind themselves to a state, obligating themselves to its laws and reserving the right to withdraw their freely given consent should the state fail to meet its own obligations to the citizens.

The citizens consent to be ruled is and must not be construed as a license to act outside the collective wishes and aspirations of the consenting citizens. This protective feature is essentially intended to preclude the possibility of abuse of power, tyranny and unjust rule. It foreshadows the possibility of some form of political discord, and by advancing the claim that the consent of the ruled is both the source and sustenance of political obligation, it protects the people from the excesses of government. One may ask: is it even possible for one to consent to abuse and tyranny? There are rights which we all have, which are sacrosanct and their existence cannot be negated by the exercise of consent or any other instrument of law; they exist to uphold the sanctity of life and preserve the dignity of the human person.

The consent theory has been the subject of immense criticisms; while critics do not generally contest that consent can be a source of obligations, they argue that far too few people either expressly or tacitly consent in the form and manner the theory requires to justify political obligation (Dagger and Lefkowitz, 2014). Criticisms of this sort have traditionally been met with questions about the meaning of consent; the argument here is that civic acts like participating in electoral processes, paying taxes, and perhaps even more mundane activities like calling the police, utilizing public facilities and the like can be classified as acts of implicit consent. (Steinberger, 218).

While Socrates alludes to a similar idea of tacit or implicit consent in his first argument in the *Crito*, the idea that these activities constitute 'active participation in the institutions of the state' amounts to stretching the analogy too far to the point where perhaps mere existence within a political space can be translated as some form of consent to be ruled. This argument is essentially a slippery slope to the possibility of coercion, an idea that negates the voluntary essence of the consent theory. Those who argue that only express consent can justify political obligation propose that political societies establish formal procedures for the evocation of such consent (Beran, 271). In such a scenario, members would be required to expressly grant

or withhold consent a necessary condition for continued residence and participation in the political society.

Contemporary Challenges to the Consent Theory

In modern political thought, the idea of obtaining such consent is problematic. As an ideal, the consent theory aims to ensure that individual rights and liberty are protected through the conditional grant of consent and the rejection of force or coercion. In this sense, the legitimacy of government or the obligating authority is both founded and sustained by the consent of the members of society who reserve the right to withdraw the consent if or when the obligating authority acts in contravention of the agreement on which the initial consent was granted. One immediate question arises, who in the modern world has granted the kind of consent that proponents of the consent theory claim? Simmons argues that modern society is perhaps sustained by historical consent, this is essentially, the consent of the formative class of the political societies so concerned (Beran, 266). This is a response to the argument that far too few people in the modern world actually consent in the way and manner anticipated by consent theorists.

The idea of historical consent is equally problematic on many fronts. By grounding political obligation in the consent of historical members to the neglect of the current, it accepts two dangerous propositions. First, it aims to assuage the concerns of modern societies whose members have not expressly or tacitly consented in the form that consent theorists describe. Second, by disenfranchising the current generation and binding their fate to that of their forbears, it trivializes the rights and freedom of the individual and allows for the state to rule without any form of 'current' consent which is the measure of a state's continued legitimacy. Simmons shares these concerns and states as follows:

The state's authority is "given" to it by its citizens, who decide both whether the state will serve their interests, and how to balance freedom within the state against benefits provided. Neither the state nor any person is free to decide what is in the interest of another. Only by giving his consent, and so indicating that he finds the government to be such that it will serve his interests to become a citizen, does a man become one who can be rightfully governed' (Simmons, 68).

In their bid to justify political obligation on the individual consent of members of society, consent theorists failed to properly acknowledge the difficulty of obtaining consent in the manner they theorized. To remedy this problem, some scholars hastily presume that historical and hypothetical consent could justify political obligation. This solution to the problem of consent is a contradiction of the central thesis of the concept, the idea that the human person is born free and the exercise of consent is an expression of that freewill. Contemporary consent theorists generally have a plethora of issues to contend with; questions about the means and method of obtaining and sustaining individual consent; the possibility of current generations being bound by the historical consent of their forbears and the possibility of majority consent being satisfactory for political obligation are all affronts on the tenets of the theory. To accept these claims about the theory is to invite chaos.

The Nature of Tacit Consent

Given the significance of political obligation, is consent something that can and should be tacitly implied? What acts or inaction constitute tacit consent? Express consent, if it is submitted, would involve some form of voluntary act or perhaps inaction (which could be verbal or nonverbal), acknowledgment, endorsement, agreement and or permission indicating or conveying an individual's desire to consent to or enter a transaction or agreement the kind of which political society is built upon and obligations arise from. This act of consenting must also be intentional and voluntary. One cannot consent to something unintentionally nor can consent be coerced. (Simmons, 7).

To this end, Simmons outlines the conditions for when non-action can be taken as a sign of tacit consent. They are as follows:

- a. The situation must be such that it is perfectly clear that consent is appropriate and that the individual is aware of this. This includes the requirement that the potential consentor be awake and aware of what is happening.
- b. There must be a definite period of reasonable duration when objections or expressions of dissent are invited or clearly appropriate, and the acceptable means of expressing this dissent must be understood by or made known to the potential consentor.
- c. The point at which expressions of dissent are no longer acceptable must be obvious or made clear in some way to the potential consentor.
- d. The means acceptable for indicating dissent must be reasonable and reasonably easily performed.
- e. The consequences of dissent cannot be extremely detrimental to the potential consentor (Simmons, 64).

For any action or inaction to count as some form of tacit consent, all five conditions have to be met. Where any of these five conditions are not met, then an individual's silence, or inaction of some other kind cannot be construed as some form of consent. However, there remain instances where it is not immediately clear whether any of the condition(s) have been met; this is arguably one of the primary reasons that consent theorists who heavily employ tacit consent have faced a plethora of criticisms. These challenges inform why Simmons opines that consent must either be expressly given or where tacitly implied, must meet the preceding criteria.

Some traditional accounts of the consent theory have either fail to meet these conditions or extend their notion of tacit consent far beyond the scope of that which should be considered as an expression of consent. Locke's consent theory, which is possibly the most famous classical account, is one example of these theories. He states as follows:

The difficulty is, what ought to be looked upon as tacit consent, and how far it binds, i.e. how far any one shall be looked on to have consented, and thereby submitted to any government, where he has made no expressions of it at all. And to this I say, that every man, that hath any possessions, or enjoyment of any part of the dominions of any government, doth thereby give his tacit consent, and is as far forth obliged to obedience to the laws of that government, during such

enjoyment, as anyone under it; whether this his possession be of land, to him and his heirs forever, or a lodging only for a week; or whether it be barely traveling freely on the highway; and, in effect, it reaches as far as the very being of any one within the territories of that government (Locke, 153).

From the preceding passage, it is immediately clear that Locke is not concerned with the actual intentions of the consentor; He equates an individual being “within the territory of a government” to an expression of that individual's acceptance of the government's authority and the consent it implies. This problematic proposition informs why Simmons attempts a distinction between actions which are “signs of consent” and actions which “imply consent.” All genuine acts of consent are “signs of consent” because the context in which they are performed (including relevant conventions) legitimizes the action as an expression of the consentor's intention to consent. This is to be contrasted with actions that “imply consent” in that they are not intentional expressions of consent but are still related to consent in some important way (Simmons, 88).

If one's analysis of tacit consent includes actions which bind individuals without their intention of expressing consent (i.e., actions which imply consent), then individuals may be morally bound to their governments but this not because they have accepted certain obligations through consent. Even if the previous actions of an individual (e.g., accepting welfare from the government) make certain future actions morally required (e.g., following the laws of that government) this seems to be clearly not the generation of an obligation from consent but from some other morally relevant feature of the actions and resulting obligations (e.g., gratitude or fair play). While these obligations may be generated by actions which imply consent and which may rationally commit one to consenting or morally bind one to the same actions that consenting would, they cannot be said to be generated through consent or “consented to” because of the absence of intentionality on the actor's part.

The kinds of actions which ought to count as consent are those that are those of intentional and voluntary acceptance of the action(s) of another and which generate obligations for the consentor. Even with this highly specified sense of tacit consent, the problem that still remains for consent theories is that very few individuals have ever given express or genuine tacit consent to the government's authority. The simplicity and allure of consent theories as the ground of political obligations seems to be countered with consent theorists being forced to admit that there are very few individuals who actually have political obligations. This has prompted many a consent theorist to modify their account(s) of the theory in order to save consent in order for it to retain its relevance as theory of political obligation.

Historically, consent theorists argue that tacit consent is the result of a choice each individual makes to remain within a defined political society and participate in the society's way of life. Plato enumerates this point in the *Crito* when he describes the decision each man had to make when he came of age:

Any Athenian, on attaining to manhood and seeing for himself the political organization of the state and us its laws, is permitted, if he is not satisfied with us, to take his property and go away wherever he likes, if any of you chooses to go to one of our colonies, supposing that he should

not be satisfied with us and the state, or to emigrate to any other country, not one of us laws hinders or prevents him from going away wherever he likes, without any loss of property. On the other hand, if any one of you stands his ground when he can see how we administer justice and the rest of our public organization, we hold that by so doing he has in fact undertaken to do anything that we tell him (Plato, 51).

The Problem of Tacit Consent

By explicitly forcing citizens to make a decision when they reach the age/maturity required for genuine consent, the state seems to be guarantee that any person who remains within its territories has consented and thus has political obligations to the state. However, this idea that residence could be taken as a sign of tacit consent has faced abundant criticism. Hume famously retorts:

Can it be asserted that the people, who in their hearts abhor his [the current dictator's] treason, have tacitly consented to his authority, and promised him allegiance, merely because, from necessity, they live under his dominion?" (Hume, 119).

Hume's contention is that people may be forced, for prudential reasons, to live under a government they have contempt for and to which they would not consent if it were possible. However, Hume's argument seems to disregard the choice situation response that was just discussed. A similar, but more pointed form of the argument contends that mere residence, even in a state with a formalized choice situation, can never constitute tacit consent because it is always possible for self-professed revolutionaries, spies, anarchists, etc. to intentionally take residence within a state, and to say that they are consenting to the rule of the government is absurd (Simmons, 97).

Beran offers three ways in which individuals can legitimately object to consent in the aforementioned sense. These include: "secession, migration, or a public declaration that they are not accepting membership in the state in whose territory they are living" (Beran, 271). One problem that immediately arises for this type of dissent is that individuals wishing to secede must either request the permission of the government for their independent claim of a certain section of territory, or be prepared to fight in order to keep the new land/state for which they did not ask the government's permission for secession. Both of these choices are problematic, but the second is especially concerning.

Engaging a war which one can foresee losing is not a live option for that individual and thus cannot be the only acceptable way for someone to withhold his or her consent. The other choice, asking permission to secede from the government, is also problematic because the government is extremely likely to decline the request. This leaves the individual in the undesirable position of being without an option for dissenting aside from entering a war with the state. Another option Beran offers for withholding consent and avoiding political obligations is migration. The first problem that this option encounters is that there is no inhabitable unclaimed land left on Earth for an individual to migrate to, so, they are forced to choose some state to reside in and consent to. A second problem is that this proposition does

not seem like a possibility for some individuals. Hume famously offers one objection to this argument as follows:

Can we seriously say, that a poor peasant or artisan has a free choice to leave his country, when he knows no foreign language or manners, and lives, from day to day, by the small wages which he acquires? We may as well assert that a man, by remaining in a vessel, freely consents to the dominion of the master; though he was carried on board while asleep, and must leap into the ocean and perish, the moment he leaves her (Hume, 2012: 118).

The objection seems to be that many vulnerable individuals cannot leave their current country and thus do not voluntarily and intentionally give their consent by staying. The reason they cannot leave is not that the government is coercing them to stay, it is that option that has been given for dissenting (i.e., migrating) is simply too much to ask of these vulnerable individuals. To put this in the terms of the fifth condition on consent - the consequences of dissent would be extremely detrimental to the poor and ignorant individuals.

While the detrimental consequences of leaving one's country of residence seems to legitimately exclude this from even being a practical possibility for many individuals, Beran, attempts to accommodate the problems with his first and second options by offering a third option for withholding consent. He argues that while many individuals are unable to migrate because they are vulnerable and they are also unable to secede, either because there is no uninhabited land or the government denies their request to secede territory and the consequences of waging war would be extremely detrimental, they should be able to avoid political obligation by "declaring publicly and to the appropriate officials that they are not accepting membership in the state." (Beran, 271). This public declaration would be a last resort for individuals to withhold their consent and remain politically free from obligations. This option seems to be an interesting and principled solution to the problems associated with tacit consent.

Conclusion

It is one thing for tacit consent to be accepted as being on a par with express consent and acknowledged as a basis for political obligation, but it is a much stronger claim to say that they are necessary for political obligation. The subsequent discussion of competing theories of political obligation can be viewed as explicit denials of the claim that consent is a necessary condition for political obligations. The heart of the problem seems to be that just as general obligations can be generated from multiple sources; it seems that political obligations could arise from pluralistic grounds as well. However, this is not a problem unique to consent theory; any account of political obligation which wishes to restrict the justification of such obligations to a single source needs to consider this objection.

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