

# The Concept of Authenticity in the Existentialist Philosophies of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Sartre: A Panacea for African Development

By

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Received: 22/11/2023 | Accepted: 29/11/2023

Published: x/11/2023

**Abstract** It is not uncommon to behold even elderly Africans still living inauthentic life where they probably, languish and exhaust their existential tendencies and capabilities of making individual impact for themselves and others. That is an underutilization of the possibilities inherent in human nature, hence the focal problem here is the alarming rate of worthless, insignificant and irrational lifestyle Africans exhibit such that little is existentially achieved due to certain socio-religious beliefs confining them to underutilization of their natural capabilities. Thus, questions arise: What factors could be responsible for this African reality? How can the tenets of existentialism salvage this ugly African situation? It is in addressing these issues that this paper defends the view that the tenets of the existentialist philosophies of Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche and Jean Paul Sartre will curb the African existential inauthenticity by arousing a new consciousness towards African development. The paper shall adopt existentialist conceptual analysis to evaluate the discourse as the expectation herein is to expose and proffer solutions to African inauthenticity.

**Keywords:** Existentialist, Philosophy, Inauthenticity, African, Development, Existence, Religion

**Publish by IJAH 2023.**

## INTRODUCTION

It has remained a baffling phenomenon to see people (Africans in this case) starting and ending their life in 'they told me' or 'we are told' to do or say this or that in this or that way. It is a terrible sort of existence that can be characterised by the Sartrean concept of 'bad faith' through which man lives in 'crowd' instead of individually registering their existence via personal impacts. This kind of life is expressed in the Kierkegaardian concept of inauthenticity' or the Heideggerian concept of 'fallen-

ness' where the African lives in self-denial and decides not to exploit his existential capabilities to add meaning to his life.

Beholding this as an African reality raises certain questions: What African peculiar factors are responsible for such a lifestyle? How can the tenets of existentialism especially as espoused in the philosophies of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Sartre, salvage this ugly African situation? It is in addressing these existential

issues that this paper argues that proper adherence to the principles of existentialism as upheld by these anchor philosophers will go a long way to rescuing Africans from such prevailing existential debacles.

The paper shall adopt the existentialist conceptual analysis to expose and evaluate this discourse. In doing this, the expectation is an exposure of the existentialist positions of the three anchor philosophers and how adhering to the tenets of their existentialist positions would rescue the African from living inauthentically. It shall significantly add to the list of materials on such discussion especially as it relates to addressing African conditions, and finally, it stands as an ideology for a U-turn to existential authenticity for African human and resourceful developments.

### The Concept of Existentialism

'Existentialism', a nominalization of the term 'existence' taking its root from 'exist', derives from the Latin word *existere* which means "stand out" of the absolute nothingness, but 'stand in' in relation to others and deal with what Husserl would call 'border lines', 'boundary situations', 'existential limits' or the concrete existential problems and situations of an individual and as they are encountered on daily basis.<sup>1</sup> Ordinarily, when existence is discussed, the existence or beingness of man, stone, goat, God, etc, comes to mind. This is a universal and common sense of understanding of existence. But for the existentialists, like Heidegger, the term 'existence' is exclusively restricted to human beings, hence the employment of the technical terms 'exist' and 'is/are' to differentiate between the existence of human beings and that of other beings.<sup>2</sup> However, this is a clear indication of the influence of Idealism, Medieval thought and Naturalism on the existentialists. They equally borrow the concept of 'existence' from the medieval era (Necessary and Contingent existence) to differentiate between, unlike the medieval scholars (who did between God and other existents), the existence of man and other beings. Thus, for the medieval scholars, only God truly

and independently exists, while other beings merely and dependently exist. The difference between the medieval scholars and existentialists is: for the medieval scholars, while every other reality 'exists' but depends, because of their contingent nature, on the necessary existence of God for the existentialists, while only man realistically exists because of his existential qualities like-consciousness, freedom, reason, etc, every other reality merely is (not really exist) because of the lack of human existential qualities as mentioned above. Finally, the existentialists, especially Heidegger, hold that as the only being that 'exists', man as a physical nature, not from the non-physical, stands as the beginning point into the discourse or inquiry on being.

Be that as it may, it can be said that "existentialism is therefore the philosophy of human existence, a philosophy preoccupied with what it means for a human being to exist."<sup>3</sup> To the 'existence-philosophers', "human existence does not simply mean 'being there,' human existence is a drama in which every individual is an actor."<sup>4</sup> Omoregbe trying to explain what 'existence' really means to the existentialists writes:

To exist is to be personally involved in the drama of life as an actor rather than as a passive spectator. To exist means to be personally committed to a freely chosen way of life; it means being conscious of the problems of human life with all the choices open to man and freely opting for a certain way of life while assuming full personal responsibility for it. To exist is to be at the helm of one's affairs, personally directing its main course<sup>5</sup>

From this explanation, human consciousness, freedom and volitional exercise make man to 'exist'. They are the existential possibilities upon which the real existence of man stands, and significantly, they equally explain why other beings do not really exist but merely being there unconsciously, unfreely and indecisively.

Existentialism is a late 19th century philosophical movement/ideology which seeks to salvage humanism as expressed in the human freedom, volition and their existential applications. Historically, existentialism started with the Kierkegaardian question to his tutor, Hegel, one of the power houses of the German idealism. Hegel

<sup>1</sup> Olusegun Noah Olawoyin, "Existentialism and the Dilemma of a Christian in a Corrupt Society," *Or-Che Uma African Journal of Existential Philosophy*, 1(2), (Sept/Oct, 2011), 25-6; Cf. Gladys L. Portuondo, "Jaspers, Husserl, Kant Boundary Situations as a Turning-Point," *An International Journal in Philosophy, Religion, Politics, and the Arts*, 11(1), (2016), 52-6, Web

<sup>2</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics," *Existentialism from*

*Dostoyevsky to Sartre* (ed.) Walter A. Kaufmann (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1956), 215

<sup>3</sup> Joseph I. Omeregbe, *A Simplified History of Western Philosophy*, (Volume Three) (Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited, 1999 rep), 38

<sup>4</sup> Omeregbe, *A Simplified History*, 38

<sup>5</sup> Omeregbe, *A Simplified History*, 38

articulated an idealistic view that identifies reality with the Absolute Spirit/Mind that makes existential history through beings. The Absolute Spirit permeates every being and has 'its' way thereby imprinting its existence in the annals of world history. In the face of the Absolute Spirit, every being is a tool of history-making and has no say. This is the problem foremost identified by existentialists as an anti-existentialist principle, and Kierkegaard dares to question his tutor Hegel, who the secretary to the almighty Absolute Spirit is. In its magnificence, the Absolute Spirit ought to have a clerk who should be taking its historical making existence through beings. Unfortunately, Hegel took the question insignificant and unserious. The underlying point in the question is an epistemic attempt to question the place of human freedom, consciousness and volition in the existential history-making nature of the Absolute Spirit. This is necessary following the point that in the face of the Absolute Spirit, human beings are incapacitated and too weak to act as beings found with freewill and volition. For Kierkegaard, the simple interpretation of this Hegelian intellectual articulation is simply 'inauthenticity'— a situation where man existentially assumes the position of an object, a spectator instead of a subject, an actor, and that is to keep man's existence at the 'Aesthetical' and 'Ethical' stages of human *cum* societal development. The question was apt following the position of man and his existential quiddities in the Hegelian lens which is absurd. The human freedom, consciousness and volition are all ignored as all that could be real revolves around the Absolute Spirit. The implication of this consequence of the Hegelian articulation becomes clearer in the Heideggerian lens where he criticizes his predecessors of going astray from the real question of being and consequently burying the reality (knowledge) of being. To revive such inauthentic lifestyle through the African engagement becomes apt and the main thrust of this paper.

### **Kierkegaard and the concept of authenticity**

This Danish philosopher is an existentialist thinker whose existential articulations stand as pointers to the direction of this paper. Kierkegaard, as pointed out above, set out to rescue human freedom from the ideal to whom man's freedom and utility of man's natural capability have been attributed to. His philosophy is primarily a reaction to the idealists and Christian theologians and philosophers whose philosophies position the human freedom and capabilities in a way that its utility becomes derivative and not direct by the human being. To make this strive a success and to secure the position he has maintained, he came up with interesting developmental stages to describe the existential categories of man. What Sartre sees as conscious and unconscious beings is what

for Kierkegaard, is represented in the three existential stages of man. The first existential stage is what he called the 'Aesthetic Stage'. In this stage, man could be referred to as an unconscious being. He is concerned with the 'immediate'. He is full of impulses and lives according to the principle of the flesh and the physical eye. He lives in emotions and sense. He is after the 'physics' and those ephemeral attractions and things of no substantial values. In this stage, man exists in total loss, loss of the human consciousness and freedom, hence humanly incapacitated. The second existential stage is what he called the 'Ethical Stage'. In this developmental stage, man could be referred to as being subconscious, but still in loss of what human freedom and the utilization of the human consciousness could mean and imply. At this stage, man is guided by social ethics and norms institutionalized by the forebears. He dictates these norms and precepts but cannot question them: how they came about and why must they be. At this existential point, he lives by 'that is how it is (being done)'. He lives by 'I am told to be (or do it) like this/way'. The third and final stage is what he called the 'Ontological Stage' At this stage man should be able to stand out subjectively to be known for what he consciously says or does, and for which, he should subsequently be responsible. Personal and not societal conviction should be the underlining factor behind man's actions. Notably, Kierkegaard says that existing in any of these existential stages has nothing to do with age. In other words, a child may be seen living in the 'Ontological Stage' while an elder unfortunately is seen exhibiting well known qualities of living in the 'Aesthetic Stage' when evaluated existentially.

The Kierkegaardian tripartite division/categorization of the human civilization or developmental stages could be likened to the sort devised by the French positivist Auguste Comte, the founder and brain behind the coinage of the term 'sociology', the scholar who opined that man and the society could be mechanically studied and structured. Comte came up with his own version of tripartite human civilization which include the 'Theological Stage' which corresponds to the Kierkegaardian 'Aesthetic Stage'. This stage could also be referred to as the 'Military' or the 'Pre-agricultural' era characterized by menial activities like hunting and gathering. In this stage, people rely on supernatural agencies to explain what they cannot explain otherwise and the society is more explain through religious conceptualization than rationality; people see the world and events as direct expressions of the will of various gods. By this, it could be posited that the ancient people conceived everything around them as a sign of active gods influencing their lives, the world and human place in the world is explained in terms of gods, spirits and magic. The second is called the 'Metaphysical Stage' which is likened to the Kierkegaardian 'Ethical Stage'. It could also be referred to as the 'Judicial' or the 'Agricultural' era; it is

characterized by explanations based on abstract notions such as essences and final causes (teleology). In this a bit upgraded though not satisfactorily, humans attribute effects to abstract but poorly understood causes; humans understand the society as natural rather than supernatural. The third is the 'Positive Stage' (Kierkegaardian 'Ontological Stage'). It could equally be called the 'Industrial' or 'Scientific' era when humans now understand and make use of the scientific laws that control the world. It is the pinnacle where the society would be governed by reliable knowledge and would be understood in the light of the knowledge produced by primarily sociology. It is at this stage that man can be said to have attained full development of consciousness where science becomes the only valid knowledge, and facts become the objects of knowledge. In this stage, philosophy possesses no method different from science; and its task becomes simply to find the general principles common to all science and then use them as guides to human conduct and as basis for social organization. At this stage, society becomes sociological, and must have a scientific base and become objective, and could unite all science and improve sociology and direct human activity and other sciences. Just like the Husserlian 'Eidetic Science' as the pure and most reliable knowledge, Comte opines that sociological knowledge (science) is the only real knowledge for human welfare and the only science that guarantees human development at the apex level.<sup>6</sup>

### Nietzsche and the concept of Authenticity

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche was trained by his religious parent and relatives. He was significantly influenced by the Classics and Philosophy taught to him by Friedrich Ritschl, his contact with Greek art and literature, the Wagner's music and events surrounding Communism, Nazism, nationalism, and other ideologies that spread across the continent in the wake of World War I that stirred in him questions as to the meaning of life, value, race and humanity, etc. his upbringing made a huge impact on him to live in accordance with the principles of the Christian ethics. In the later days of his life, and as an atheist, he began to question the source of the prevailing Christian ethics and how relevant it is to the reality of human existence and in comparison to inherent human

capabilities. This marked a paradigm shift in his life towards an energetic participation in the existentialist movement. In the stream of this new consciousness, he asks "Are we not wandering lost, through infinity of nothingness? Is night not approaching, and more and more night? God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! What possible comfort is there for us? Is not the greatness of the dead too heavy for us."<sup>7</sup> Pondering on the content of the above quote, he then conceived the Christian ethics as a cage to man and his natural capabilities to pursue a good life through what man can do. But what exactly does it mean and imply that 'God is dead'? The quote below will provide more necessary insight:

God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?<sup>8</sup>

This is a metaphorical lamentation of the death of God which (who) has killed man and his natural capabilities through the religious ethics and doctrines divinely imposed on man. The 'we' who have killed 'God' is man through the maximum utilization of his natural capabilities to define his existence. Man, by this, has murdered that which(who) has always murdered man. This statement 'God is dead' *Gott ist tot* which has become the Nietzschean philosophical identity was first altered in Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*.<sup>9</sup> Even though Nietzsche was an atheist in his later life, by the proclamation that 'God is dead', he never meant there was a God who actually has died, rather he was "referring to how the Enlightenment had contributed to the erosion of religious beliefs, which had long served as a foundational belief system for much of the world."<sup>10</sup> In other words, enlightenment overthrew the idea of a universe that is governed by divine providence, and introduced the idea of a universe governed by physical laws. By this, philosophy has "shown that governments no longer needed to be organized around the idea of divine right to be legitimate, but rather by the consent or rationality of the governed— that large and consistent moral theories could exist without reference to God."<sup>11</sup> Suffice it to say

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.socialsci.libretexts.org>;  
<https://www.study.com>

<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche cited in Paul Roubiczek, *Existentialism: For and Against* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 40.

<sup>8</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God\\_is\\_dead#Hegel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_is_dead#Hegel)

<sup>9</sup> "'God is dead": What Nietzsche really meant" <https://bigthink.com> first published on August 12, 2016; updated on January 29, 2022, retrieved on May 28, 2022

<sup>10</sup> "God is dead"

<sup>11</sup> "God is dead"

therefore, that Europeans “no longer needed God as the source for all morality, value, or order in the universe; philosophy and science were capable of doing that for”<sup>12</sup> them. For Nietzsche, human beings through their intelligence and practical wisdom in their desire to better understand the world in which they live leading to scientific revolution, have killed God and his imposed morality (on them) through religious institutionalized dogmas and ethical principles. In other words, humanity through reasoning (and philosophy) and science have conquered and replaced divinity, faith and religion. Enlightenment in a nutshell implies the overthrow of religion and faith in the divine, and the enthronement of science and rationality in the pursuance of the real knowledge of beings. The underlining factor here is a search for human freedom and creation of an existential avenue to allow man showcase the inherent capabilities in his nature to better his life and attain his existential fulfillment and aspirations. Man is not found without capabilities to ensure his survival, and he is the agent (risk taker) as to the outcome of his life. Following this, he should be allowed to create his existential guides. This should not come from outside— a (divine) being who does not experience the existential situation of man, but inside— man himself who is both the subject and object as to the effects of the existential activities in life.

For Nietzsche, the previous ethical standard proceeded from the divine has incarcerated man hence the necessity for man as a bundle of possibilities to grow beyond this ethical imposition that has incarcerated his capabilities for long, to inventing a new ethical order where he will take charge and operate within a standard set by himself. By this, man should be the architect, initiator and inventor of his own morality. For Nietzsche, the real morality is the one that proceeds from *inside the self*, at will and freedom, and not the one from *outside the self* which for him, is an imposed one. This gave rise to his ideology of *Superman* and identification of man as *Will to Power*.<sup>13</sup> So, the reality behind everything that exists, including the existing man, is for him, ‘Will to Power’. Even God and the gods are all substantially, essentially and

naturally ‘Will to Power’. “There is in fact,” he said, “no other alternative for gods; either they are the will to power or so long as they are that, they will be national gods, or else the impotence for power and they necessarily become gods.”<sup>14</sup> For Nietzsche, everything that exists is driven around by its instinct for domineering and taking control over other existents. The principle of strife, self-centeredness, war or opposition is the core nature or a composite of whatever exists. The implication is that pleasure and pain are concomitant phenomena in the striving after an increase of power. Thus he concludes that whatever man does with an end to make him happy justifies the means. In his words, “exploitation does not belong to a deprived or imperfect and primitive society, it belongs to the nature of the living being as a primary organic function: it is a consequence of the will to life.”<sup>15</sup>

Thus, just like Protagoras of Abdera, he opines that man at the death of the God of the Christian ethics,<sup>16</sup> should become existentially responsible and the standard setter of his own ethical guidance. God has been the grandiose and empty image in which the fear of life and hostility to reality find self-expression, concealment and justification. The recognition of this and the subsequent action to take control of his moral conducts makes man a fulfilled and conscious being. Human dependence on the divine that does not live human experience instead of human creating way for human welfare, is an inauthentic life. It is the essence of man that is the Supreme Being, the turning point in history will be the moment when man becomes aware that the only God of man is man himself.<sup>17</sup> Man “can only be his own master when he owes his existence to no one but himself.”<sup>18</sup> Nietzsche intends to fill the void left by the disappearance of God, makes it a paradigm point of shift; and this is the point of the doctrine of the *Superman*.

It is upon this established ground to discard the Christian ethics that he built his theory of *Superman* or the concept of *Master Morality*. The concept of *Superman* employed by Nietzsche to explain what he thinks about ethics is an antithesis to a thesis which is the Christian

Vol. 1811 (New York: Happer and Row Inc. 1970-1984), 20.

<sup>12</sup> “God is dead”

<sup>13</sup> Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, trans, R. Hollinn Dale (London: Hazel Watson and Vaney Ltd, 1968), 182.

<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, 187; Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1973), 578; Nietzsche cited in Joseph O. Eneh, *War & Peace: Aspects of Practical Ethics* (Calabar: Afranedoh (Nig.) Ltd, 2001), 94; Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, (trans.) D. F. Krell,

<sup>15</sup> Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Part 11, Vol. 7, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 171

<sup>16</sup> R. Adolfs, *The Grave of God*, (trans.) N. D. Smith (London; Burns and Oates, 1967), 13.

<sup>17</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, cited in E. Borne, *In Atheism* (New York: Hawthorne, 1961), 33.

<sup>18</sup> Karl Marx, *Economics, Pobitiqueet Philosophies* cited in Borne, 31.

conception of morality or virtue. This Christian ethics is what he calls *Slave Morality*. Existentialism sees existence as primordial to essence for its nature is embedded in the whole concept and exercise of freedom. Just like Feuerbach who says that the Christian God is “the myth that destroys man’s own efforts, against which man must fight to re-conquer his proper nature from which he has been alienated,” Nietzsche sees the Christian ethics as an enslavement to man’s real/authentic existence and success. Hegel would align himself with the Nietzschean position by saying that Christianity is “a backward religion, a religion of endless, hopeless waiting, whose devotees are either wandering in a desert looking for a land flowing with milk and honey or singing in a vale of tears scanning the horizon for the advent of the new heaven and earth beyond time.”<sup>19</sup> This implies that the Christian God of Christianity was an inadequate, premature and not-yet-developed God; an ordinary antithesis of evolution of spirit for the true God was dialectically evolving. Summarily, it could be said that Christianity aims at destroying the strong, at breaking their spirit, at exploiting their moments of weariness and debility, at converting their proud assurance into anxiety and conscience-trouble;... it knows how to poison the noblest instincts and infect them with disease until their strength, their will to power turns inwards against themselves- until the strong perish through their excessive self-contempt and self-immolation<sup>20</sup>

For Nietzsche, the Christian ethics and morality are enemies to full expression of who man should be, and have facilitated man’s existential pitiable condition where man languishes in self-denial and un-utilization of his human potency. The only hope of survival to man is to live authentic life so as to avoid existential futility. Nietzsche finally identified the man whose ideology would produce, the man who would existentially begin to live authentically by abiding by his existentialist principles as the *Übermensch*. Trying to shed more light on this, he describes the *Übermensch* as the man who should, out of his will alone, create the values, morality that should be guiding his life having done away with the ethics stipulated by a divine being above. As he states it in his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche opines that “for the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred yes is needed: the spirit now wills his own will.” Characteristically, “such a bold individual will not be able to point to dogma or popular opinion as to why they value what they do.” Engaging himself more critically, Nietzsche has foreseen that the *Übermensch* has

not yet existed. He has also seen the rarity and difficulty in the emergence of the *Übermensch*. At this, he therefore came up with another alternation to counter nihilism, and that is ‘The Last Man’. This kind of person is a “most contemptible thing” who lives a quiet life of comfort, without thought for individuality or personal growth because: “We have discovered happiness,” say the ‘Last Men’, and they blink.”<sup>21</sup> From the dialectical stance, man must grow above the thesis (God and his imposed morality, religion and faith). At this level, man is slave moralist. Doing away with this, he comes up to the level of the ‘Last Man’ and from there proceeds to the *Übermensch*. At this, he becomes a master moralist and then lives by what he makes of himself and is convinced about.

### Sartrean Influences and concept of Authenticity

Jean Paul Sartre is one of the leading existentialists in the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> centuries. There are series of influences behind Sartre’s existentialist philosophy. From childhood, Sartre experienced from his father who was a religious man and guided by religious ethics. Religiously speaking, the Christian concept of faith and morality is the bedrock of Sartre’s existentialist philosophy. Sartre conceives religious version of morality and faith as nothing less than enslavement, incapacitation of the human being and a means to waste the capabilities inherent in the human nature. Intellectually speaking, the phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl sparked off certain philosophical motivation in Sartre, but he slightly shifted from being entirely swallowed in the Husserlian tradition and subtly twisted it to suit his existentialist pursuit. By extension, the dualistic division of the Western traditional philosophy and idealism highly influenced Sartre too. Idealism is a product of dualism where the physical or real is separated from the non-physical, or ideal. By this, essence is separated from existence and priority is bestowed on the former. To reverse this, Sartre has to reject the separation especially as postulated by Kant in his ontological argument on ‘noumena’ and ‘phenomena’. For Sartre, to be is to manifest in entirety and without any intermediary.<sup>22</sup> To do this, to be becomes identical with freedom for without freedom, an intermediary becomes necessary. Still under the same ambient, he further rejects the medievalist or scholastic concept of necessary being and contingent being. Succumbing to this position implies the stripping off the freedom of (the contingent)

<sup>19</sup> V. P. Micelle, *The Gods of Atheism* (New York: Roman Catholic Books, 1971), 22; Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans, W. Kaufmann, (New York: Random House, 1967), 689.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, (Illinois: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), 733

<sup>21</sup> “God is dead”

<sup>22</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1956), iv, ix, xxii, xxxiii

being and feebly, entirely and powerlessly submitting to the necessary being.<sup>23</sup> Creationism also falls in the same line of thought with this rejected ideology hence if there must be 'freedom stripping off' from any being, it ought to be the making of the being itself through conscious negligence to the full exploitation/utility of the inherent capability in its nature. His prominence is his existentialist struggle for human authenticity through the concept of freedom in his articulations.

Having discharged an existential situation that presents some beings as deriving their freedom from the other or a separation of the manifestation of being (essence) from the being itself, he goes on to posit consciousness as the definitive for being.<sup>24</sup> Consciousness is intrinsic and not extrinsic to the human being, and so, the manifestation of being human and adding value to the being of human is within the exercise of the human consciousness. Consciousness is an attribute of the human living, existence which is identified with freedom. To exist for Sartre, is to exercise freedom which is an inherent human value. Human existence and any possible value accrued to human existence are dependent on the manifestation, exercise of the human freedom. Thus, the existence of human being implicates the idea of human consciousness and manifestation of the human freedom, and to add value to existence depends on the level at which man realizes, out of his consciousness, that to exist is to be free and practically and existentially exercise the freedom. With this standard set, man is whole, and no factor to his existence is external to him like idealism, dualism and creationism would hold, rather to own up or not own to this standard answers the question of authenticity or inauthenticity. Sartre speaks on human reality thus:

Human reality carries nothing within itself... Man is the being through whom nothingness comes into the world... The being by whom nothingness comes into the world must be its own nothingness... Man is always separated by nothingness from his existence. The being by whom nothingness arrives in the world is a being such that in its being the nothingness of its being is in question<sup>25</sup>

To Sartre, nothingness which is a by-product of inauthenticity is not an eternal but internal existential phenomenon to man. At this juncture, authenticity becomes a necessary phenomenon applied as an option to the earlier rejected positions in Sartre's ontology. It is a central concept in the Sartrean existentialist philosophy. Unlike idealism, dualism and creationism which attribute authenticity and inauthenticity to extrinsic factors, Sartre posits that the two states of existence are products of human existence, exercise of the human consciousness

and freedom. An authentic existence (being) is a product of conscious existence, proper utility of the human freedom hence authenticity implies living responsibly and owing up to the tasks of existence. An inauthentic existence (being) is a product of human failure to realize the meaning of existence which equals to freedom and its exercise and consciously realizing that existence implies living responsibly, answerable to the conditions of life for a better life. The being-in-itself has nothing secret; it is solid (massif). In a sense we can designate it as a synthesis. But it is the most indissoluble of all; the synthesis of itself with itself. It is itself indefinitely and it exhausts itself in being.

From the interrogation of the three existential scholars above, one feature dominates: that every Western philosophy is a footstep of Plato whose philosophical root could be traced to the two strands of ideologies (idealism and empiricism) initiated by the two earlier Western thinkers: Parmenides and Heraclitus respectively. Plato also has the Tripartite Theory of the Soul which includes the appetitive, the spirited and the Logical (Rational) divisions. In the same principle he also articulated three classes of the society which include the Producers, the Auxiliaries and the Guardian respectively. Functionally, the Producers which correspond to the appetitive comprise of the farmers, artisans who produce, the Auxiliaries which correspond to the Spirited category comprise of the courageous who defend the society, while the Guardians which correspond to the Logical comprise of the Philosophers who govern the society. Since Plato's mannerism of articulation in this form, every other Western thinker has drawn a handful of influence from such pattern of articulation leading to a sort of dialecticism. This is what is seen played out in the Tripartite tradition of categorizing thoughts in the Western philosophy. This equally plays out in the categorization attempts made by some existentialists and sociologists as demonstrated above. Western is characteristically structured in dialectical order where one has to stand antithetical to the other or structured in a process that one (thesis) stands antithetical to the thesis, and another emerged in synthesis to the antithesis. This gives a sort of uniqueness and arrangement and an ease to identify lineage of influences and knowledge-gaps from predecessors to the successors and for a possible dialectical form in the Western pattern of philosophizing.

<sup>23</sup> Sartre, *Being*, xi, iii, xxxiv; Jean Paul Sartre, *La Naus* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), 182, 5

<sup>24</sup> Sartre begins his ontology in the Cartesian tradition, but unlike Descartes who attribute

the primacy of (the human) being to 'mind', Sartre attributes his own primacy to 'consciousness'

<sup>25</sup> Sartre, *Being*, 21, 23, 28, 35

## Ways through which the African Manifests Inauthenticity

It is important to note that the concept of development as meant here encompasses both human and non-human aspects. In fact, human developmental aspect is the most fundamental as the non-human aspect depends on it. Human development here entails the emergence of a new level of consciousness about self, environment and engagements, be it in the field of politics, religion, economy, socio-infrastructure development, etc. According to some scholars,<sup>26</sup> in fact, it is in human development that the reality and practicality of the idea of development come out clearly. The whole idea of existential authenticity is embedded in human development because human development goes with a certain level of self-consciousness that certainly leads to seeing existential authenticity as part of being human.

As has been noted above, inauthenticity is an existential mannerism through which man lives in self-denial and unreality of himself thereby under-utilizing his natural potency to exist meaningfully. But from the practical experience of the African today, the African is still living in the existential thesis rejected by the existentialist tradition and as analysed above. First, the African belief system appears to encourage both the first and second developmental stages in Kierkegaard and Comte, hence the African epistemological principle appears inaccessible to scientific tenets. It is a methodological epistemology that the Aristotelian hylemorphism could best describe, just as it has been described elsewhere as “practical metaphysics or physicalized or empiricized idealism or spiritualism.”<sup>27</sup> Speaking on this, Martin opines that “an African approach to knowledge seeks a spiritual cause to phenomena in the

physical world... such an approach is a mainstay in African cultures spanning from Kemet to Vodou”<sup>28</sup> and even very many other cultures and religious traditions like the Roman Catholic form of Christianity. It is a demonstrable metaphysics; an epistemological tradition that initiates from the physical but transcends to the non-physical thereby explaining the non-physical from the physical, hence, the epistemic method cannot give a holistic room for scientism as Comte and the likes would uphold. This gives an insight into why Anyanwu and Ruch maintain that “the method through which the African arrives at the trust worthy knowledge of reality (God, man, spirit, society, social facts) is intuitive and personal experiences.”<sup>29</sup> From another perspective, the consciousness of this method stands as the root and proof to the claim that the African is so religious; thus, following this effect, religious view of interpretation becomes predominant in the African life and that enhanced the ease at which foreign religions pierce into the existential marrow of the African. Till today, experience shows that the African tends towards religion for solution than he tends towards rationality and scientism; and this marks the beginning of his inauthenticity from religious perspective. Is it surprising today that every time, the African is on prayer prescription: mid-night prayers, vigils, fasting, prayer sessions, shouting to top most of his voice, incurring quickened old age and sicknesses ranging from ulcer, typhoid as a result of ‘dry fasting’ to show that he is prayerful which implies a powerful child of God. Power for the African is only by prayers and shouting halleluiah, fasting and being seen carrying religious related objects

<sup>26</sup> Joseph I. Omoregbe, *Knowing Philosophy*. Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publications Ltd. 2011. 6-22; Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu and Leo Chigozie Ozoemena, “A Critical Analysis of Ethical Issues in Students-Teachers Relationship in Nigeria,” *Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (2019d), 133-43; Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu and Leo Chigozie Ozoemena, *African Philosophy, Cultural Conceptions and Experiences: A Collection of Essays* (Mauritius-Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2019), 9-39; Hilary Chimezie Ngwoke and Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, “Promoting Innovation for Development through a Participatory-Based Pedagogy: The Freirean Model Considered,”

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<sup>27</sup> Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, “Okolo on African Personality,” *Caribbean Journal of Philosophy*, 14, no. 1, (2022), 125; Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu and George Ohabuenyi Abah, “A Discourse on the Meaning and Implications of Philosophy,” *International Journal of Humanitatis Theoreticus*, no. 5, vol. 1, 2021, 37

<sup>28</sup> Denise Martin, “African Mythic Science or Vodou Methodology,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 5, no. 4 (June 2012), 96

<sup>29</sup> K. C. Anyanwu and E. A. Ruch, *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1981), 94

like the Bible, chaplet, crucifix, etc. preaching even on the road paths. Worst of it all is that his prayer has no time-limit: he is in the church in the morning, afternoon, evening and then night to conclude it. And truly, at day break, he will also break down and slump or even begin displaying mental challenge following his spiritualism. From prayerful spiritualism to mental breakdown, the man will be talking to himself in the name of communicating in the spirit and physically conveying spiritual message. Many a times, the African is either so religious or intellectually dormant to recognize that this mental breakdown could be due to over stress of the brain and body; and unfortunately, that has led to a number of eventual or sudden deaths. Worst still, such death will be tagged 'spiritual attack', 'enemies at work, etc. During my undergraduate studies, a lady broke down due to over stress and hunger, and she was rushed to a 'prayer house' managed by her fellow prayer warrior-students instead of taking her to a medical facility. On the process, a psychologist Reverend Sister philosopher who was passing by asked what was happening, and hearing from her friends, she admonished to allow her to rest, sleep and afterwards, should be given food and some medical tablets knowing that she was suffering from over stress and hunger contrary to their usual assumption that it was 'an attack' or what is expressed in the usual Nigerian way 'village people' referring to your village enemies who want you back to village without any positive existential achievement. That prescription was followed and she quickly regained her health. This is just one out of a million experiences in Africa. The most remarkable part of this whole insanity is that the African is neither today solidly devoted to his own indigenous traditional religion nor to the foreign religions. Today religious centres are everywhere, both in open spaces, completed and uncompleted structures instead of hospitals, schools and science laboratories. The African is really crazy about religion such that with it you simply have your way through. They condemn their own religious beliefs but turn around and accept same religious principles under the cloak of 'foreign' religion. He would be told to drink sniper, chew bottle and stay under the rain and sun all through, risking being infected with pneumonia and others. However, that is not to discard entirely the effectiveness of spiritual manipulation in some cases as experience has shown in Africa. Standing on the ignorance of the possibility of interaction/tapping among vital forces in the African world, Westermann describes the African and his approach to reality as sorcerous, necromantic and superstitious.<sup>30</sup> Going extremely against this is contradictory to the method through which African thought could be approached as pointed out above.

In the yesteryears when the African took his responsibilities, he got into marriage through his

existential experience with the partner, and they both became convinced that they could live as couples, and they would then pray for both human and divine 'sustenance', not 'approval' or prophecy that's/he is your husband/wife'. Today, this self-evident courtship has been replaced with religious enquiry method where God would speak and confirm coupleship and within some years, divorce and domestic violence become the prevailing order of the partnership. Under this existential inauthenticity, partners in marriages commit marital suicide fostered by religious blindness where they are convinced by experience that the marital partnership does not rhyme, but are caged under the auspices of 'it is a product of God's approval' and God and the Scriptures preach for 'endurance' (of your marital suicide).

The concept and belief in *Akara-Aka* (predestination) is another prevailing pattern of living inauthentically by the African. This has demoralized the African that s/he now lives in the confinement of the belief that hard work or embarking on a journey through self-conviction are not enough reasons for existential survival. For many Africans today, hard work only fetches the daily bread. They believe that no matter how one suffers oneself struggling through the heat of survival attempts, that if it is not one's *Akara-Aka* (predestination), one would not succeed. But they cannot identify and differentiate what is 'predestined' and what is 'earned' or what luck (if luck really does exist) could 'drive' to their way when they struggle in life. But to see how incarcerated through such belief, when they leave the environment in which they are fed with this belief system, they see success by mere human effort manifesting from their self-determination and struggle in life. The same thing one suffers oneself doing in Africa but does not succeed and which is described as a misfire (wrong venture) into one's predestination, is what one would engage in, outside the African environment and succeeds. This belief has blindfolded the African from critically engaging some existential situations/challenges in life to ask questions regarding certain factors as to why there is success and failure surrounding his engagements in life. Questions bordering on what, how, why, where, when, to which extent of whatever he engages in, in life. At this point, they continue to die in ignorance and unrealisation of their full nature. The worst is that they would end up inculcating such belief in their children who would get stuck in religious engagements where they are trying to break the brainwashed jinx as instilled in their consciousness. Things that human rationality can solve through exposure to what is good and how it could be done for the betterment of the whole community, is what Africans starve themselves for, and commit religious suicide trying to solve. The funniest part is that even in this religious consciousness, he is still among the worst

<sup>30</sup> Diedrich Westermann, *The African Today* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 85

categorized evil, heartless and undeveloped. Comparatively, those in whose homes the infiltrated foreign religions are invented, on one hand, have upgraded the process to tourism for numerous benefits and their economy is sustained by their rationality- an expression of their potency. But Africans, the buyers of these religions, on the other, are rather using them for inhuman exploitations among themselves and their economy still developing and religiously sustained thereby epitomizing what inauthenticity could ever mean and imply. The African has failed to differentiate between 'religiosity' and 'morality' even though imbibing by morality is not a guarantee that evil will not befall him for the world is an openness where the good and the bad struggle for prevalence over men.<sup>31</sup>

Today, it cannot be denied that Africa is in a developmental stage resulting from belief crises. If Africans would follow the guide of intellectuality, and psychologically distance selves from Western religious domination, and incapacitating belief systems, they will get it all right. Religious domination which never succeeded without its first son called 'political domination' is a primary challenge to African development. Europeans came to Africa and fed Africans with beliefs and theatrical pattern of living, and then took the African practicality and demonstrative methodology where not only the physicals but non-physicals are practically approached. They fed African with an inauthentic lifestyle where they live in beliefs and total dependency on the divine for help which they could do for themselves by applying their nature of potency and authentic living. But this style of inauthentic living is more typical of Christianity than Islam which teaches Muslims the priority of action before belief, or the establishment/initiative of belief on action. Thus, whereas for Christianity, belief (theory) precedes actions (deductive prevalence), for Islam, action precedes belief (theory) (inductive prevalence). This is the bedrock of Islamic radicalism over Christianity. This explains why even in the face of death, taking Nigeria as an instance, Christians fold their hands and pray, choose to lock themselves up and then cry to divinity for help instead of embarking on actions to salvage their ugly situation. At this, evil keeps prevailing, and another version of neo-colonialism (religionization (Islamization (Fulanization or tribalization, that is, tribal dominance)) of the country) is obviously succeeding. It is with this consciousness that this paper recommends the application of existentialist tenets for salvaging not only the Nigerian, but also at

large, the African situation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of both tribal and religious domination.

Today, Africans are seen as the most religious, but unfortunately not the most moral people even when they may be conscious of that but self-unwillingness would not allow its realization. Following this ephemeral feature, Africans have turned everywhere into worship centres: open spaces, completed and uncompleted structures, even their homes, hospitals, schools, etc. It is due to this spirit of religiosity that there are more (well-furnished and luxuriously decorated, equipped with money from gullible congregants) churches than hospitals, schools and science laboratories, etc. In the African, particularly Nigerian life, this is never hidden. That explains why if every other sector— education, health, transport, etc., embarks on strike, religious centres will never, and even in that same spirit, when the church is tempered with, with such decision (strike), Africans quickly react against it and tag it, 'satanic move to scuttle and subtly hijack the body (church) of God Almighty' thereby allowing devil (the enemy) to take control, like it was the case of 'shut down' during the COVID-19 devastating era. Even when the 'church' as a body made up of some 'Christian intellectuals' came up with a way out reducing the rate of infection by stopping hand shaking and tongue-reception of the holy communion among other measures, these fanatics and 'holy art thou' would not follow such precautionary measure having been fixated to their religious dogmas. And when they become sick, they refuse going for medication but go to prayer houses and take the repetition of 'blood of Jesus' a hundred times as medication. In a critical health condition, those who claim 'deeper life' in Christ would refuse blood transfusion that it is abomination to their version of creed.

Still from this perspective, it explains why Africans struggle with the ideology that 'my own church is better than your own church', and when the heat of the argument becomes too much, a people with same religious creed would rise up and murder in cold blood people from the other belief, sometimes seeing no reason to defend this, they tag it 'blasphemy' against 'their own' God, prophet and religion. A greater percentage of what the African hustles out in life is given out (wasted) on religious affairs where miracles are projected and preached as a fundamental priority to encounter, and at the end, the brainwashed-miracle-searcher will go both physically and spiritually empty handed. Is it deniable that churches are spiritually empty and financially driven today where worldly affairs have taken the upper hand?<sup>32</sup> It is the spirit

<sup>31</sup>Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, "The African (Igbo) Concept of Akara Aka: A Philosophical Reassessment," *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 5(3) 2019, 70-80.

<sup>32</sup> Anayochukwu K. Ugwu, *A Philosophical Comparison between African Traditional Religion and Western Religions* (forthcoming)

of inauthenticity proceeding from the African religious blindness that s/he will have an examination tomorrow but sleeps in the church today praying, or even being brainwashed with the 'magic pen' or 'miracle centre' saga. The African today will either wake up to do vigil but sleep at his/her workshops, offices, business centres and schools, or leave all these for religious gathering in the church. S/he will argue that his/her scriptures stand against blood transfusion and divorce (while s/he loses a patient because of lack of blood, or even dies in marital violence). It could be summarily said that it is for Africans that the Christian scriptures say: 'many people are too lazy to even put food into their mouths'. Most Africans live in inauthenticity that they wait for the divine to come down and do everything for them, even the ones naturally made for men to do.

### Criticisms and Evaluation

A clear challenge in the existentialist philosophies is the content of elements of extremism. It is too obvious that even Nietzsche had to point out some in his own ontological argument and foresaw some limitations and was wondering if humans truly are up to the task of creating their own values, meaning in life all by themselves. This is important following the point that the despair of the death of God may give way to new meaning in their lives; for as Jean-Paul Sartre would say, "life begins on the other side of despair."<sup>33</sup> This weary became clearer in his *Twilight of the Idols*, when he recognizes a possible danger of his position: God is dead.<sup>34</sup> Nietzsche opines that many people feel the liberation in the proclamation hence the assertion that "at hearing the news that 'the old god is dead', we philosophers and 'free spirits' feel illuminated by a new dawn."<sup>35</sup> By this, a bright morning though has arrived and with the old system of morning gone, a new one is created, but this new one is not without its own peculiar risks: "ones that could bring out the worst in human nature" or "put most people at risk of despair or meaninglessness" hence the question: "What could the point of life be without a God?" Nietzsche is not without the fear that the pattern of understanding inherent in his existentialist perception of the world might lead to pessimism, "a will to nothingness" that was antithetical to the life-affirming philosophy." And it is this fear of nihilism that he in his *The Will to Power* writes about saying: "What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: the advent of nihilism... For some time now our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe." It could equally, at this point, be held against Nietzsche that he is becoming too emotional with the thesis he earlier rejected thereby falling back to it again hence the

assertion: "When one gives up the Christian faith, one pulls the right to Christian morality out from under one's feet. This morality is by no means self-evident... Christianity is a system, a whole view of things thought out together. By breaking one main concept out of it, the faith in God, one breaks the whole."<sup>36</sup> Nietzsche could be said to be committing the fallacy of *argumentum misererecordiam* for falling back to the world where God rules which will certainly lead to the universe where the religious ethics and dependency on the divine rule supreme in human affairs thereby landing human existential in-authenticity earlier rejected.

The over emphasis and identification of existence with freedom in Sartre is on one hand, a liberation of human freedom and maximum utilization of human natural capabilities, but on the other, and if not tamed, is a possible encouragement to societal disorderliness and certainly the tendency of inhumanity, inculcation of atheistic tendencies and instillation of the feeling of solipsism in human beings. Put differently that the place of pride of 'freedom' in the existentialist philosophy is very important for that is the 'nitty-gritty' of the whole message.

Generally, from the lens of existentialism, man is a being-always-in-growth. This implies that his nature is full of possibility. Man is both potency and act: potency that he always exists towards becoming; act that he has become what he is not and must grow to (another) what he is not. Suffice it to say then that in his potency lies his act and in his act lies his potency. Thus he is never a finished or fixed being whose existential manifestation never got stopped. Even success is yet a process of succeeding. He is both being and becoming as his nature and existential experiences reveal of him. From this perspective, man's existence primarily entails commitment, responsibility. That is to say that it is a process, always in struggle for self-actualization, fulfilment, and that man must own up to the outcome responsibility. By this shall the African live so as to live meaningfully. It is with and in this existential consciousness that the African would make a meaningful headway to progress. And this consciousness draws a huge influence from the existential experiences of the African for consciousness is being conscious of 'something' and 'acting(responding)' according to the 'object' of consciousness. From this, his consciousness would give rise to his own perception of existential authenticity. This would only give rise to the indigenization of knowledge and evolution of a brand of African existentialist movement and consciousness. This infuses a sort of independent impetus in the African to stand out innovatively but stand in collaboratively with other traditions of existential ideologies to make history, hence existentialist hybridism. It thus becomes a call, movement for a new African consciousness characterized by

<sup>33</sup>"God is dead"

<sup>34</sup>"God is dead"

<sup>35</sup>"God is dead"

<sup>36</sup>"God is dead"

independence and defence of the subjectivity of ideologies. With this consciousness, the African would create his own values— religiously, philosophically, ethically, artistically, aesthetically, epistemologically, metaphysically, morally, normatively, educationally, otherwise; build his own system in accordance with his own environment and experiences.

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