Jean-Paul Sartre's Authentic Existence: A Means for Peace in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This work is an expose of authentic existence as proposed by Jean-Paul Sartre, a French philosopher whose position gives way for people to live out their authentic lives without pretense or allowing themselves to be limited by any means. Through his submission, this work is able to use his position to bring out means through which a dying and fragile peace in Nigeria can be brought back to life. This work gives reasons why peace is becoming a thing of the past among the various religions, tribes, and political affiliations in the country of Nigeria. Some of the factors of disharmony and disunity include tribalism, corruption, inferiority complex and the effect of colonial rules in the minds of the people. However, with the use of the authentic existence of the African man, the ubuntu ideology of the Nigerian people will give room for peace and unity and the cooperative existence of all irrespective of tribe, religion, or political affiliation. It points out means through which peace and harmony can be restored and further gives recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Authentic existence, Peace, Bad Faith, Freedom, Choice, Responsibility, Existential Facticity

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, one of the African continents, has experienced significant development setbacks due to the activities of European imperialists in the past. The country was subjected to humiliation, exploitation, and degradation, leading to psychological trauma, imprisonment, loss of identity, and an inferiority complex. The colonial nations' motives were to milk Nigeria and the African people, but Nigeria's current state is marked by issues such as kidnapping, bribery, corruption, religious/ethnic crises, and Boko Haram. Nigerians frequently lose sight of their origins as the original, pure African people, and these problems shouldn't be attributed to the colonial powers.

African, especially Nigeria, is currently facing poverty and lack of basic amenities, with leaders not taking care of these issues. People are actually suffering in almost every African nation as they never did during the colonial era. Sartre's teachings, based on these circumstances, emphasize the importance of taking full responsibility for every choice made and living an authentic life. This work argues that Nigerians, both leaders and the led, must work together to improve their lives and take responsibility for their actions and liberation. By transcending the past and becoming actors in the existential stage, Nigerians can authenticate and actualize their Being, living peacefully with one another.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES/ METHODOLOGY:

The method of data collection in this research will be based on interviews. Research interviews will be set out to inquire from certain people what is needed to achieve peace and unity again in Nigeria which has been divided by ethnicity, banditry, religious disunity, killings, kidnapping, Fulani herdsmen, et cetera. This methodology makes it easier to hear from the people what and how peace and love could be achieved. Our data will be basically on the information obtained from the people during the interviews to be conducted in the course of the research.

RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

Rev. Fr. Dr. Ugochukwu Ngana (2023) believes that using Sartre's position of authenticity of life can help salvage Nigeria's current situation. He believes that Nigerians have lost the values of their 'ubuntu philosophy' from 1940-70, leading to a nation of harmony and peace. However, the unimaginable began to creep into the country in the 1970s, resulting in civil unrest. To bring back unity, peace, and collective progress, Ngana believes that the application of justice, removal of bad leadership, and election of competent and qualified candidates with verifiable track records can bring back unity, peace, and collective progress. He also emphasizes that all sections and tribes should be treated equally, treating them as equal citizens. To eliminate insecurity, banditry, Fulani herdsmen killings, and Boko haram, Ngana suggests that the government should value the lives of its citizens, tackle military corruption, and create jobs for unemployed youths. This will help reduce criminality, banditry, and kidnapping, as many youths are unemployed and resort to criminal activities for survival. By engaging these youths in work, these evils will be reduced, promoting a more harmonious and prosperous Nigeria.

Mr. Richard Afoenyem (2023), an army officer during the Biafran/Nigerian civil war between 1967-70, believed that Nigeria could not be one and will never have peace and harmony. He believed that Nigeria's history of British greed and colonialism led to the amalgamation of three countries, the Igbos, Hausa, and Yoruba, into one entity called Nigeria. Before the amalgamation, Nigeria had various countries operating independently, but after the amalgamation, there was political unrest and injustice. Afoenyem believed that the northern part of Nigeria saw themselves as the owners of the country, leading to unfairness in the country. He argued that the northern candidates for university admission and mineral resource sharing were not equal, and the majority of Nigeria's revenue came from Igbo land. Afoenyem argued that peace can still be achieved through justice and equity in land distributions and that the Igbos should be considered the major key players in the country. This inclusiveness would automatically end banditry, kidnappings, and other social vices that kept the country at a standstill.

Mr. Echezona Ekengwu (2023), a lecturer at Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra state Nigeria, believes that peace can only return in Nigeria when a true federal system of government is implemented. This system would allow states to have control over police and other forces to protect their localities and ensure the security of lives and properties. Ekengwu also believes that Nigeria's situation is influenced by incompetence in government elections, as seen in the February 2023 election where the Labour Party presidential candidate won, but the unneutral umpire sided with the ruling party. He believes that achieving these goals is crucial for securing lives and a better future for Nigerians who value their livelihoods.

AUTHENTIC EXISTENCE BY JEAN PAUL SARTRE

Sartre's philosophy erupted as a result of the dissatisfaction with the traditional belief which holds that 'free will' is an illusion and that everything that happens, including all the things

people do or say is causally and logically determined a priori. But Sartre maintained that 'free will' is an intrinsic and necessary feature of the human condition. It is a feature that is directly implied by the very nature of consciousness as being in itself. As such, it is not determined. He maintained that man is totally free and responsible for his actions as such, he is not determined in any manner. All his actions evolved around the choices he made. For him, man is what he makes of himself, man is condemned to be free.

When Jean-Paul Sartre (1996) used the phrase "bad faith" it was to refer to any sort of self-deception that denied the existence of human freedom. Bad faith according to Patrick Ezechukwu (2022) is an outward sign of an inauthentic life. The inauthentic individual always assumes that all his life activities are necessitated by an imminent power, deterministic necessity or the gene of heredity and abdicates his absolute responsibility allowing himself to be drafted along with the world. Sartre thinks that having bad faith makes people choose certain decisions that they should not have ordinarily chosen since a man to deliberately chose inferiority, he does so by the effect of 'bad faith' prompted by the spontaneous consciousness realized in the end pursued by the will and the end obtained.

(a) **Freedom and authenticity**: Sartre's propositions emphasize the importance of freedom and authenticity in our being. He believes that man is free because he is not himself but presence to himself, and that freedom is the nothingness that forces human reality to make itself instead of being. He links freedom and consciousness by placing them in the very being of man, stating that since man has nothingness that can make him other than what he is, he must be limitlessly free in his actions. Jean-Paul Sartre (1962) emphasizes that the indispensable and fundamental condition of all action is the freedom of the acting being. This being-for-itself, which Sartre called man, is contingent but essentially free, and it is a necessary condition of its existence that it is not free to cease being free. He states that man cannot be both slave and free; he is wholly and forever free or he is not free at all.

Sartre argues that freedom lies in our hands rather than determining what we would like to be. He believes that man cannot change his present situation, as it is common in our race or acquired during childhood. Therefore, we are what we make of ourselves, choosing what we want to be through 'free choice'. People make themselves through a series of choices and decisions, converting their existence into the essence of their final self. In summary, Sartre's propositions emphasize the importance of freedom and authenticity in our being. He emphasizes that freedom lies in our hands and that we are what we make of ourselves through choices and decisions.

(b) **Existential Facticity**: Facticity, defined by Sartre (1996) in 'Being and Nothingness,' is a concept that highlights the limiting factors that affect the existence of things. It includes factors such as place, body, past, position, sex, background, and fundamental relationships with others. Sartre argues that humans are made by various factors, including climate, earth, race, class, language, history, heredity, childhood circumstances, and acquired habits. However, facticity can be a 'bad faith', as it neglects the potential for transcendence that is inherent in humans, allowing them to change and choose. Sartre argues that everything that happens to us is always human and equal to us and that there cannot be any determined situation in human existence. Although this facticity constitutes a barrier against actualizing our authentic self, it can be surpassed.

NIGERIAN SITUATION AND THE AUTHENTIC EXISTENCE OF SARTRE COMPARED.

(a) **Explications of the Nigerian Problem**

Nigerians were initially subjected to colonial rule, where they were subjected to humiliation, exploitation, and degradation. The colonial masters worked for the interests of their country's origin, and it was a difficult process to let go. However, Nigerians were liberated and freed from their colonial lords, but freedom requires transcending one's past. Nigerians are now concerned about their past, as they can and should transcend their past. The country is divided by violence, corruption, political assassinations, religious and ethnic crises, and social vices. Chinua Achebe (1983) argues that Nigerians are not corrupt because their current system makes corruption easy and profitable. The 2023 election could determine the future of Nigeria, with many people prioritizing the candidate's tribe and religion over a competent candidate. This attitude does not foster peace and demonstrates the inauthentic living of the Nigerian people, as Sartre emphasized. Blaming white men for their motives to milk the continent of Africans will not yield any fruit. Healing these self-inflicted wounds will lead to peace for both leaders and the entire population of the country.

(b) **Ambivalence of Islam and Christianity to Constitutional Secularity**

The Nigerian people today are divided along religion, primarily between Christianity and Muslims. This division cannot guarantee unity and peace in a nation, as the modern state prides itself on being secular and not a theocracy. The modern state must be unbiased and morally equal, and no religion may enjoy a privileged position. The state constitution, which is regarded as continually binding on and directing residents, applies to every human institution and individual. A good citizen respects and submits to the state's constitution's sovereignty, without regard to one's religion.

The underlying ambiguity of post-colonial Islam is forcefully brought up by an Egyptian Muslim scholar named Nasr Abû Zayd (2004), who questions whether it is possible to be both "good citizens" and "good Muslims." The bane of Nigerian peace is a lack of understanding or respect for constitutional secularity and its implications for religious activity and its bounds (Olusesan Raymond 2016). The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) released a statement in April 2014 on the interaction of state and religion in Nigeria, challenging the widespread belief that Nigeria's constitution is secular. The bishops submitted that the problem relies on how to reconcile two conflicting principles, both enshrined in Nigeria's constitution: that Nigeria is 'one nation under God' and that there shall be no state religion in Nigeria, either on the Federal or State level (art. 10 of our constitution).

This under-appreciation of Nigeria's secularity is the root cause of numerous incidents of religious violence and strife in different regions of the country. The root of religious disputes in the southern region of Nigeria is a struggle to balance the freedom of the individual with the demands of the prevailing civilization (religion, culture). Conflicts between tradition and personal integrity are unavoidable when the constitutional guarantee of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is not respected. If these growing religious tensions are curbed by the authorities, there will be no conflicts, disunity, and chaos between these two major religions in Nigeria, Christianity, and Islam. Religious bigotry by Muslims led to the death of Miss Deborah Samuel Yakubu, a second-year college student killed by a mob of Muslim students in Sokoto state, Nigeria, on 12th May 2022.

Creative imagination is required to combat chronic human rights violations and the culture of impunity. Stakeholders and crucial members of civil society must aggressively oppose actions against justice and peace. This is particularly true if the lawfully in power, but irresponsible

administration conceals its culture of impunity under arguments for "sovereignty" and "national interest."

(c) Corruption

Nigeria's corruption is a significant issue that hinders the development of the nation. The country is plagued by corrupt leaders who embezzle public funds for community development without arrest or prosecution. This has led to embittered youths and caused problems. Corruption has contributed to the poverty and misery of a large segment of the Nigerian population. Examples of such corruption are found in various sectors such as offices, police extortion, and public embezzlement. Chinua Achebe (1983) states that corruption in Nigeria has reached a fatal stage, and Nigerians must continue to pretend they are only slightly indisposed. Even those caught in the act of corruption and bribery have not been questioned or detained. This demonstrates how Nigeria's system allows for anything to take effect without being questioned.

More than their colonial overlords, Nigerian leaders have demonstrated their incapacity and ulterior purposes. The system under which they live make it easier for corruption to creep into every corner of the nation. The issue is not that Nigerians lack the necessary skills; rather, it is that their objectives and beliefs are flawed. Flavored affluence is a popular but unfortunate index of good life in Africa, which allows for public embezzlement and lack of accountability. Corruption serves as a blockage to man's total development and self-realization, as outlined in Sartre's philosophy. This deprives the poor masses of the opportunity to act on their initiative and responsibility, limiting their living conditions worthy of human freedom. When the leaders of the country are corrupt, what do you expect from their citizens? Corruption does not allow for peace and harmony to reign in a society. Youths are used to destabilize the peace of nations by corrupt leaders who have used public funds for their private use.

(d) Tribalism

Tribalism is a significant issue in Nigeria's development, exposing citizens to unfair treatment and social injustice. Promotion and employment are often based on tribes and "godfatherism," resulting in job mismatches and a lack of merit. This denial of merit can harm not only individuals but society as a whole. The motive for this denial may be tribal discrimination, sex prejudice, political, religious, ethnic, or corruption and bribery. To truly develop Nigeria, Nigerians must transcend the level of voting solely for those from one's tribe and culture and forget the capabilities of opponents. The national election in Nigeria on February 25th, 2023, showed that many people prioritized tribe and religion over competence, causing stunting and undemocratic

(e) Inferiority Complex

Neo-colonialism, a form of imperialism, has led to a loss of confidence in one's capabilities and a belief in foreign goods as superior to their own (Kwame Nkrumah, 1966). This has led to a loss of appreciation for locally made goods and a desire for Europe and Americans to supply all their needs. This inferiority, as described by Sartre, has led to a decline in dignity and progress in Nigeria. Some individuals who seek improvement programs are often weighed down by those around them, hindering their true self-authenticity and realization of their being-for-itself. This inauthenticity can lead to a tragic outcome, as the initial zeal has been killed by the inauthentic Nigerian person. Sartre's concept of being who one is made of is essential for living an authentic life. However, Nigerians seem to have adopted an inferiority complex over an authentic life, leading to a life that is not theirs, hindering peace and progress.

SARTREAN SOLUTIONS AND SOME OTHER PERSPECTIVES

The Nigerian predicament is a complex issue that requires a solution that can be solved by embracing the philosophy of Sartre. J. F. Kennedy (www.Thinkexist.com) believed that every problem created by humans has a human solution, indicating that all hopes are not lost. This work aims to use the philosophy of Sartre to propose solutions for the liberation of Nigerian minds from colonialism and inferiority complex, allowing them to live authentic African lives. Sartre emphasized that human freedom is inseparable from God, nature, society, and the past and that Nigerians should forget the negative influences of the past and use it for personal growth. They should work out for value and efficiency, as an act causes value to emerge, making most problems surmountable.

To avoid the negative effects of the inferiority complex, Nigerians should work out for value and efficiency, encouraging locally-made goods and commodities. They can also solve their problems by becoming enquirers themselves, engaging in dialogue with philosophers, learned individuals, and youths to curb the chaos and killings that have ravaged the country. Nigeria needs peace more than ever, as the country is divided by ethnicity, religion, and political affiliations. Nigerians should be careful in selecting leaders, considering their competency, regardless of tribe, state of origin, or party. Discrimination, ethnicity, tribalism, corruption, and poverty are closely related to the people's ability to secure employment and earn a living. The government should engage in social policies to spur economic growth and provide opportunities for the transcendence of facticity and bad faith, ultimately leading to the liberation of the mind and self-actualization of the African person.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Sartre's philosophy of freedom, choice, and responsibility is a call for self-assessment and realization among the Nigerian people. He believes that man is completely free from hindrance and infringement and that he is responsible for everything he does. Life is a life of choice and alternatives, and an authentic life is one where individuals are fully aware of their free choice and assume full responsibility for it. However, Sartre's notion of freedom has some loopholes, such as treating freedom as limitless. He also emphasized that freedom goes with responsibility, limiting the absolute free act of man. Furthermore, Sartre cannot neglect the effect of facticity and experience on freedom, as they limit it to a great deal.

In conclusion, Sartre's philosophy of freedom, choice, and responsibility calls for self-assessment and realization among the Nigerian people. He argued that rules and moral guides can limit potential and determine actions, but he failed to acknowledge that each society has its principles that guide people's way of life, including cultures and traditions. Society plays a greater role in shaping the human person, and Sartre's argument that we should not be regulated by pre-existing rules but instead create our own rules and values would cause chaos in society.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS RESEARCH

Sartre, an existential philosopher, believed that existence precedes the essence of things, and everything comes from us. He believed that we are free and live in freedom and that facticity and the past are human situations that we can overcome. Nigeria's current situation is not solely due to European influence, as African rulers and chiefs have taken control of captives and negotiated with buyers (Obi Oguejiofor, 2001). Blaming Europeans for Nigeria's problems is not effective, as Nigerians must work within themselves and tell themselves the truth. Nigeria's leaders are thorns to Nigerians flesh, with a focus on family and close friends. Corruption is increasing, and the country's democracy is theoretical. The tragic situation in Nigeria is due to

the mismanagement of natural resources and corruption by leaders who forgot that independence is not an end in itself but a means to attain other ends. The Nigerian government's efforts to improve the country have been criticized for being inefficient, with criminals and corruption taking control. The country's infrastructure and hospitals are in poor shape, and the government's lack of leadership is a major issue. Sartre believes that man is an open possibility, and we can achieve our goals if we find leaders who possess the will, ability, and vision. Both leaders and the masses should play their roles in living in harmony, focusing on the future and the potential for change. The task of planning harmony and a peaceful society lies with the leaders, and the electoral processes should be checked based on the competency of individual programs of activities. Sartre emphasizes the importance of avoiding negative influences from the past and embracing our authentic selves. Nigerians should reject habits that hinder their aspirations and chances of becoming a modern and attractive country. By adopting positive approaches, we can actualize our true destiny and free ourselves from the indelible mark of our past and the facticity of life.

RECOMMANDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Jean-Paul Sartre through his authentic existence has enlightened us about being who we are and the power of maintaining our identity. Having x-rayed his position and given some insight through which Nigerians can become more authentic to themselves, the work recommends that future research should center on the reason why Nigerian people kept blaming the colonial masters of the massive failures that is witnessed in the country today.

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