

AKINPELU'S POSTULATIONS ON EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AND RESOLVING HUMAN PREDICAMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a reconstructive study of Akinpelu's postulations on education and implications for social change and resolving human predicaments in contemporary Nigeria. It begins by defining the key concepts that underlie the study, namely: existentialism, social change, human predicaments, freedom, authenticity and inauthenticity. The paper reveals that the contemporary Nigerian socio-economic and political milieu portrays a dysfunctional system. This scenario is characterized by such existential predicaments as corruption, poverty, banditry, diseases, kidnappings and conflicts, among other absurdities. Against the background of this gloomy narrative, the work recognizes that the educational philosophy of Jones Akinpelu might be the panacea needed if the county must halt the speed with which she is plunging towards a state of anarchy. The central argument of the paper is that, for Akinpelu, the educand is an autonomous being who is capable of taking decisions that have the tendency of positively impacting his/her life and social milieu. So, it is the responsibility of the school and the classroom teacher to provide an enabling learning environment that will help the individual learner to fully maximize his/her potentials. According to Akinpelu, if the school is able to effectively carry out this task; then, the contradictions which characterize contemporary Nigeria will gradually dissipate. The paper adopts the hermeneutic narrative methodology.

Key concepts: Existentialism, social change, human predicaments, freedom, authenticity, inauthenticity.

Introduction

The Contemporary Nigerian socio-economic and political milieu portrays a dysfunctional system. This scenario is characterized by such existential predicaments as political oppression, corruption, poverty, kidnappings, banditry and ethnic rivalries among “non-indigenes” and “host communities.”¹ According to Warnock, these deplorable conditions are basically due to human factors, viz.: limited knowledge, limited resources, and limited rationality.² For Oguejiofor, the reality of these ugly tendencies come out most clearly when Nigeria is compared with some other countries in Europe and America.³ Consequently, one gets the impression that the country is gradually tilting towards the Hobbesian state of nature.

Against the background of this gloomy narrative, this paper recognizes that the educational philosophy of Jones Adelayo Akinpelu (1936 - 2010) may be the panacea needed if the country must halt the speed with which she is plunging towards a state of anarchy. The central theme of Akinpelu's existential philosophy of education is that the human person is an autonomous being (i.e., a self-determining entity) who is capable of taking decisions that have the proclivity of positively impacting his/her social milieu.⁴ So, it is the responsibility of the school and the classroom teacher to provide an enabling environment that will help the individual learner to fully maximize his/her potentials. If the school is able to do this; then, the absurdities and contradictions which characterize the contemporary Nigerian society will gradually dissipate.

Like our previous works⁵, the methodology of this present paper is the hermeneutic-narrative discourse. This is a technique which combines critical reflection, detailed analysis and constructive interpretation. In adopting this philosophical research methodology, we foraged for useful materials from the writings of Jones Akinpelu and other scholars. We systematically recreated and re-organised these texts to suit the subject matter of our discourse.

Consequently, the paper is divided into six major sections. Section one is clarification of concepts. It is followed by section two wherein we examine Akinpelu's ontological notion of the human person. This section provides a foundation for the next section, Akinpelu's postulations on education. While section four looks at the implications of this 21st century African philosopher's thoughts for social change and resolving human predicaments in contemporary Nigeria, section five is a critique of his genre of existentialist philosophy of education. The last section of the paper concludes our discourse.

Clarification of Concepts

Six concepts are central to this paper. There is a need to define these concepts if justice must be done to this discourse. The concepts are: existentialism, social change, human predicaments, freedom, authenticity and inauthenticity. These concepts will now be examined, beginning with existentialism.

Definition of Existentialism

Existentialism is a 20th century Continental European philosophical movement which had its origin in the writings of Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher and theologian. In contrast with Hegelianism which conceives the human person as basically abstract, existentialism perceives man as a concrete entity - a thinking, feeling and acting individual.⁶ Prominent among the earliest members of this radical movement include: Nietzsche, Buber, Marcel, Heidegger and Sartre. Its contemporary African disciples are: Omoregbe, Ogundowole, Unah, Olajide, and Akinpelu, among others.

Existentialism is philosophy of existence. For the existentialists, to exist is to be actively involved in the affairs of one's life. Particularly, for Omoregbe, it means to be personally committed to a freely chosen way of life and be morally responsible for one's life choices.⁷ A

popular slogan of this continental philosophical movement is “existence precedes essence”, an epithet which runs contrary to Plato’s dictum, “essence precedes existence”. For Sartre, what the former maxim (i.e., existence precedes essence) means is that the self exists before it eventually discovers its purpose in life. According to him, it is man who creates his own essence (or nature). The *leit motif* of this Sartrean argument is to defend human freedom, the platform upon which existentialism dovetails. This leads to the next concept, social change.

What is Social Change?

According to Dubey, Edem and Thakur, social change may be defined as “a process wherein the patterned network of rules or institutions are modified, readjusted or radically transformed to produce new sets of guideline for social behavior and structure”.⁸ Closely related to this definition is that of Nwabueze. He says social change is a state of rapid modifications and alterations.⁹ For Kobiowu, it is a modification of attitudes, values and organizations. True to the fact, he (i.e., Kobiowu) opines that social change leads to giving up one set of attitudes and values for another.¹⁰

As a sociological concept, social change may take the form of a gradual modification (i.e., evolution) as exemplified in the thoughts of Comte, Durkheim, Parsons and Nyerere or sudden modification (i.e., revolution) as captured in the works of Marx and Gramsci. In addition, it may be planned or unplanned as enunciated by Weber and Kobiowu. Furthermore, it may either be “backward” (i.e., retrogressive) or “forward” (i.e., progressive) as expostulated by Ogundowole. One may equally recognize endogenously or exogenously initiated change as pointed out by Odetola and Ademola.¹¹ A detailed analysis of these conceptual vagaries is outside the scope of this work. However, in the context of our present discourse, the notion of social change putatively represents, to use the phraseology of Ogundowole, “an upward-thrust motion along an optimal trajectory”. Stated in another way, it is a process of development which influences the social being in a positive upward direction. Akinpelu’s perception of the concept aligns with this position. The third concept for analysis is human predicaments.

Meaning of Human Predicaments

Human predicaments refer to paradoxes, contradictions or negative tendencies which make existence precarious, grotesque and incomprehensible.¹² These absurdities take such forms as poverty, corruption, oppression, rape, violence, kidnappings, conflicts and wars. For Akinpelu, these are dilemmas of life.¹³

These dysfunctional and deplorable conditions alienate the individual. Although they are basically moral evils, sometimes the individual discovers that they impose limitations that he/she cannot overcome. He/she is helpless and listless. According to Sartre, Unamuno and Omoregbe, these absurdities fecundate further absurdities: Misery, fears, worries, anxieties, brevity of life, unpredictability of the future and inevitability of death.¹⁴ For Heidegger, the individual is a victim of these circumstances.¹⁵ They characterize his existence - a facticity over which he/she has no control.¹⁶ This leads to the concept of freedom.

Definition of Freedom

Etymologically, freedom comes from the Latin expression “*liberum arbitrium*”, meaning “freewill” or “free-choice-decision”.¹⁷ According to Brugger and Baker, “it is the state of not being ‘forced or determined by something external, in-so-far as it is joined to a definite internal faculty of self-determinism.”¹⁸ For Ezeanyino, it is the “...absence of coercion in performing or not performing any actions that enhance man’s self-determination”.¹⁹ On his own part, Bagudo avers that freedom is the process of acting on one’s initiative. *Eo ipso*, it is the ability to make a choice.²⁰

According to Akinpelu, freedom is an ontological aspect of man.²¹ Battista Mondin agrees with him. He says it is a fundamental property of the human person.²² Like Sartre, Akinpelu contends that “man cannot but choose because he is condemned to freedom, condemned to make himself into what he wills, into what he consciously decides he wants to be.”²³

Within the context of this paper, therefore, “freedom” overlaps and may be used interchangeably with “autonomy”,²⁴ “independence”²⁵ and “liberty”²⁶. Thus, our definition of the concept (i.e., freedom) captures Ezeanyino’s two senses of the term, viz.: “freedom for something” (i.e., freedom to make a choice) and “freedom from something” (i.e., liberation from bondage of whatever sort).²⁷ The penultimate term under clarification of concept is authenticity.

What is Authenticity?

Authenticity is an ontological state of conscious existence. It incorporates the freedom to make a choice and being morally responsible for one’s decisions or actions. For Sartre, authenticity is achieved when the human person performs actions, not merely because society approves of them, not merely because they agree with some universal moral norms, but because they are necessary for his survival and existence.²⁸

According to Akinpelu, an authentic life is a life of originality, a life of self- determination. It means to be in “good faith”. *Eo ipso*, to be true to oneself.²⁹ Unah expands the frontier of this discussion. He says an authentic self “...is the self that determines itself spontaneously, a self that acts out of deep personal convictions, a self that owns itself, a self that says yes and means yes”.³⁰ A reverse of this is an inauthentic self. So, what is inauthenticity?

Definition of Inauthenticity

This is a mode of existence whereby the human person is subjected to the whims and caprices of the crowd.³¹ From the existentialist perspective, an inauthentic life is a fake life, a life of pretence, a life of artificiality. For Akinpelu, it means to be in “bad faith”. *Eo ipso*, to be false to oneself.³²

According to Azenabor, an inauthentic person puts him/herself under the control of other people so that he/she is no more responsible for his/her own way of life.³³ Unah corroborates this view. He says ‘the inauthentic or unauthentic self is the self that abandons itself, a self that forgets itself. It is the self that invents several devices to shirk responsibility.’³⁴ Having examined the six concepts that underlie this paper, let us proceed to the next aspect of our discourse.

A short profile of Jones Akinpelu

Jones Akinpelu is a 20th century African Philosopher. He was born in Igbo-Elerin, a sub-urban settlement in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo state, Nigeria, on November 8, 1936. He had his undergraduate Studies at the University College, Ibadan and obtained the B.A.(Honours) degree in Latin. His masters degree in Classics was from London University in 1963. He got his Ph.D in Philosophy of Education from Columbia University, New York City in 1970. Akinpelu spent a significant portion of his academic career teaching in the Department of Adult Education at the University of Ibadan. After his retirement in 1996, he moved to the University of Botswana, Gaborone where he became Director of the Center for Continuing Education until 1999. He was appointed Emeritus professor in the Department of Adult Education at the University of Ibadan in 2001. Akinpelu is considered as one of the fathers of philosophy of education and andragogy in contemporary Africa. He died in 2010. Akinpelu was influenced by the writings of contemporary European existentialists like Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre and Maxine Greene. How does he conceive the human person?

Akinpelu's Ontological Notion of the Human Person

Akinpelu conceives the human person as an autonomous being (i.e., a self-determining entity). For him, the individual is essentially free.³⁵ Like Sartre, he postulates “that man is free, is a brutal fact, an ontological fact. Man cannot but choose because he is condemned to freedom, condemned to make himself into what he wills, into what he consciously decides he wants to be.”³⁶

In addition, he opines that man is “an open possibility.”³⁷ This means that the individual is capable of attaining any height in life. It means that no situation, circumstance, person or thing can hinder the individual from realizing his/her full potentials, except him/herself. He contends that by refusing to make a decision, the individual is indirectly making a choice. For, no one can exist without making a choice. Simply put, the individual is a choice maker.³⁸

Against the background of the above discussion, Akinpelu argues that the individual has a unique personality which is not duplicated in any other person.³⁹

As a free and self-determining entity, this 21st century African existentialist avers that the human person is morally responsible for the consequences of his/her decisions, choices or actions.⁴⁰ For Akinpelu, one lives an authentic life when one is true to one's conscience (i.e., when one is true to one's true self). *Mutatis mutandis*, the human person is true to him/herself when he/she makes a choice “...after taking into considerations all possible factors - including the consequences...”⁴¹

Akinpelu postulates that the human person is a being-in-the-world (i.e., a being-in-reality) and a being-with-others (i.e., a being-in-relation). Simply put, the individual interacts with the material world and also with other human beings in the social environment. So, he/she (i.e., the individual) is open to social influences, including social change. *Eo ipso*, man is a “social animal”⁴². Specifically for Ogunyemi, Akinpelu opines that the individual, by his/her communalistic nature, is in a vortex of relationships.⁴³ *Quid pro quo*, the individual (i.e., the African) is first and foremost a member of his/her nuclear family, the extended family, the community, and his/her society in that order before being an individual.

In spite of this ethnographic position, Akinpelu believes that the individual has a right to be different from others. However, unlike Sartre, his philosophical ontology is theistic in nature. In fact, according to Akinpelu, he is a Christian and a theistic humanist.⁴⁴ This is particularly so if one considers his theological argument that life is the greatest gift from the creator.⁴⁵ This proposition underscores the divine origin of human life. How does Akinpelu's postulations on education synchronize the above thoughts?

Akinpelu's Postulations on Education

Akinpelu's postulations on education have their foundation on his ontology of the human person. Against the background of this consideration, he conceives education as a sociological process whereby an individual acquires knowledge, skills and other set of abilities which make him/her useful to him/herself and the society. This definition shares similitude with that of Fafunwa.⁴⁶ This is how Akinpelu puts it, “education is the equipping of individuals with knowledge and other worthwhile skills and attitudes for the business of living.”⁴⁷ It incorporates all organized and relatively organized efforts aimed at total personality development of the individual.⁴⁸

From an existentialist perspective, Akinpelu opines that the business of education is not to produce citizens who merely act in conformity with the social order. Rather, the individual has the right, if it becomes necessary, to decide against the norms of the society, or against the majority.⁴⁹ According to him, the centrifugality of education is knowledge. And, like

Whitehead, he postulates that knowledge must be useful for living in all its ramifications.⁵⁰

Based on this argument, it is evident that Akinpelu's notion of education incorporates the sub-systems of formal, non-formal and informal education.⁵¹ He avers that there should be integration between formal and non-formal subsystems of education through the Distance Learning System (DLS).⁵² The reason for this is to enable products of non-formal education (i.e., Technical and Vocational Education Programmes) gain access to the university system in furtherance of their academic development. For Akinpelu, the agencies of education are the school, the home, the extended family, the peer-group, the mass-media, religious bodies and significant others in the community.⁵³

In the light of the above discussion, it is peremptory to contend that Akinpelu recognizes four major aims of education. Prominent among these is character development. According to him, an individual may not be referred to as an educated person if he/she has all other qualities and dispositions but lacks good character (*iwa rere*). For him, "good character is of the utmost importance; a man without it, however otherwise distinguished, is only a carved wooden doll...." So, like Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Kant, Akinpelu avers that it is the duty of the formal school system to inculcate moral values in the learner.⁵⁴ According to him, some of the values that education should inculcate in learners include: democratic culture, honesty, warm community relations, hardwork, hospitality, tolerance, cleanliness, justice, impartiality, truthfulness, respect and consideration for the interests of others.⁵⁵

The second aim of education is the intellectual development of the individual. He postulates that the product of the educational system should 'possess some body of knowledge or skill in a narrow specialized area, but more still a broad-based general knowledge'.⁵⁶ *Quid pro quo*, education should enlarge the mind and the outlook of learners. It should promote the cultivation of intelligent perception and insight. It should make possible the deepening of their (i.e., learners') scholarly and intellectual commitment⁵⁷. And, like Alfred North Whitehead, he reiterates, the knowledge acquired must be useful for living in all ramifications.⁵⁸

The third aim of education is to make the individual a better citizen. This requires exposing a learner to themes in civic or citizenship education. As a legal member of a state or country, a learner should be informed about his/her rights and obligations. According to Akinpelu, some of these prerogatives are: right to life and dignity of person; right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; participation in democratic activities; obedience to rule of law; voting during elections; and payment of taxes, among others.⁵⁹ In return, the state is expected to protect the citizen and ensure his/her welfare.

The fourth major aim of education is to lead a learner towards self-discovery and self-realization. The learner should see him/herself as a unique and conscious being who is free to make a choice; and who should be fully responsible for the consequences of his/her actions.⁶⁰ In his characteristic manner, Akinpelu quips "...education is to help him develop his initiative, to help him search for and discover himself, and to cultivate self-reliance as a key character trait."⁶¹ For him (i.e., Akinpelu), the end-in-view of all forms of education is social change.

Akinpelu divides the school system into three major categories, viz.: primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. Like Awolowo⁶² and Ogundowole,⁶³ he avers that the curriculum of primary or basic education should incorporate such subjects as literacy, numeracy, elementary science, civics and social studies, health and physical education, moral and religious education, domestic science, agriculture, creative arts, music and one Nigerian language. He moots that the six years of primary education should be for permanent literacy.⁶⁴

In addition to the above, he opines that the curriculum of secondary school (i.e., three years for Junior Secondary School and three years for Senior Secondary School) should be broad-based.

Particularly, he postulates that the junior secondary curriculum should incorporate such core subjects as Mathematics, English Language, Basic Science and Technology, Religion, Cultural and Creative Arts, Business Studies and one Nigerian Language; and such prevocational subjects as Home Economics and Agriculture. Concerning the Senior Secondary School, he contends that the curriculum should have a core of basic subjects for everybody, but there should be concurrent streaming into a number of employment and academic oriented options. “These are the agricultural, the technological, the commercial, the arts and crafts, the teacher education, the scientific and the liberal arts and social science streams.”⁶⁵ He asserts that the above traditional ‘academic subjects should be taught along with such socially generated curricular packages as population and family education, sex education, drug education, security education, and moral and religious education.⁶⁶

Akinpelu does not think that students who do not have the academic acumen should be allowed to proceed to Senior Secondary School (SSS) after Junior Secondary School (JSS). He believes that at least forty percent (i.e., 40%) of students in JSS should be able to gain admission into SSS in continuation of their academic programme while the remaining sixty percent (i.e., 60%) should be absorbed into different vocational, crafts and technical non-formal education and training agencies in collaboration with the National Directorate of Employment NDE.⁶⁷

He advocates that the funding of primary and junior secondary education should be the responsibility of the government.⁶⁸ This is because education is a social service which a government owes its citizens. For him, both primary and junior secondary education should be free, universal and compulsory. Like Plato and Aristotle, he does not discriminate against any learner on the basis of gender. He believes everyone should be given equal attention and opportunity.⁶⁹

Akinpelu declares that the curriculum of tertiary or higher education (i.e., Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Universities) should be specialized. Eo ipso, it should prepare learners for professionalism in various areas of endeavour. He avers that parents should be responsible for funding senior secondary school and higher education. This is because, for him, higher education is expensive and may not be universally available or completely free at any time.⁷⁰

Due to its strong emphasis on liberty (i.e., freedom of opinion, of worship, of taking initiative, and of experimenting), Akinpelu’s philosophy of education is existentialist in orientation. Consequently, like other existentialists such as Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Jasper and Ogundowole, he recommends such methods of teaching as discussion, Socratic method, activity-based, excursion, fieldtrip, learning by discovery, role-playing, drama and play-way. For him, the contemporary classroom teacher should be guided by the Yoruba proverb, “ibi a gbe nserere. ko le jo ibi a gbe nj’ore” (an amiable learning environment where learners interact freely is not same with one where learners are caned).⁷¹ The question that comes to mind at this juncture is: what does Akinpelu’s philosophy of education portend for contemporary Nigeria?

Implications of Akinpelu’s Postulations on Education for Social Change and Resolving Human Predicaments in Contemporary Nigeria

Firstly, Akinpelu’s postulations on education reveal that the school is expected to provide an educational experience that will solve socio-economic and political problems of our time and make the world a better place to live. On the strength of this proposition, one believes that the ability to acquire new values and attitude will create in the educand (i.e., the learner) a receptive disposition for social change. Eo ipso, “an upward-thrust motion along an optimal trajectory”.⁷²

Secondly, this existential philosophy of education opens up a vista of hope for the

contemporary classroom teacher. It invites him/her to see him/herself as in *loco parentis*. Put in another way, the teacher is expected to bring him/herself as close as possible to the position of a parent within the classroom. This is akin to what Buber refers to as the "I-Thou relationship"⁷³. In this doing, the classroom teacher is inspired to cultivate an optimistic attitude and tailor his/her teaching to suit the peculiarity of each pupil. His/her ultimate aim is to make the learner discover his/her potentials, explore these potentials and develop them to the fullest.⁷⁴

Thirdly, in contributing towards the learner's realization of his/her authentic self, the school and the teacher are expected to make the classroom environment conducive and learner-friendly. *Eo ipso*, the teaching and learning environment should be tolerant, permissive and devoid of fear or threat. This can be done when teachers lay emphasis on such appurtenances as: perceiving the learner as an autonomous being (i.e., being conscious of learner's freedom); being mindful of learner's moral responsibility; and recognizing his/her need of self-development. These recipes are equally identified and articulated in various aspects of the National Policy on Education (NPE).⁷⁵

Fourthly, like Augustinianism⁷⁶ and Russellianism⁷⁷, Akinpeluism as a philosophy of education reveals that if the process of teaching and learning is to be effective; then, learners must take ownership of the process. Taking ownership of the teaching and learning process means that the individual learner has to process, interpret, assimilate, appropriate or internalize what is taught to him/her by the teacher⁷⁸. True to the fact, the educand should recognize the fact that the price of human survival is continuing adaptable intelligence which can only be a product of continuing learning.⁷⁹ Let us now make a critique of Akinpelu's thoughts.

Critique of Akinpelu's Postulations on Education

Our discussion here shall begin with the strengths of Akinpeluism as a philosophy of education. By postulating that the learner is "an open possibility"⁸⁰ who is capable of becoming whatever he/she desires to become, Akinpelu, ipso facto, implicitly aligns with Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. According to Gardner, a 20th century American neuropsychologist, the human mind has at least seven relatively autonomous intellectual competencies, each with its own distinctive mode of thinking.⁸¹ These competences are: (a) Linguistic intelligence (this is responsible for the production of language and all related complex possibilities such as poetry, humor, storytelling, grammar, metaphors, similes, abstract reasoning, symbolic thinking, impromptu speaking, oral debate, conceptual patterning, and all genres of the written word); (b) logical-mathematical intelligence (it is associated with deductive and inductive reason-i.e., the ability to make objective observations, formulate hypotheses, observe data, make judgments and draw conclusions); (c) visual-spatial intelligence (this competence deals with visual arts (i.e., painting, drawing and sculpting), navigation, mapmaking, and architecture); and (d) body-kinesthetic intelligence (it is the ability to express emotions through dancing, acting, miming and other forms of body language; ability to play a game; and ability to use the body in endless gymnastics).⁸²

In addition to the above, other aspects of multiple intelligences include: (e) musical-rhythmic intelligence (this is sensitivity to sounds, human voice and musical instruments); (f) interpersonal intelligence (this is the ability to work co-operatively in a group and the ability to communicate with other people); and (g) intrapersonal intelligence (it is the capacity to be conscious of one's consciousness, viz., feelings, emotional responses, thinking processes, self-reflection, intuitions and spiritual realities).⁸³ What the above translate into is that, for Akinpelu, classroom teachers should not limit the assessment and evaluation of learners to academic intelligence alone.⁸⁴ Rather, attempts should be made to explore, exploit and develop

all the competences of a learner.

Another strength of Akinpelu's existentialist philosophy of education lies in his argument that about forty percent (40%) of students in Junior Secondary School (JSS) should be able to gain admission into Senior Secondary School (SSS) in furtherance of their academic programme, while the remaining sixty percent (60%) be absorbed into various Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes with a view to enhancing their productivity and technological awareness⁸⁵. This is significant because it will help to correct the problem of mismatch between education and employment in critical industrial, technological and professional sectors of the Nigerian economy.⁸⁶ It will also help to mitigate such problems as acute unemployment, under-employment and mis-employment in the country.

Akinpeluism is eclectic and ampliative in nature. It is a hybridization of various intellectual currents. Some of these currents cut across the thoughts of such great scholars as Aquinas (who avers that man is an imago-Dei); Hume (who conceives the human person as an individual); Rousseau (who believes that the human person is a social being); Martin Heidegger (who perceives Dasein as a possibility); Kierkegaard (who contends that man, the existing subject, is in the process of existential becoming); Marcel (who says the human person is a unique individual); Sartre (who believes that the individual is condemned to freedom); and Freire (who argues that man is a self-conscious being). In spite of these foreign accretions and influences on this philosophy, it speaks to the African reality. This is basically because, to use the phraseology of Rosenow, Akinpelu's arguments are based on the assumption that all African learners, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, have a universal human common denominator which connects them and bridges individual differences among them.⁸⁷

In spite of the recognizable strengths of Akinpelu's postulations on education, there are some weaknesses or contradictions in the model. One of these is that he contends that the individual learner is capable of achieving epistemological objectivity on the basis of subjectivism. This is the way he puts it: "Therefore, objectivity is obtained by the use of his (i.e., the learner's) own reasoning power to consider the 'pros' and 'cons' of the issue, and whatever decision he arrives at is objective for him."⁸⁸ In a related perspective, he argues that a moral agent (i.e., the learner) is capable of making excellent moral decisions on the basis of emotions.⁸⁹

In the above discussive scenerio, Akinpelu explicitly argues that both "reason" and "emotion" are faculties which are required for achieving epistemological and ethical objectivity respectively. Ricoeur⁹⁰ and Omoregbe⁹¹ do not agree with this contradiction. They aver that objectivity *qua* objectivity (i.e., inter-subjectivity of validity claims) can only be arrived at on the dictum of rationality. By this criticism, Ricoeur and Omoregbe vitiate the epistemological and ethical underpinnings of Akinpelu's educational treatise. Bewaji, amplifying the thoughts of Ayer, offers another dimension to the criticism of Akinpelu's ethical position. He says that his (i.e., Akinpelu's) moral argument lacks objective validity because it is unverifiable.⁹² *Quid pro quo*, that Akinpelu's moral postulation (as demonstrated in the above quotation) is merely an expression of moral sentiments. This is fundamentally because, for Ayer, as for other logical positivists and linguistic analysts like Schlick, Carnap, Russell and Wittgenstein, all metaphysical, theological and ethical propositions are by their nature emotive, untestable and meaningless.

The strong emphasis of Akinpelu on the "freedom" of the educand gives the impression that the ultimate goal of education is the cultivation of the individuality of the learner. In this respect, his theory mirrors Kierkegaard.⁹³ Unfortunately, the inherent danger of this model is that it gives the idea of an educand who should provoke society and overturn its system of values and conventions. *Quid pro quo*, Akinpeluism, as an educational theory, gives the impression that the learner has the liberty to be a radical, a social antagonist and a non-

conformist deviant. This proclivity undermines the validity of the traditional premises about man's social and rational nature exemplified in the works of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas and Kant.

Like John Passmore⁹⁴, this 21st century African philosopher gives the impression that education, especially formal education, is capable of making the human person achieve perfectability. He believes that education can solve all the problems confronting society. This is how he puts it:

*Increased emphasis would be given to development- oriented vocational and technical 'hands-on' programmes such as trades, crafts, agriculture, technological, industrial and commercial skills. Thus, in addition, ...socially-generated curricular packages such as population or family education, sex education, political or citizenship education, youth education, environmental education, drug education, moral and religious education, parenting education, and such other modular educational packages as can be designed to meet identified, existing social problems.*⁹⁵

Much as we agree that education is a significant tool for bringing about social and human transformation⁹⁶, we do not think that the human person is capable of attaining a state of perfection. To use the phraseology of Kant, this goal-in-view (i.e., human perfectability) is a *chimera*.⁹⁷

Finally, Akinpelu's postulations reveal a conflict between his African belief in communitarianism⁹⁸ and his Continental European acceptance of existentialism. While communitarianism teaches that the individual is inextricably connected to the group and that the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories⁹⁹, existentialism (especially the versions of Kierkegaard, Sartre and Akinpelu) avers that the individual has a right to confront and disagree with societal norms and standards. It is unfortunate that Akinpelu's philosophy of education appears unable to resolve this ontological conflict.

Conclusion

This paper is a reconstructive interpretation of Akinpelu's postulations on education and implications for social change and resolving human predicaments in contemporary Nigeria. By combining the philosophical tools of rational speculation, detailed analysis, critical reflection, rigorous investigation and constructive interpretation, the work began by defining the key concepts that underlay our discourse. We also examined Akinpelu's ontological notion of the human person. This was followed by an indepth forage into the writings of this 21st century African philosopher of education. After this, we looked at the implications of his existentialist thoughts on Nigeria. The paper rounded off with a critique.

In the work, Akinpelu argues that the educand is an autonomous being (i.e., a self-determining entity) who is capable of taking decisions that have the tendency of positively impacting his/her life and social milieu. So, it is the responsibility of the school and the classroom teacher (i.e., the educator) to provide an enabling environment that will help the individual learner to fully maximize his/her potentials (i.e., multiple intelligences). Akinpelu believes that if the school is able to effectively carry out this task (a task that has the intrinsic worth of fecundating social change); then, the absurdities and contradictions which characterize contemporary Nigeria will gradually dissipate.

Notes and References

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² G. J. Warnock, *The Object of Morality* (London: Methuen and Company Ltd., 1970), 12 *passim*.

³ J. Obi Oguejiofor, *Philosophy and the African Predicament* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2016), 7. A related argument may be found in Olumuyiwa Adebajo Falaiye, *A Philosopher Interrogates African Polis: How can we get it Right?* Inaugural lecture (Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 2012), 27.

⁴ Jones Adelayo Akinpelu, *Essays in Philosophy and Education* (Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig.) Ltd., 2005), 208. A similar idea may be found in the work of Wale Olajide, *Ataraxia: An Authentic Response to Existential Predicaments*. In Francis Ofor and Adeyemi J. Ademowo (Eds.), *Humanism, Existential Predicaments and Africa: Essays in Honour of Olusegun Oladipo* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2014), 17.

⁵ Some of these are: Michael Olumide Ogunyemi, Akinpelu's Concept of Values: A Paradigm for Social Ethics in Contemporary Nigeria. In *Nigerian Journal of Educational Philosophy*. Vol. 25, No. 1, October, 2014: 98-110; Heidegger's Phenomenological Ontology As a Model for Creativity and Critical Thinking in Contemporary Nigerian Educational System. In *Nigerian Journal of Educational Philosophy*. Vol. 27, No. 2, October, 2016: 185-203; and John Dewey's Educational Theory As a Model for Critical Thinking and Creativity in Contemporary Nigeria. In *Nigerian Journal of Educational Philosophy*, Vol. 28, No. 1, October, 2017: 45-54.

⁶ J. A. Akinpelu, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education* (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1981; Repr. Ed., 1984), 154. According to Kierkegaard, the abstract speculative nature of Wilhem Hegel's philosophy depersonalizes human beings in that it lays too much emphasis on thoughts and reason. See Harold H. Titus, Marilyn S. Smith and Richard T. Nolan, *Living Issues in Philosophy*, 8th Ed. (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1986), 390.

⁷ Joseph Omoregbe, *A Simplified History of Western Philosophy*, Vol. 3: Contemporary Philosophy (Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited, 1991), 38.

⁸ D. L. Dubey, D. A. Edem and A. S. Thakur. *An Introduction to the Sociology of Nigerian Education* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers, 1984), 83.

⁹ N. Nwabueze, The Meaning of Social Change. In P. O. Olusanya and Lai Olurode (Eds.), *Readings in Introductory Sociology* (Ikeja: John West Publications Ltd., 1998), 230-255.

¹⁰ S. V. Kobiowu, *Social Foundations and Sociology of Education* (Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2012), 236.

¹¹ These ideas may be found in the following works: T. Olatunde Odetola and Ade Ademola. *Sociology: An Introductory African Text* (London and Basingstake: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1985), 201-215; M. Haralambos and M. Holborn, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*. 3rd Edition (London: Collins Educational, 1993), 659 - 665 & 775; and Kolawole

Ogundowole, *Philosophy and Society* (Lagos: Correct Counsels Ltd., 2004), 95 & 96; See also, Kolawole Ogundowole, Self-Reliancism and National Development. In E. Kolawole Ogundowole (ed.) *Philosophy and Logic* (Lagos: Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos, 2009), 164.

¹² This definition was informed by the views of Tunde Lawuyi, Humanism and Nigerians Existential Predicament: The Elite Nuisance. In Francis Offor and Adeyemi J. Ademowo (Eds.), *Humanism, Existential Predicaments and Africa*, Op. Cit., 1-15; see also J. A. Akinpelu, *Philosophy and Adult Education*. (Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers Nig.) Ltd, 2002), 66.

¹³ J. A. Akinpelu, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, Op. Cit., 160.

¹⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 545; Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life* (New York: Dover Publications, 1954), 320; and Joseph Omoregbe, *The Human Predicament: Has Human Life on Earth any Ultimate Purpose, any Ultimate Meaning? An Existential Inquiry*. Inaugural Lecture (Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 2001), 5.

¹⁵ Cited in Michael Olumide Ogunyemi, Heidegger's Phenomenological Ontology As a Model for Creativity and Critical Thinking in Contemporary Nigerian Educational System, Op. Cit., 192.

¹⁶ Segun Ogungbemi, *Philosophy and Development* (Ibadan: Hope Publicatiois, 2007), 159.

¹⁷ Nkechi Ezeanyino, Human Freedom: Its Ontological Basis. In *BODIJA Journal*, No. 2, June, 1990: 45.

¹⁸ Idem.

¹⁹ Idem.

²⁰ A. A. Bagudo, *Philosophical Analysis of Educational Concepts* (Ibadan: Sam Bookman Publisher, 2004), 92.

²¹ J. A. Akinpelu, *Essays in Philosophy and Education*, Op. Cit., 43.

²² Battista Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2007), 101.

²³ J. A. Akinpelu, *Essays in Philosophy and Education*, Op. Cit., 80.

²⁴ Etymologically, autonomy comes from the Greek word, *auto -nomia* which was applied to free ancient Greek cities when citizens of these cities were free to live according to their own laws as opposed to being under the rule of foreign neighbours. See Peter Tuannnen, Personal Autonomy: A Necessary Ideal in the Education of the Nigerian Child. In Kola Babarinde (ed.), *Education and the Challenge of Patriotism in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Caxton Press (W/A) Limited, 2000), 57-63.

²⁵ Kant argues that freedom is independence from anything other than the moral law alone. Cited in Harry Schofield, *The Philosophy of Education: An Introduction* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1974), 259.

²⁶ M. V. C. Jeffreys contends that freedom is the liberty to act according to preference.

See *Education: Its Nature and Purpose* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1971), 28-32.

²⁷ Nkechi Ezeanyino, *Op. Cit.*, 45.

²⁸ Cited in Jim Unah, *Heidegger's Existentialism: An Essay on Applied Ontology* (Lagos: Panaf Publishing Inc., 1996), 43.

²⁹ J. A. Akinpelu. *Essays in Philosophy and Education*, *Op. Cit.*, 82.

³⁰ Jim Unah, *On Being: Discourse on the Ontology of Human Being* (Lagos: Foresight Press, 2016), 73.

³¹ Michael Olumide Ogunyemi, *Heidegger's Phenomenological Ontology As a Model for Creativity and Critical Thinking in Contemporary Nigerian Educational System*, *Op. Cit.*, 190.

³² J. A. Akinpelu, *Essays in Philosophy and Education*, *Op. Cit.*, 84.

³³ G. E. Azenabor, *Phenomenology of Dasein*. In Jim Unah (ed.), *Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy* (Lagos: Fadec Publishers, 1986), 273.

³⁴ Jim Unah, *On Being: Discourse on the Ontology of Human Being*, *Op. Cit.*, 74-75.

³⁵ J. A. Akinpelu, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, *Op. Cit.*, 155: *Philosophy and Adult Education*, *Op. Cit.* 43.

³⁶ J. A. Akinpelu, *Essays in Philosophy and Education*, *Op. Cit.*, 80.

³⁷ J. A. Akinpelu, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, *Op. Cit.*, 156.

³⁸ Oluremi Ayodele-Bamisaiye, *Ontology and Education in the Ideas of Aminu Kano and J. A. Akinpelu*. In *Nigerian Journal of Educational Philosophy*. Vol. 26, No. 1, October, 2015:122.

³⁹ J. A. Akinpelu, *Essays in Philosophy and Education*, *Op. Cit.*, 155.

⁴⁰ J. A. Akinpelu, *Essays in Philosophy and Education*, *Op. Cit.*, 85.

⁴¹ J. A. Akinpelu, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, *Op. Cit.*, 158.

⁴² Akinpelu, 181.

⁴³ J. A. Akinpelu, *Values in Nigerian Society*. In O. A. Nduka and E. O. Iheoma (Eds.), *New Perspectives in Moral Education* (Ibadan: Evans Brothers Nigeria Publishers Ltd., 1983), 30-51.

⁴⁴ Oluremi Ayodele-Bamisaiye, *Ontology and Education in the Ideas of Aminu Kano and J. A. Akinpelu*, *Op. Cit.*, 125.

⁴⁵ J. A. Akinpelu, *Values in Nigerian Society*. In O. A. Nduka and E. O. Iheoma (Eds.), *New Perspectives in Moral Education*, *Op. Cit.*, 30-51.

⁴⁶ A. Babs Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Ltd., 2004), 1-40.

⁴⁷ J. A. Akinpelu, *Essays in Philosophy and Education*, *Op. Cit.*, 216.

⁴⁸ J. A. Akinpelu, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, Op. Cit., 231; see also 183.

⁴⁹ Loc. Cit., 158.

⁵⁰ J. A. Akinpelu, *Essays in Philosophy and Education*, Op. Cit., 216.

⁵¹ J. A. Akinpelu, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Adult Education*, (Ibadan: Ibadan External Studies Programme Series, Department of Adult Education,. University of Ibadan, 1988), 52-58.

⁵² J. A. Akinpelu, *Themes in Philosophy of Education for Teachers* (Ibadan. Tafak Publications, 2005), 209. See also, *Essays in Philosophy of Education*, Op. Cit., 169.

⁵³ J. A. Akinpelu, *An Introduction to Philosophy and Education*, Op. Cit., 175.

⁵⁴ J. A. Akinpelu, *Essays in Philosophy and Education*, Op. Cit., 61. Related ideas may be found in Values in Nigerian society. In Otonti A. Nduka and E. O. Iheoma, *New Perspectives in Moral Education*, Op. Cit., 35-36.

⁵⁵ J. A. Akinpelu, *Themes in Philosophy of Education for Teachers*, Loc. Cit., 187, see also *Philosophy and Adult Education*, Op. Cit., 132.

⁵⁶ J. A. Akinpelu, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, Op. Cit., 181.

⁵⁷ J. A. Akinpelu, *Relevance in Education*, Inaugural Lecture (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1987), 6 (paraphrased).

⁵⁸ This material has been cited earlier, see fn 54 *supra*.

⁵⁹ J A. Akinpelu, *Themes in Philosophy of Education for Teachers*, Op. Cit., 151, 178 & 198 *passim*; *Essays in Philosophy and Education*, Op. Cit., 115 & 193 *passim*.

⁶⁰ J A. Akinpelu, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, Op. Cit., 155.

⁶¹ Akinpelu, 159.

⁶² See Michael Olumide Ogunyemi and Olajumoke Olaiya, Awoism As a Philosophy of Education: Implications for Political Stability in Contemporary Nigeria. In *Nigerian Journal of Educational Philosophy*, Vol. 30, No. ; October, 2019: 168-180.

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⁶⁴ J. A. Akinpelu, *Themes in Philosophy of Education for Teachers*, Op. Cit., 212.

⁶⁵ Akinpelu, 230.

⁶⁶ Akinpelu, 190.

⁶⁷ Akinpelu, 227.

⁶⁸ Akinpelu, 215 & 217.

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⁷⁰ J. A. Akinpelu, *Themes in Philosophy of Education for Teachers*, Loc. Cit., 215.

⁷¹ Akinpelu, 131 (The translation of this proverb into the English equivalent is our own).

⁷² Kolawole Ogundowole, *Philosophy and Society*, Op. Cit., 95 & 96; See also, Kolawole Ogundowole, *Seif-Reliancism and National Development*, Op. Cit., 164.

⁷³ The "I-Thou relationship" is one that gives room for a genuine communication between the teacher and the learner. See Valentine Ntui, *Education in the corpus of sociocultural and constructionist teaching and learning: Reinventing Buber's ICH UND DU (I AND THOU) in Academic Mentoring for Nigeria's Higher Education*. In *Nigerian Journal of Educational Philosophy*. Vol. 5, No.2, October, 2014; 68-83.

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⁷⁵ FGN, *National Policy on Education*. See specifically section 1 (subsection 6a); section 1 (subsection 8a); section 2 (subsection 13c); and section 3 (subsection 36b).

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⁸⁰ J A. Akinpelu, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, Op. Cit., 156.

⁸¹ Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 63-67.

⁸² These ideas of Gardner may also be found in Bert Bower, Jim Lobdell and Shevry Owens, *Bring Learning Alive: The TCI Approach for Middle and High School Social Studies* (California: Teachers' Curriculum Institute, 2004), 12-14.

⁸³ Howard Gardner, Op. Cit., 63 - 67. See also, Robert J. Sternberg, *Cognitive Psychology*, 3rd Ed.. (Australia: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2003), 506-508.

⁸⁴ J. A. Akinpelu, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, Op. Cit., 161.

⁸⁵ J. A. Akinpelu defines technological awareness as the consciousness or mental disposition to design and manufacture pieces of machinery. The components of this

consciousness are technological literacy, technological attitude and technological environment, see. *Essays in Philosophy and Education*, Op. Cit., 220 and 222.

⁸⁶ Related ideas to this may be found in J. A. Akinpelu, Looking Forward: Nigerian Education in the 21st Century. In *Nigerian Journal of Educational Philosophy*. Vol. viii, No. 1, 2001: 6-12. See also, Themes in Philosophy of Education for Teachers, Op. Cit., 209.

⁸⁷ Eliyahu Rosenow, Kierkegaard's Existing Individual. In *Journal of Philosophy of Education, The Journal of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain*. Vol.. 23; No. 1, 1989: 3-14.

⁸⁸ J. A. Akinpelu, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, Op. Cit., 157.

⁸⁹ Akinpelu, 157 - 158.

⁹⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, edited and translated by John B. Thomson Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 161-162 passim.

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⁹² Bewaji, *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge: A Pluricultural Approach*, (Ibadan): Hope Publications, 2007, 276 & 2773; also, A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (London: Victor Gollance Ltd., 1946), 107-109 (adapted to suit our discourse).

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⁹⁴ John Passmore, *The Perfectibility of Man* (London: Duckworth, 1972), 20.

⁹⁵ J. A. Akinpelu. *Themes in Philosophy of Education for Teachers*, Op. Cit., 223.

⁹⁶ Michael Olumide Ogunyemi, *Problems and Challenges Facing Higher Education Management in Nigeria: A Sociological and Philosophical Perspective* (Port Harcourt: Thaworld Global Resources Ltd.. 2013), 44-47.

⁹⁷ Michael Olumide Ogunyemi, *A Critique of Categorical Imperative in Kant Philosophy and Its Relevance for Nigerian Educational System*. An Unpublished M.Ed Thesis (University of Lagos; September, 2010).

⁹⁸ This theme runs through various aspects of J. A. Akinplu's works, see especially Values in Nigerian society. In Otonti A. Nduka and E. O. Iheoma (Eds.), *New Perspectives in Moral Education*, Op. Cit., 25-30.

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