PHILOSOPHICAL DETERMINATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL NATURE OF TRUTH AS CORRESPONDENCE, AND ITS EXPEDIENCE FOR INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS AMONG NIGERIANS

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Abstract

Buller and Burgoon both accede to the conclusion that lie, deception or falsehood is a major relational transgression that often leads to disagreement, distrust, and conflict in relationship. It violates relational rules, values, and expectations, and often turns so messy, leading to maiming, killing, abandonment of ideals and values, and disintegration of communal life. Everyone expects relational partners to be unambiguous and truthful, otherwise relating and communicating would entail grave equivocation and misdirection, and consequently require deception indicators to unravel falsehood, ascertain truth, and acquire reliable information. This anomaly is prevalent in many strata of the Nigerian state – politics, religion, family, friendship, organizations, etc. Experiences around point to the fact that lying, deception, falsehood and "speaking with a forked tongue" prevail among all classes of relational partners today, so that such communal relationship of our forebears, which endeared one to the other, and promoted mutual respect, efficiency in trades and services, security, trust and peaceful coexistence, has long gone down the drain giving way to destructive individualism, with all its attendant consequences. This impending catastrophe so stimulated stares at us in the face and looms wide over the land like a bomb of darkness awaiting its appointed programmed time to explode. It is in the bid to avert this impending colossal loss that this paper employs the philosophical qualitative and conceptual research method to explore an acceptable definition of the nature of truth and recommend its espousal as yardstick for interpersonal relations in Nigeria. In its findings, this paper recommends the adoption of the correspondence interpretation of truth, and its enactment as yardstick for interpersonal relations, moral evaluation, and determination of justice in the Nigerian society.

Keywords: Truth, Correspondence, Interpersonal Relations, Deception, Falsehood, Lie.

Introduction.

The search for truth permeates all walks of human existence. In fact, it underlies virtually everything, ranging from the larger question of life to the smaller, everyday specific items of information, knowledge of nature, agreement and disagreement, decisions, choices, policies, and principles. Its nature, whether it is considered to be subjective, objective, relative or ambiguous, has been shown to be akin to one's valuation of reality in all of life's issues. It is an anthropological fact and a phenomenon encountered wherever people evaluate and assess their knowledge; there they seek for the truth.

Reasoning tends to support the claim that anyone who believes everything that he is told, without verifying its claim, is liable to bamboozlement, mislead, confusion, misjudgment, and such may not even live long and happily. People tend to believe that there is an objective perspective of truth, and they seek to use it to

appraise their knowledge whether their own knowledge is correct or not. Hence, to pose the question of the nature of truth in interpersonal relations is not a weird chase. It is equally a common knowledge of experience that before any rational being would consciously aligns with any decision or belief there is, somewhere in his subconscious mind, the quest for the proper understanding of the truth of such issue. Whether he fully analyzes it or not, it is there all the same. This is cognate to Schaeffer's assertion that "All people, whether they realize it or not, function in the framework of some concept of truth."[1] He rightly asserts further that one's concept of truth will radically shape his worldview and decisions in life. Hence, every rational human decision, choices and aspirations are programmed around his valuation of the concept of truth, right and the needful[2]. Therefore, it is rational for anyone to appraise the truth value of any claim before reaching conclusion on such.

Sequel to the above, since agreement or disagreement, and uniformity or disparity on views and opinions do inform whether there will be peace or conflict among people, it necessarily follows, and is thus logical to reason that agreement on the nature or definition of truth, and agreement of views on such vices as falsehood, lie, deception, "fork tongue", dishonesty, conscious misinformation, fabrication, etc., can lead to, and enhance interpersonal relations among relating partners; while disparity or disagreement on these concepts can automatically lead to conflict. This universal premise is perhaps responsible for Nathan Hilberg's submission about religion that "the world's religious landscape is marked by similarly credible but conflicting truth claims," hence his conclusion that conflicting truth claims of religions are arguably a primary cause of conflicts among major religions in the world[3].

In philosophical enquiries, issues involving the concept of truth are seen, not only as descriptive and informative but also elusive and challenging. According to Geisler and Feinberg, if philosophy is ultimately tied up with truth, as it is often expressed that "the compass of wisdom is truth and that to have truth is an irreplaceable, precondition for this skill", it thus implies that this concept is very significant, especially in philosophical enquiries. But surprisingly, as much as this concept appears to be so close to us, that we rely on it in the determination of almost every issue of personal and interpersonal relationship, and even reserve the determination of judgment on particular issues on the discovery of truth on such matter, yet to get a convincing, all-encompassing and generally acceptable definition for it has continued to be an endless activity and a mirage. As soon as one thinks he has pinned it down some cases or counter examples immediately show deficiency.[4].

In the bid to emphasize the strategic function of 'Truth' in philosophical enquiry, David Trueblood stresses that "there is a profound sense in which the effort to distinguish the real and truth is the final purpose of all philosophizing."[5] He argues that though in ordinary speech, we frequently use certain words, such as 'Truth', knowledge, Meaning and Reality almost interchangeably, there is value in trying to make a clear distinction between them. He correctly argues that knowledge arises when the mind, having subjective experiences or impressions, refer these to objects which the mind is said to "know."[6] This knowledge is of various degrees of refinement, depending in large measure upon particularized methods of verification, most of which are possible only by means of communication with other knowing minds. If we have reason to believe that they are trustworthy, not deceitful, or false, we say that the statement is true. Thus, truth is that upon which the genuineness of knowledge depends and so has meaning only in reference to propositions which are created and judged by minds.[7]

With this introduction, it is somewhat valid to assert that the significance of truth to general human existence and interpersonal relations is never a subject of contention, instead, the task ahead in this paper is to ascertain its functional definition by tracing the historical development of the concept in the history of

philosophy from its original Greek connotation to the contemporary usage, examine scholarly opinion on the concept, and applying same for cordial interpersonal relations among Nigerians today.

Deception as Diametrically Opposite to Truth

The offline Cambridge English Dictionary defines "Deception" as an act or statement which misleads, twists or hides the truth, or promotes a belief, concept, or idea that is not true, a lie; with the motive of personal gain or advantage.[8] Deception comes in the form of lie or falsehood, and the deceiver may employ any instrument such as distraction, dissimulation, sleight of hand, camouflage, manipulation or twisting of words or concealment in order to achieve his dirty purpose. However, the format or scope, the fact remains that deception is diametrically opposed to Truth.

This fact, perhaps, is what informs Buller and Burgoon's position that "Deception is a major relational transgression that often leads to feelings of betrayal and distrust between relational partners. It violates relational rules and is considered to be a negative violation of expectations."[9] Deception is believed to be a major reason behind many once romantic marital relations, which have now gone sour, with some ending in bitterness, divorce, manslaughter or even murder. Deception and all its cognates have also been accounted as one of the reasons, if not the major reason, for loss of trust, confidence, credibility, and continued solidarity for some leaders and governments, be it public or private; not to talk of it being a cause for the breakup, discontinuance and total collapse of friendships, partnership, family ties, and establishments. It remains a universal moral predicate that friends, relational partners, Government, and citizens, etc, should imbibe truthfulness, anything short of this is tantamount to falsehood, which is opposed to the principle of mutual relationship.[10]

The moral philosopher Sissela Bok, in her contemporary classic, "Lying", argues that the "principle of veracity" is a minimally necessary basis for a functioning society; it is a lowest-common denominator principle based on the common human intuition to favor truth over lies.[11] She stresses that humans across time and cultures prefer truth because, "trust in some degree of veracity functions as a foundation of relations among human beings; and when this trust shatters or wears away, institutions collapse."[12] She noted further that we often underestimate the harm of deception or lying by analyzing it only from the perspective of the deceiver or liar rather than considering it from the perspective of the deceived. She thus submits that lies are always coercive for the one being lied to; it seeks to persuade not by appealing to our freedom to choose but by compelling us via deception to narrow our field of choice. As such, lies give power to the liar and take power away from the persons being lied to. This shift in power accumulates over the course of repeated lies; hence, "it is clearly unreasonable to assert that people should be able to lie with impunity whenever they want to do so."[13] This thus establishes the danger of deception and lies in any society. The next point of attention is to establish a conceptual framework for this paper on the concept of truth.

Conceptual Framework for the Concept of Truth

The question "what is truth" can be understood in different ways, whether a proposition consists in its correspondence to a fact, its warranted assert ability, its pragmatic usefulness, its coherence with other propositions, its meaning as the view of those in power, or something else. Whatever the angle from which it is viewed, it is an embattled question which is at the center of, not only cultural controversies but universal discourse. Part of the reasons being that it has often not been properly distinguished from the question of knowledge; that it determines what is known and what ought to be known. As a result, certain things which are true of knowledge—for instance, that it is created by humans, largely through dialogue, and is relative to time and place—are wrongly attributed to truth itself. This is responsible for Swindler's

argument that we should "de-absolutize truth" and think of it as "dialogic."[14] That is, that truth should be emptied of any objective connotation, and be made relative, to depend on the situation and discussion at hand at any moment. Obviously, there would be many dangerous implications to this. For instance, would the concept of truth not become empty, devoid of meaning, and thus insufficient for decisions and judgment? Will the relativity created not be incongruous to life, to say the least? These and many other concerns quickly come to mind to negate this position.

In line with the premise of this paper, Hendrik Vroom observes that people are not univocal in what type of 'reference' they have in mind when utilizing the concept of truth[15], a situation that is susceptible to dissention, altercation, and anarchy if not qualified. The implication of this is that since people's concept of truth differs, there would be as many truths as there are different users with equivocal reference to the concept. But successful communication can only take place in an atmosphere of unequivocal discourse and relationship, while equivocal usage of the term truth would lead to confusion, misunderstanding, ambiguity, and chaos. Hence, the need to forestall these dangerous consequences is driving experts towards dissuading the general public from falsehood, lie, deceit, lip service, political statements etc., and the consideration of the English expression 'as it is' as a generally accepted definition for 'truth.[16].

Historical Development of the Concept of Truth in Philosophy

From the early period in history, a form of progressive paradigm shift is noticeable in the thinking of philosophers on the search for the meaning of truth. It was agreed that truth involves more than having isolated facts or knowledge; but the ability to see the underlying order of relationships[17]. It thus connotes that even during that period, there is a consensus agreement that, rather than carrying an equivocal reference, which necessarily leads to ambiguity, misunderstanding and chaos, truth ought to display an underlying order of relationship. This led to the examination of the Greek etymological connotation of the concept of truth. The Greek term for truth, "Aletheia", means "unhidden" and refers to the "unhiddenness" of the cosmos with its fixed order by which all things exist and are kept in coherent totality. By this definition, Cahn posits that, the concept of truth is such that should be unhidden, objective, unambiguous, uncomplicated, handy, intelligible, and decipherable. It should be accessible to all, regardless of position or approach[18].

Plato, the great Athenian philosopher (427-347 BC), posits that the concept of truth is the central subject of discourse in Western Philosophy; it is transcendental and identifiable with the Divine. According to him, people often seek for truth by thinking it could be approached by thought, when actually it is related to Being itself, the highest Being, the One, the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. He submits that the yearning to contemplate the truth is actually the quest for the Divine[19]. Thus, Plato believes in a world of spiritual ideas which were interrelated, and at the head of which stood the Form of the Good. Aristotle (384-322 BC) is at variant with Plato's view. For him, truth does not abide beyond the visible world, or in the realm of ideas, but in statements. This Aristotelian view is alluded to as the root of the most influential definition of truth in the history of western philosophy: that truth is the correspondence between the thought and the form of things[20].

Clement of Alexandria (c.150-220AD) on his own states that there is only one truth, but it is expressible in many forms. He uses the analogy of coinage in which a coin could be used for various things such as payment of tax and payment for goods and services to buttress his argument. Clement expresses further that all truth and goodness, whenever it is found, comes from the creator who had implanted the good seed of truth in all his rational creatures. In order words, Clement stresses, as no one before him had done, that 'the way of truth is one but into it, a perennial river, streams flow from all sides'.[21] A thorough understanding

of Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) thought, especially as expressed in his work *The Critique of Pure Reason,* reveals that Kant makes a foundational distinction between the "objects" of subjective experience, which he labels *phenomena* and the "objects" of "reality" which he calls *noumena*. The *phenomena* make up the world we know, the world "for us" (*fur uns*); the world as we see, perceive, or experience it, while the *noumena,* are "transcendentally real" or, to put it in a lay man's language, they exist in and of themselves (*ding an sich*), but are never experienced directly or even indirectly by man. They exist outside of and separate from the mind; they are inaccessible to the human mind. They are called reality or actual states of affairs similar to the picture portrayed by the advocates of the correspondence theory. They are given form and shape by what Kant described as categories of the mind and this ordering gives rise to phenomenal objects. Relating this to truth, *phenomena* objects are not analogues, copies, representations or any such thing of the *noumena.* The *noumena* gives rise to the phenomena but in no way resembles or interacts with it. The mind never experiences the noumena, and the phenomena, in no way represents the noumena[22].

Theories about the Nature of Truth

There are many theories postulated to describe the nature of truth, though some of them are only slightly different or contain minor modifications to the others. Five of these shall be listed here, which are: (i) the Correspondence Theory; (ii) Coherence Theory; (iii) Pragmatic Theory; (iv) Deflationary Theories; (v) The Semantic Theories; but of these five, only the correspondence theory of truth shall be given detailed examination in this paper because of its relevance to the goal of this paper.

The Correspondence Theory of Truth

According to Geisler and Feinberg, the correspondence theory of truth, which gained its popularity primarily through the writings of Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), consists in some forms of correspondence between a belief or a sentence and an objective fact or state of affairs.[23] Expatiating this view, Omoregbe states that:

> If a proposition correctly reflects a fact in the world, that proposition is true, but if what it states does not correctly reflect a fact in the world then it is false. Correspondence between a statement and a fact in the world is thus the criterion of truth.[24]

Although Geisler and Feinberg rightly submit that there are many versions of the correspondence theory of truth; this paper will be more favorably disposed to the Aristotelian version. For Aristotle (384BC-322BC), "to say of what is, that it is not, or of what is not, that it is, is false; while to say of what is, that it is, and of what is not, that it is not, is true."[25] By this definition, Aristotle is asserting that it is by the facts of the case, whether they are as claimed or not, that a statement is called true or false. Let it be established here that it is this Aristotelian conception of truth, regardless of its simplicity or inexpressive look, that has existed as the traditional and conventional formulation for truth among renowned philosophers for some time.

Explicating further on this theory, Lenox stresses that the Correspondence theory of truth is one of the most widely held theories on what it means for a proposition to be true. It makes two claims: one, that a proposition is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts; and it is false if and only if it fails to correspond to the facts; two, that the truth of a proposition or belief is dependent on the facts or upon the way the world is. Such a view is suggested by Aristotle, who wrote, "It is not because we think truly that you are pale, that you are pale; but because you are pale we who say this have the truth." That is to say, a proposition is not true because of what we believe about it. The truth of the proposition that someone is pale, for example, does not depend on whether we believe he is pale or not, but upon the correspondence of his physical look

to what it means to be pale. The proposition is true if and only if, as Aristotle notes, it aligns with the fact that someone is pale[26].

Moreover, according to the correspondence theory, one and the same proposition cannot be both true and false, neither can the same proposition be "true for you and false for me". Truth is not "relative"; of course, you might believe some propositions which I don't believe. We might thus disagree about the truth of some proposition. Still, the truth of the proposition is determined by the facts and not by whether you or I believe it or not. Let's consider this example: suppose that Mike is in London talking to his sister, Grace who is in Namibia. Mike looks out his window, sees the rain falling and says, 'It is raining.' Grace looks out her window, sees the sun shining and says, 'It is not raining.' Couldn't they both be right? Isn't this a case where a proposition is both true and false?" Of course, they are both right, but obviously not on the same proposition. In fact, given our description of the case, each of them is right, but this does not show that one and the same proposition is both true and false. We should say that the proposition that Mike accepts is that it is raining in London, not in Namibia; and the proposition that Grace accepts is that it is not raining in Namibia, not in London. Each of them accepts a true proposition, but not the same proposition. So to determine the truth status of their individual proposition, one needs to compare each proposition with the fact in its immediate environment.[27]

Not long after the formulation of this platonic – Aristotelian correspondence theory of truth, Eubulides faulted its premise and proposed what could be called the "Liar Paradox." According to him, let us consider a man who says, I am lying" or "I am now uttering a Falsehood." The utterance is true if it is false and false if it is true; thus, in at least one case, the correspondence theory of truth seems to result in an utterance meaning its opposite. Eubulides also queried the Aristotelian dependence on fact for the truth or falsehood of a proposition, stating that it reveals apparent problem. Make a correspondence of the proposition; there and then it will be apparent whether it is true or false[28].

Philosophers have been able to refute these Eubulides criticisms to a reasonable extent. One of the answers proffered to the Liar paradox is to insist that the claim "I am lying" is self-destructive or self-defeating and, therefore, is not a truth claim at all. To use mathematical language, sentences like this constitute the "Null set". Tarski also refuted the liar paradox by denying that a sentence which asserts that sentence "S" is a true sentence of a particular language, can itself be a sentence of that language. In the word of Tarski 'such a sentence would belong to a meta-language, that is, a second-order language in which talk about the first –order language is possible.'[29]

Donald Davidson too criticized the notion of fact in the correspondence theory arguing that "If true statements correspond to anything, they all correspond to the same thing". He noted that facts are the true statements themselves; facts are not named by true statements as the correspondence theory mistakenly supposes.[30] Davidson seems to be confused here on the difference between a fact and the statement bearing the fact, which this writer and many other philosophers reserve the term proposition for. For instance, in the statement "it is raining", the concrete thing "rain" is not the same as the statement conveying the occurrence. A statement may be affirmative and yet may not be supported by the concrete evidence; in such case it is either said to be non-sense or a lie.

To this end, we contend that sense can be made of the term 'correspondence' because speaking of propositions corresponding to facts is merely making a general claim. In summation, whatever the objection raised against the correspondence theory, whether of those who contend that unless we have some explanation of what it is for a proposition to correspond with the facts, or that the theory is not very informative, or of those who say that the theory is uninformative because the notion of a fact is obscure, or

those who argue that one cannot explain what a fact is without making use of the concepts of truth and falsity, and, therefore, the correspondence theory is circular and ultimately unenlightening, the basic intuition that the truth of a proposition depends upon the facts has proved stubbornly resistant to criticism.

Traditional Notion of Truth among Nigerians

As it has been established above, all human beings intrinsically possess the quest for truth, and this does not exempt Nigerians. However, being a heterogeneous country, the quest for truth among Nigerians may require some level of caution and technicality since it may not be out of place or improbable that truth in Nigeria too may not be homogeneous. Nigeria comprises of 36 States and a Federal capital territory, over 300 ethnic groups and over 500 Spoken Languages; and the largest, most populous and politically influenced ethnic groups in Nigeria include Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw, Kanuri and Ibibio. Within these groups, there are minor groups with different languages, culture and lifestyle[31]. This heterogeneity however does not imply division, but more of a unity in diversity.

There is no particularization of truth in Nigeria; the concept of truth is universal; hence, there cannot be different truth for the Western world, Africans or Nigerian. Thus, what is termed as the notion of truth among Nigerians, in this paper, is but how Nigerians have espoused and applied the universal concept of truth in their individual context; that is, the particular aspect of the universal theories of truth they embrace and the extent of such courtship. The Nigerian philosophy is very rich in this but due to the wideness in her ethnicity, culture, and worldview, two of the major ethnic and cultural groups in Nigeria - the Igbo and the Yoruba group - shall be the sample-focus for this paper in determining this.

Notion of Truth among the Igbo People of Western Nigeria

According to Ejeh Paulinus, the Igbo people use such words as "*eziokwu"* (a combination of two words: *ezi* which means correct, genuine, right or good; and *okwu* which means word or speech; *Ezi okwu* therefore means literarily good talk, the correct sentence, right word, or the appropriate statement*); "*Obughi Eziokwu" (it is not Good talk), 'Ezi ihe', Asi (Lie), etc. in their discussion on truth."[32]. As Nze also rightly pointed out that "the common understanding among the Igbo people is that 'eziokwu' - truth is used to represent utterances (that is, the lack of inner contradictions) that are true"[33] For the Igbo, to be is to be true to what one really is. The Igbo puts this ontological principle in the maxim: Eziokwu Bu Ndu (Truth is life; life is truth). In Igbo, ethico-ontological praxis, not only in the moral sense is the utterance of truth an affirmation, but even in the ontological order, the true is the living; only the true lives. Truth is authenticity, (Ugwu ndu). Not to be in the truth is not to be in life, in dynamism, self-manifestation and the vital energy; it is to die. The untrue disappears into the false-hood of non-being[34].

Elaborating on this concept, Ejeh stresses that the opposite of Eziokwu (good talk) is Obughi Eziokwu (it is not good talk), i.e. if we take the opposite of truth in English to be falsity. Obughi Eziokwu (it is not good talk), translates cognitively in Igbo, unless there is reason to believe that a person is deliberately making a falsehood in which case, Obughi Eziokwu (it is not good talk) takes on a moral undertone. In fact, it now moves from Obughi Eziokwu (it is not good talk) to asi (lies). When a statement gets to the level of asi (lies), it takes on a purely moral undertone and the sincerity of the person involved is called to question. There are degrees of truth among the Igbos. For instance, to say of a statement that ""obughi eziokwu (it is not good talk) is not the same as saying that a statement is asi (lie), because to say that a statement is asi is to cast aspersions on a person's moral standard; neither is "obughi eziokw"u the same as "eziokwu" (good talk) nor is it asi. It is more like a bridge between "eziokwu" and "asi". It is used usually in a cognitive sense unless it is suspected that a person's statement is a deliberate falsehood. This of course brings on

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the issue of intention on the part of the person making the statement. But since there is no way of knowing the intentions of a person for making a particular statement, it is necessary to assume that the person is using a statement in an innocent sense until proved wrong, in which case, "obughi eziokwu" is applied to a person with a moral sense[35].

The notion of truth is so central and important for the Igbos such that there are a number of ways in which it is used to capture the concept and real meaning of truth in Igbo thought system. In addition to "*ezi okwu*", the Igbo also describe the truth of a statement with the expression "*Ihe mere eme" or "ihe mere",* which means what really happened or what happened. For instance, the Igbo would say:

'Ọ bụ ihe mere eme'	-	It is what actually happened
'Ọ bụghị ihe mere'	-	It is not what happened.
'Ọ bụ gịnị mere?	-	What happened?
'Ọ bụ ihe mere eme?'	-	Did it really happen?

In the Igbo thought system, the expression *ihe mere* or *ihe mere eme* makes the Igbo concept of truth clearer and in line with 'what is the case', 'what agrees with reality,' or as 'testimony'; a correspondence with the fact. Thus "*ihe mere"* or "*ihe mere eme"* refers to an event which has been accomplished or perfected. Hence, the expression, "*ihe mere eme"* makes truth an empirical fact and not an intuitional fact. In other words, truth as illustrated by "*ihe mere em"e* becomes something that can be investigated and verified empirically. By this very reason, the Igbo expression "*ihe mere eme"* represents for the Igbo truth as correspondence since what is the case agrees with what happened in reality. Besides, the Igbo also understand truth in the Aristotelian sense as rightly noted by Aristotle that, "to say of what is that it is not, or what is not that it is, is false. While to say of what is that it is, or what is not that it is not, is true"[36] In other words, the Igbo conceive truth as the conformity of the mind with reality. Hence, for the Igbo, when what is in the mind conforms or agrees with what is in reality, then that is "*eziokwu"* or truth.

From the ongoing, the expression *Ihe mere eme* seems to be more in line with the very nature of the Igbo concept of truth and is therefore preferred, since it does not exhibit the apparent ambiguity inherent in the expression 'Ezi okwu'. This toes the same line with the western conception of truth in which the correspondence theory is seen as the better representative of what truth is. Thus, while the expression *Ihe mere eme* defines what truth is for the Igbo, *ezi okwu* gives the criteria to strengthen it. This is exactly the case with the Western correspondence and coherence theory of truth in which the correspondence theory defines or explains the meaning of truth while the coherence theory gives the criteria for truth. To the best of the knowledge of this writer, Ejeh actually did a pretty detailed work suitable for reference on the notion of truth in Igbo context.

Notion of Truth among the Yoruba People of Western Nigeria

Like their Igbo counterpart in the Eastern part of Nigeria, the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria also have a rich concept of truth. According to "A Dictionary of the Yoruba Language", the Yoruba words for "true" are "tooto", "nitoto"; and "truth" is translated as "otito", "ododo"[37]. The concept of truth ("Otito") is differentiated from falsehood ("aisoto"), dishonesty ("aisododo"), Lie ("iro"), Lying ("iropipa"); habitual liar ("opuro"), etc. From the ontological and ethical perspectives, Oyebade Oyewole asserts that morality in Yoruba socio-

cultural setting revolves around the notion of character (*Omoluabi*), and it follows that spoken words have to be truthful (Je otito) for one's integrity to be established. He argues that this is based on the assumption that the weight of command ("ase") in a person's word is directly proportional to truth[38]. A divination from the Ifa oracle (Odu Ifa), Odu Eturupon-meji states that, "s'otito; se rere, s'otito; se rere; eni s'otito n'imole agbe (be truthful, do good; be truthful, do good; it is the truthful that the divinities support").[39] The implication of this is that moral rectitude attracts pleasure and goodness from the divinities, and where it is absent when expected, the displeasure and wrath of the gods are inevitable. As a result of this expedience, couple with its cosmic and social values, every member of the Yoruba family is firmly instructed to imbibe the principle of integrity.

Another salient benefit of truth in the Yoruba community is that it enhances brotherliness, trust, and social acceptance. This is why Yoruba people would always say: "K'aso'ro K'a ba be ni iyi *Omolúàbí* (The virtue of incontrovertibility is the honor of *Omolúàbí*). It implies that a person whose words cannot be trusted, that is, who is not truthful in speech, has failed integrity test and does not deserve or qualify for honor in the community. This is because a Yoruba person is respected by the measure of words uttered in truth as facts and received as words of authority, and every false claim is a blemish on character and a mark of ignobility. The Yoruba people would say "Bi o tile je pe otito koro, sibe a ma nso ni" (Although truth is bitter, still it must be said/told all the same) to emphasize the objectivity, irreplacability, and expedience of truth over all other options – falsehood, lie, or deception. This also portends that though truth is not enticing it is the needful and should be preferred[40].

Having established the conspicuous function of truth in the Yoruba setting, it is now expedient to underscore the definition of truth among the Yoruba people. Barry Hallen and Kwasi Wiredu , submit that while in English Language "truth" is principally a property of propositional knowledge, in Yoruba Language "ooto" may be a property of both propositions and certain form of experience; that is, a correspondence of the proposition with the existing fact[41]. This is why it is always said in Yoruba-land that "Otito ni yo fi oju ara re han" (Truth is self-revealing or "It is the truth that will introduce itself") to suggests that in the Yoruba cultural belief, truth has certain attributive characteristics that makes it identifiable and conspicuously evident in the instances in which it is considered. It is characterized, not as a theoretical or mere intuitional fact, but empirical; that is, it is identifiable, it can be explored and verified; thus a correct proposition would necessarily correspond to the fact; truth has the power to unravel and determine the fact of any correct proposition.

The same argument is drawn from the expression "Bi iro ba lo ni ogun odun, ojo kan soso ni otito ma wa ri [ba lona]" (If lie, falsehood or deception thrives or lasts for twenty years, truth will overtake it [expose it] within just one day). The import of this proverb is that truth by its characteristic is discerning; it has revelatory or unraveling power, a searchlight, under which falsehood cannot be enshrouded or concealed permanently. By its empirical attribute, it exposes the correctness or otherwise of any proposition; thus buttressing the nature of truth in Yoruba context as correspondence which would necessarily agrees with the reality it represents.

Applying the Correspondence Theory of Truth for Interpersonal Relations among Nigerians in the 21st Century

Although we have clearly established the belief of Nigerians in the correspondent nature of truth, as properly represented by the Igbo and Yoruba people, it is however appalling and atrocious to observe the wide disparity between the presence of this belief and its practice among Nigerians. While the notion of truth and its nature as correspondent is firmly enshrined in the belief system of Nigerians, the relevance of

its pragmatic application to interpersonal relations is avowedly and conspicuously absent; hence the characteristic lifestyle of falsehood of many Nigerians today. This situation is aptly captured in the sermon delivered at the wake keep Mass for Archbishop Peter Jatau, by The Most Reverend Father Mathew Kukah, the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto State, titled "A Nation in Search of its Soul", where he criticized the Federal Government of Nigeria over the state of the nation. In his words, "Today our dear nation is like a proverbial farmer searching for his black goat. He has to do it with a sense of urgency because darkness is setting in as the sun quickly recedes. Our nation has become one huge wasteland, huge debris of deceit, lies, treachery, double-dealing and duplicity. Nigerian politics has become a huge Trojan horse, a hoax, a hall of guile and dissimulation[42]."

This same state of bewilderment arising from the deceitful lifestyle of Nigerians – from the people in Government, to the citizenry, clergy, politicians, traders, business people, technocrats, educationists, students, parents, children; common man on the street, all alike – would have actuated Chike Okafor's rhetorical question in his article: "Is Lying Nigerian National Pastime or a Way of Life? Has Nigeria become a nation of congenial liars?" According to Okafor, "It seems that lying has become Nigerian past time, almost everybody lies and sometimes, one finds it difficult to decipher and distinguish which comment is the truth and which one is not". He recalled that "in the American culture, during a one on one communication, the communicators were expected to look into one's eyes to reassure the participants that each person is representing the truth and nothing but the truth … Whereas, an opposite is the case among most Nigerians. They would look into one's eyes and lie between their teeth. To compound the lies, they would smile in the process, which was supposed to drive the nail right through the heart[43]."

This spate of lie, insincerity, falsehood and deception has eaten so deep into the fabric of Nigerians, even our political leaders, that it is almost being considered as an innate culture of Nigerians in certain quarters. Can we forget in a hurry the lies of a former president of the Nigerian senate and a former speaker of the Nigerian House of Representatives, two of the most powerful offices in the Nigerian political structure, who lied about their ages and academic qualifications - I mean the "Toronto certificate" saga among others? The consequent altercation and upheaval are recorded and stored in the archives for today's children to peruse. This situation is indeed highly worrisome and calls for urgent redress.

The peak of this paper is the practical application of the correspondence theory of truth to the interpersonal relations of Nigerians. To demonstrate this, relating partners would need to verify whether each other's claim aligns or corresponds to the fact on ground or not. A combination of any of the following methods would be potent for this goal: checking one another's family antecedents, attitudinal history, present practical disposition to realities of life, weight of integrity, and language parity. These would ineluctably go a long way to validate or refute each other's claim to truth. However, one cannot but admit the possibility of fuzzy or blurred situations where, in spite the above means of verification, the truth is still not empirically decipherable. At such point, one last potent medium of verification is what I have termed "the post-correspondence", "consequence or result centered", or "the benefit of the doubt" principle. In this last method of correspondence, the verification of truth is post-consequential; it is determined by the outcome deducible from the said claim. Thus, where the consequence matches the claim, the statement is said to be true, and where it does not, it is said to be false. This writer is however not unmindful of the implications of this view: one, is the determination of this so called "consequence" going to be in the immediate, short term, or on the long-run? Is it not possible for a false claim to produce a desired consequence, and vice versa? Where this happens, does the consequence- yielding- false – claim automatically qualify to be regarded as true? It should be submitted here that these are not too serious issues, and are also not within the purview of this paper; hence, ignoring them would not affect the success of this paper.

Summary and Conclusion

Generally, truth is both a cognitive and moral virtue critical and sine qua non to the success of any human interpersonal relations. While the term "truth" carries a positive connotation, even when sometimes its consequences may not be palatable, the terms deception, falsehood, lie, etc. carry strong negative moral connotation, frustrates harmonious relationship, and attracts social, legal, religious, or criminal sanctions to its users. It is thus high time Nigerians began to verify claims received from every quarter in order to forestall the bitter consequence of deception, fraud, and falsehood.

Effectual truth is such that goes beyond the theoretical level of principle to a pragmatic expression irrespective of outcome. Hence, for harmonious relationship to thrive in all strata of the Nigerian community, the need for a correspondent definition of truth and its application to the day to day life of all and sundry, regardless of class, age or status is inevitable. Every statement or claim should, henceforth, be evaluated from the perspective of the speaker's family antecedents, character history, present practical disposition to realities of life, weight of integrity, language parity, and ultimately, what I termed "the post-correspondence" principle. With these definitional methods of the correspondence theory of truth, interpersonal relations in Nigeria cannot but be better for it.

End Notes

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