

Seeing and Saying in the Context of Phenomenology: The Trajectory to Authenticity and Nation-Building

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Introduction

The assertion that “I” am because “We are” is the cornerstone of Africa’s relational ontology, grounded in the phenomenological spirit. The purport of this relational ontology is that, because of a We, we have an I. In other words, the individual’s life is meaningful only within the context of the community. If there is an I because of a We, what value should we place on the destiny of communities? The community is central to the individual’s life and survival. But communities are collectivities of individuals with diverse orientations, perceptions and attitudes. So, there are diverse identities in communities seeking participation and inclusion. This strikes at the core of the problem of identity and difference, and of reconciling the one and the many. How can communities shape the lives of individuals with diverse temperaments and orientations to help them actualise their potential for the greater good of all? By mediating the tension between individuals, on the one hand, and the tension between individuals and the community, on the other hand. Phenomenology can help achieve both. It is how to achieve this task to mellow down the bellicose temperament of mankind inebriated by the metaphysical spirit of superior-holier-than-thou attitude, dogmatism, intolerance, and fundamentalism that I set out to explore in this lecture.

Accordingly, this lecture has seven sections. Section one begins with the scourge of misunderstanding and ignorance, and caps it with metaphysical seeing and speaking and the groundswell of intolerance. Section two will highlight theistic and anti-theistic tendencies and their consequences for society, while section three will discuss the difference between metaphysics and ontology. Section four will deliberate on the nature of phenomenological seeing and speaking. Section five will discuss authenticity and nation-building, emphasising the importance of truth-telling in social relations. Section six will present a summary of discussions and recommendations, and section seven will present acknowledgements, abridged contributions to knowledge, and important awards.

SECTION ONE

The Scourge of Misunderstanding and Ignorance

The scourge of misunderstanding, bigotry and intolerance ensnare the pathway of genuine understanding and peaceful coexistence of identities that exhibit both similar and disparate characteristics. Take, for instance, the simple tension between believers and nonbelievers in the discourse on God. Communities, recognising their centrality in individuals' lives, should be more conscious of cultivating a culture of accommodation and shared vision among their members and of avoiding the habit of entertaining binary oppositions between entities that appear dissimilar. We begin our intellectual surgery by asserting that believers and nonbelievers are both believers. Believers believe in the existence of God. Nonbelievers believe in the nonexistence of God. So they are both believers with rival notions of God's nature.

In either case, the “isness” of the Entity in contention is taken for granted, that is, that God is. What it is and what it is not is the bone of contention, not that it is not entirely. In each case, there is a debate about something—an Entity. It is the Entity’s mode of being that is the issue, not that the Entity is ontologically unavailable. The availability of the Entity provides an opportunity for dialogue, conversation, disputation, debate and further inquiry. This point was established somewhat differently some decades ago in the averment that difficulties in conceptions of God provide an escape route to atheism (Unah, 1988, p. 69). Both believers and nonbelievers acknowledge that the Entity—God—is, regardless of whether they say that It is or that It is not, which is a second-order activity. The first-order activity is: a particular entity is, or is not; how it is or is not is quite a different matter altogether.

Isness is the unanalysable condition of being—the very indisputable fact that something is. For if it is not, what is being debated or disputed? What is often debated or disputed is the oughtness of isness, not isness, because isness provides the basis for intellectual engagement among both believers and non-believers. The dispute is often about what being should be or what it should not be, not about the concept’s availability for intellectual engagement. Both the beingness and nonbeingness of being are about beingness.

When it is asserted that God does not exist, what is egregiously implied is that God is not what it is claimed to be, not that the concept is unavailable for discussion. What is often inadvertently contested is that the evidence points to the contrary of what the Entity is claimed to be. Were that not the case, further debate on the topic would be impossible. So we reiterate the point that believers and nonbelievers are both believers. One believes in the existence of God; the other, in the nonexistence of God. For both groups of believers, the concept of God is the central topic of discussion or debate. There is always something—an Entity—that both groups affirm and deny. That Entity is what provides us—believers and nonbelievers alike—with a legitimate and honest opportunity and occupation for inquiry.

If the “I” is meaningful because there is a “We”, the life of believers has significance only within the context of the lives of nonbelievers. Any group that seeks to exterminate the other(s) is merely digging away the ground on which it stands, as believers and nonbelievers are intertwined in the politics of making meaning of an otherwise meaningless universe. It is like the individual vainly seeking to undermine the community, or, conversely, the community seeking to stifle and engulf the individual. According to William Ebenstein, quoted by Campbell Shittu Momoh, even the early Greeks could not contemplate the concept of liberty as an entirely individual affair, unrelated to the quality of a person as a member of their organized political community (cf. Momoh, 1994, p. 17).

Ontologically, there is a structural interconnection between believers and nonbelievers. A symbiotic relationship obtains between them. Each feeds on the other for its meaningfulness and significance. There are ontologically legitimate and logical grounds for asserting and maintaining that God is, as much as there are valid arguments for asserting that God is not, especially in the second-order sense. The legitimate and logical grounds for contending that God exists or that God does not exist are grounded in the second-order sense. It is only in the second-order sense that valid arguments can be advanced for both theistic and anti-theistic positions and tendencies. What is debated at this level is not isness, but the oughtness of isness—what does this entity (God) do or look like? What can we legitimately and logically claim that it does or does not do? What capacity does It have to do and undo? Is this Entity an idea in the human mind, or is

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It a being out there with the capacity to cause things to be or not to be?
What is the nature of this Entity called God?

It is the discourse on the nature of God that separates believers from non-believers, theists from non-theists or atheists. Even among theists or believers, there is diversity of opinion about how descriptive attributes such as “love”, “power”, “intelligence”, “perfection”, “kindness”, “seeing”, and so on apply to God. Some say that these attributes apply to God in a literal sense. Others aver that they apply in a metaphorical sense. Those who claim that attributes apply to God in a literal sense further contend that such attributes apply infinitely, while others argue that they apply in a finite sense. These claims and counter-claims about the attributes of God transmogrify into what are known in the literature as the metaphysical, infinite anthropomorphic, and finite anthropomorphic conceptions of God, respectively (Edwards, p. 176).

Likewise, in the discourse on the notion of creation in relation to God, believers are further divided into three broad groups—the Creator as Uncaused Cause or Unmoved Mover, who set the world in motion and has since abandoned it (a view associated with Aristotle), the Creator as a perfect, all-powerful, all-knowing and benevolent God (a position espoused by Thomas Aquinas), and the Creator as not necessarily perfect, but nonetheless created the world and has been sustaining and perfecting it (a perspective attributed to Hegel and Whitehead). All these are contentious theistic positions held by different groups of believers. The rejection of any of these positions, contentious as they are, is considered an attitude of unbelief or an anti-theistic position. But it is because the metaphysical position is rejected that the infinite anthropomorphic position was proposed as a better option. And again, it is because of the inadequacies of both the infinite anthropomorphic and the metaphysical conceptions of God that the finite anthropomorphic conception was enunciated. The latter two perspectives are not treated as unbelief or atheism because they propose alternative conceptions of God that they consider more meaningful and practicable for believers. It is the conspiracy of one group to refuse to acknowledge that what the other sees as meaningful for it is indeed meaningful for it that there is a groundswell of intolerance amongst humankind all over the world, with graver consequences for developing communities that have not entertained and resolved the radical philosophical question of how they want to be as a collective.

Metaphysical Seeing and Speaking and the Groundswell of Intolerance

In metaphysics, architects of systems design their worlds on the basis of the principles of reality that manifest compellingly to them, and seek to repudiate other organising principles of reality that are inaccessible or not understandable to them. Yet the different metaphysical systems are diverse processes of actualising the manifestation of reality accessible to different communities of Homo sapiens. Like Heraclitus's River, which none can step into twice, each community's encounter with Reality is unique to it. Reality is one humongous repository of encounters or an inexhaustible reservoir of meaning that none can completely comprehend.

Each community's understanding is valid for itself, and another community's understanding is valid for that community, as long as it does not negate or abolish what the first community understands about Reality or the world. However, metaphysicians tend to be planetary system builders, constantly aiming to claim the majority of Reality for themselves and to dominate others, forcing them to adopt their own way of understanding the world. This leads to resistance and hostility. Initially, there is the intolerance of the other by the metaphysical system builder, who claims exclusive insight into Reality for their system. Then, there is the rise of competing metaphysical system builders seeking to challenge and retaliate against the arrogant metaphysician for the damage caused by their hubris and intolerance towards genuine encounters with Reality.

One metaphysical system builder thinks and speaks disparagingly of the other, exhibiting intolerance and rejection. The other replies and seeks to retaliate by constructing systems that not only protect its world but also develop containment systems for aggressor metaphysical interlopers. That is how the world becomes riddled with intolerance of one group against the other, and vice versa. That is how the world came to nurture planetary aggressors and avengers of aggression, each contesting to outdo the other, promoting intolerance and belligerence that now threaten humanity with a cataclysmic vortex. All of this arises from spiritual ambition expressed in religious teachings, dogmas, fanaticism and intolerance. Religious ideology is the most potent tool masquerading as bigotry, superstition and ignorance. And this castrates man's ultimate essence of seeing and saying what he encounters as Reality. This is the destruction of freedom that ought to make humans more human in mind

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and spirit, and make society more humane. Fortunately, there is a superior metaphysics which restores the freedom and dignity of man. This superior metaphysics, or the transcendence or the overcoming of metaphysics, is phenomenology. But let's get more clarity on metaphysical seeing and saying.

Metaphysical Seeing and Speaking

The metaphysical seeing and speaking involve perceiving and expressing things as they are, recognising them as Reality manifesting itself to consciousness, to the human mind. These perceptions and expressions vary across different consciousnesses, minds, and communities. The approach of thought is to accept and cogitate given phenomena freely. When a group of students is asked to shut themselves off from all distractions, meditate for a set period, say 10 minutes, and then honestly share the contents of their consciousness, different thoughts or preoccupations will be recorded. The key point is that no one determines what the mind thinks or what happens within an individual's consciousness. It occurs freely based on the temporality of individuals and communities — what might have been, what is, and what could be in the process of historicising the entities or identities involved.

The problem begins when a thinker claims that what they see is the absolute truth about Reality, about the world. Everyone is permitted to say what they see of the world. But if what an individual or community sees about Reality is all there is, how can other minds or communities participate in their own seeing and saying, which has the characteristic of disclosure, of revealing the world as it occurs to diverse minds? This penchant for absolute truth, of absolute seeing and saying about the world, gives birth to the regime of one true story. The regime of one true story destroys the diverse character of Reality. This is an exercise in swimming against the tide that allows the multiplicity of encounters with the world. It is this multiplicity of encounters that discloses the world, yielding its infinite possibilities for enriching humanity.

Seeing and saying are man's true nature and vocation. One who declines to see and say is merely burying the talent endowed by nature, which enables humans to become co-creators with Nature or Providence. Likewise, one who decrees against this seeing and saying, which characterises human reality, is stifling creativity and innovation. Genuine

metaphysicising is an exercise in creativity and innovation, because humans are constantly seeing and saying, constantly transcending what is to what is not to enrich the world, constantly going beyond now, beyond physics, to the not now, planning ahead, planning for the future, and reaching beyond this being to that being to enrich this being.

Phenomenological metaphysics captures and clearly articulates the genuine seeing and saying that enrich the world. Man's major equipment for relating to the world in a transformative, creative manner is consciousness, the human mind, endowed with creative, productive imagination. It is this creative, productive imagination, described by Kant and Heidegger as an incessant reproductive process, that authorises man's seeing and saying, man's disclosure of entities in the world in temporal phases and dimensions, which always leaves room for more seeing and saying about the world, making human creative intelligence the signature of Nature. Stating the infinite capacity of the creative imagination to organise experience and render Reality meaningful, Heidegger has this to say about Kant's understanding of the imagination:

Because of its freedom, the imagination for Kant is a faculty of comparing, shaping, differentiating, and of comparing in general (synthesis). "Imagining", therefore, denotes all non-perceptive representation in the broadest sense of the term: fancying, contriving, fabricating, worrying, daydreaming, and the like. The "power of imagination" ... is thus joined with wit, the power of differentiation, and the faculty of comparing in general (Heidegger, 1962, p. 136).

And Heidegger's Kant further says that the 'power of "forming" relations originally is pure imagination itself' (p. 87).

Thus, all cognitive activities of the mind, including seeing and saying about the world, forming relations, and connecting things, are powered by the pure productive imagination, through the process of finite transcendence, the process of reaching beyond entities to their being in order to comprehend them and render them meaningful for us. An elaboration of this immense capacity of human beings to create order, and sometimes disorder, in making and unmaking the world will be carried out in the section dealing with the Difference between Metaphysics and Ontology.

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On phenomenological terms, seeing and speaking are man's true nature and vocation. But seeing and speaking what exists, preventing others from seeing and speaking what they perceive of the world, is the disease from which humanity must be cured. How could you see, speak, and decree that others should not see and speak when these qualities are inherently part of a human being? Apart from restricting access to genuine experience, preventing others from seeing and speaking what they perceive about the world leads directly to chaos and social breakdown. Only the phenomenological attitude can rescue humanity from its metaphysically destined path of monolithic culturalism, rather than multiculturalism rooted in man's authentic nature.

This clarification of the metaphysical temperament and the phenomenological attitude prepares us to address directly the disquieting religious crisis engulfing the world today, especially in our part of the world, where religion is being thoughtlessly deployed to maim and destroy human lives, entities that should be treated as an end, not as means to power and control, and protected at all costs, to promote egalitarianism, benefit mankind and glorify Providence. It is to revisit how the contentions and disagreements between believers and nonbelievers, on the one hand, and the acrimony between the organized and evangelizing religions, on the other hand, have provided fertile grounds for adherents of the religions to become disposable cannon fodder for political power-seekers and control seekers, displacing populations and replacing them through genocidal activities and ethnic cleansing. Apparently, what many take for granted has dire consequences for both the individual and the community, as we are seeing today.

Evidently, the main difference between believers and nonbelievers is that while the former reject unsatisfactory notions of God and propose alternatives, the latter merely reject unsatisfactory conceptions and fail to offer alternatives that leave room for transcendence, which is socially and politically very dangerous. This is exemplified in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre (Unah, 2014, pp. 180-183). However, a few contenders to the available conceptions of God proposed non-theistic non-transcendental alternatives, placing them in the province of humanism. One example will suffice in this lecture. It was Andreas Ludwig Feuerbach!

Both theistic and anti-theistic tendencies have consequences for the individual and the community; if the latter falls into slumber or fails to chart a proper course for its members. It is to these that we now turn, ushering us into the domain of phenomenological seeing and saying, thereby navigating the trajectory of authentic nation-building.

SECTION TWO

Theistic and Anti-theistic Tendencies and the Consequences for Society

Theistic tendencies are often summarised in the concept of theism—the view that God exists. Ontologically, theism is the assertion that God is, an Entity with specific and identifiable characteristics, which believers can relate to, build their hopes and aspirations on, and depend upon for their ultimate salvation. Anti-theistic tendencies are expressed in the concept of atheism—the position that God does not exist or ontologically that God is not, and that there is no Entity in reality corresponding to such a being, as the theists usually allege. Atheism is usually based on the Epicurean dilemma that an all-powerful and perfectly good God could not create a world full of evil. Atheists argue that the problem of evil, or the undeniable fact that evil exists, makes the very idea of an omnipotent and perfectly good God untenable.

Patrick Sherry (Feb. 11, 2026) avers that the problem of evil derives from three fundamental propositions—that God is all-powerful, God is perfectly good, and evil exists, attributing them to Epicurus, cited by David Hume (1779). From Hume’s dialogues in which Demea, Philo, and Cleanthes (characters in the book) debated several arguments for the existence of God, from argument from design, cosmological argument, to argument from evil, ending up with refutations, defenses, and theodicies (explanations of why evil persists), none has been able to put an end to the controversy around the problem of evil, especially the *evidential problem of evil* which continues to highlight the unabated existence of evil in the world, beyond those arising from sin and the exercise of freewill, the usual escape route of religions. If humans suffer evil because of the original sin and the wrong exercise of freewill, including the suffering of children on account of the sins of their parents beginning from Adam, as alleged, no argument has been able to account convincingly for the “sufferings of non-

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human animal species from natural evils and human cruelty against them” (Wikipedia).

Regarding the logical problem of evil, which is the counterpart to the problem of evil, atheists need to be aware that it is not logically impossible for evil to exist alongside an all-powerful, omniscient, and perfectly good God. Most philosophers seem content with various arguments and defenses such as the argument from design, the cosmological argument, and the Aristotelian argument from Cause. It is not logically impossible for the Creative Intelligence to set the world in motion and then let it operate independently. An Uncaused Cause or Unmoved Mover could initiate a world of motion and then leave it to run on its own. But what consequences would emerge for both theistic and anti-theistic positions? How would those who believe in God's existence and those who deny it relate to one another or coexist within the community or society?

Consequences for Society

It is the responsibility of a community or society to regulate motives and promote peaceful cohabitation and harmonious relationships among its members. If some members are motivated to profess faith in a transcendent Being or Entity, it is the duty of community or society leaders to establish rules and regulations governing the conduct of faith-based members towards members of other faiths or non-faith-based members, to ensure peaceful coexistence and harmonious relationships for all. Those who study the nature and structure of human society describe it as regularised interaction (Unah, 1999, p. 35); implying that there are rules of conduct to govern members' behaviour and to enforce compliance with those rules by everyone.

Sociology, by definition, is the discipline that studies society (Olurode, 1999, p. 1). Societies vary according to typologies and levels of social organisation. A society comprises the individuals living within it. However, these individuals are nurtured in units called families. Families constitute a society. They are organised into units by males and females. Individuals are raised in families of orientation to establish their own families of procreation through marriage rites, rituals, and ceremonies. Marriage is practiced worldwide, but not everyone desires to marry and establish a family. Some people marry, while others choose not to. People have their

reasons for marrying or not wanting to marry (p.1). Furthermore, people marry and sometimes cease to marry—leading to separation or divorce.

If people marry and some others decide to stay out of marriage, why shouldn't people be allowed to believe in and practice religion, while others are allowed to profess unbelief and opt to stay out of religion? Why should society's instituting authorities not firmly disallow any attempt by groups and individuals within society to impose religions on individuals who want to profess unbelief and stay out of organised religions? Why should the profession of faith or unbelief result in acrimonious relationships in society? Can a society which cannot effectively regulate motives and protect both believers and nonbelievers ever achieve peaceful coexistence amongst its members? Is such a society not an experiment with disintegration?

Come to think of it, what are the consequences for society of believing or not believing in God? To answer this question in ways that are phenomenologically transparent, let us examine what happens in the lives of believers and nonbelievers (who are ultimately believers in an egregious sense). What happens in societies that are preponderantly religious and those that are preponderantly nonreligious? So, we are going to perform intellectual surgery by examining the conduct of individuals and of the political societies of believers and nonbelievers. So, we proceed from the life world, the pre-philosophical, pre-phenomenological world, to the transcendental phenomenological order of genuine experiencing.

One of the fundamental achievements of religions lies in two parts—achievements in natural religions and achievements in organised religions. In natural religions, individuals and communities offered explanations for some baffling, inexplicable occurrences in nature. What causes lightning and thunder? What triggers rainfall, bountiful harvests, and famine? What causes diseases? Why do people die? Who created human beings? To answer these puzzling questions and address other unpredictable natural events, early humans formed groups and communities. The most thoughtful among them sought answers by providing explanations. Some deities under the watch of a Supreme Being were believed to be responsible for all these phenomena. Since thunder and lightning are not caused by humans, some invisible deities must be responsible. No one knew what caused rainfall,

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bountiful harvests, or famine. Some unseen deities were thought to be the cause. Similarly, diseases were believed to be caused by angry deities or gods. A place of contact, appeasement, and veneration had to be established for them. This mindset dominated human thought in most parts of the world during the early stages of civilisation.

The Egyptians, Jews, Babylonians, Amalekites, Greeks, Romans, Indians, Africans, and others created idols, images, and shrines to honour and respect these powerful natural forces, as they believed at the time, to bring comfort to the restless void of life. Community members were encouraged to take part in religious rites, rituals, and ceremonies, but not under threat of death. People were urged to appease the deities and venerate the gods if the priests sensed something was wrong that could provoke the gods' disapproval. They were not terrified into obeying the gods; they did so only when they felt it was necessary or under the priest's command if he divined that a crime had been committed or a taboo broken. That was simple natural religion, in plain terms. From this, it can be inferred that natural religion was characterised by man's dependence on the forces of nature, leading to polytheism—the adoption and veneration of many deities or gods by different groups within the community.

Frederick Copleston informs us that in *The Essence of Religion*, Ludwig Feuerbach identified polytheism as a nature religion characterised by man's dependence on Nature, viewing this dependence as a form of alienation. He associated this feeling of dependence on Nature as the basis or ground of religion. However, in *The Essence of Christianity*, Copleston states that Feuerbach presents the idea of God as a projection of man's best qualities into the void and a resort to worshipping this transcendent imaginary Being as an advanced form of religion, exemplified by Christendom (Copleston, 1963, p. 63). The key point is that, for Feuerbach, both natural religion and organised religion involve a form of alienation, implying that man must diminish his human worth to approach, venerate, or worship the supersensible, whether it resides in nature or is projected into the void. Man must devalue himself and alienate himself from his true self to become a believer in the religious sense, whether organised or unorganised.

In further analysing the concept of alienation, developed from Hegel and Marx, to deconstruct the psychology of religious believers, Feuerbach makes the point that

... consciousness of God is self-consciousness, knowledge of God is self-knowledge, by his God thou knowest the man and by the man his God: whatever is God to man, that is his heart and soul, God is the manifested inward nature, the expressed self of a man (1989, pp.12-13). To enrich God, man must become poor, that God may be all, man must be nothing; God, the almighty, infinite, unlimited being, is a person, he is a self seeking egoistical being, he denies human dignity and ego; God is the luxury of human egoism (pp. 26-27).

The feelings of reliance on Nature and submission to a monotheistic, transcendent God associated with alienation are not resolvable as long as one remains engaged with religion. Liberation is possible only for those who possess the intellectual capacity to fully consider the process, restoring their dignity and ego, and reclaiming qualities they have invested in a transcendent being. This represents the stage of man's self-realisation independently, and the overcoming of the kind of self-alienation involved in religion.

The lesson from Feuerbach is that religion is man's rejection of himself by himself in obeisance to a mentally constructed Deity. He does not seem to believe that all of humankind can be free from feelings of dependence on Nature or the creation of abstract ideas of a supreme divine being to compensate for man's inadequacies. He thinks that humans can free themselves from the chains and bonds of religion by redirecting all the attributes traditionally assigned to God back to themselves. He believes that overcoming the alienation inherent in religion is what will liberate humanity.

But the feeling of dependence is innate in humans, in one way or another, and it is the reason why religion has become such a persistent, wicked problem for humanity. It is easily understood and relatable for the average person who lacks the capacity for scientific understanding of nature or the abstract metaphysicising of principles by the intellect and human imagination. That is why the holy and the profane, the vulgar and the scholar, the glitterati and the literati, the believer and the nonbeliever, are forever entangled in a confused state of affairs. It is for this reason that

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Joseph Omoregbe asserts that “It is now generally agreed by philosophers that the existence of God can neither be proved nor disproved. The question of God’s existence, therefore, remains a matter of belief and not of philosophical or scientific demonstration” (Omoregbe, 1993, p. 117). And my final take on the matter, at this juncture, before I move to a more critical issue of the distinction between metaphysics and ontology is that, *No one disputes the word “God.” What is forever disputed is what God is claimed to be, and what he is alleged to have done or be doing. The concept of God offers both believers and nonbelievers a legitimate opportunity to contemplate the world.*

SECTION THREE

The Difference between Metaphysics and Ontology

The world seeks clarity regarding the difference between metaphysics and ontology. They are often used interchangeably, even by professional philosophers. Or is there no real distinction between them? Do they mean the same thing, and are two philosophers using these terms in their work engaging in exactly the same activity? This lack of clarity between the two philosophical areas is a global concern. Before the pandemic, Trinity College in Dublin had scheduled a symposium to address this issue, and I was one of those invited from Africa, if not the only one at the time. After we had prepared our presentations, the symposium was cancelled for unclear reasons. I then forgot about it until the 2025/2026 postgraduate class at the University of Lagos, which offered Advanced Metaphysics (encoded PHY 904), prompted me to clarify the distinction, if any, between metaphysics and ontology. This question made me think about the matter again. Here is my response:

Metaphysics

After its accidental coinage by the editors of Aristotle’s works, notably Andronicus of Rhodes, from the Greek construction, *meta ta physica*, the term ‘metaphysics’ became synonymous with the study of the forms of reality or hidden essences underlying the appearance of things, or the study of the first principles in the organisation of experience — the study of what lies beyond the domain of ordinary facts, or what lies beyond the bounds of sense — the study of being qua being.

In our daily commerce with the world, all of us, one way or the other, are led beyond the boundary of ordinary facts to interrogate the source by reason of which facts came to be and have meaning or potency. Concerning this, F. H. Bradley writes,

All of us, I presume, more or less, are led beyond the region of ordinary facts. Some in one way and some in others, we seem to touch and have communion with what is beyond the visible world. In various manners we find something higher, which both supports and humbles us, both chastens and transports us (Bradley, 1962, p. 41).

Metaphysics explores questions of ultimate reality, the universality of being as being, how we extend beyond the present situation into the “not now,” how we transcend what is to what is not, from what is known to what is unknown. Its aim is to enhance our ability to adopt new approaches, forge new relationships with the world, and connect differently with things and people; in short, to foster innovation. All these are ways of actualising our metaphysical nature.

Furthermore, the search for the principles or ultimate building blocks of the world, the design of the concepts for organising experience by the mind, and the pursuit of meaning, order, coherence, and unity among multiple, disparate, and diverse entities are exercises in metaphysics. All of us are involved, one way or another, in these activities. What this means is that metaphysics is our way of being more truly human, more creative, more inventive, and more innovative. The less metaphysical we are, the less creative, inventive, and innovative we become. All this amounts to stating that the search for principles to introduce order in disorder, meaning in meaninglessness, purpose in purposelessness, sanity in insanity, sense in senselessness, and unity in diversity is undeniably metaphysical.

However, it is within this display of capacity that metaphysicians inadvertently introduce rigidity, exclusivity, objectification, fixism, fanaticism, intolerance, totalitarianism, the lust for one true story, and the regimes of the absolute into the science of Being. Being is the subject matter of ontology, and before we press the button on the distinction between metaphysics and ontology, let us review the clarification made by the Greek master of metaphysics, Aristotle, on the two senses of metaphysics, though it is disputable whether he ever used the term ‘metaphysics.’

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Aristotle's clarification of first philosophy made the distinction of two senses of metaphysics easily discernible—*metaphysical speccialis* and *metaphysical generalis*. This means metaphysics as a specialised science and metaphysics as the science of pure Being, of being precisely in its aspect as being, or being qua being. Frederick Copleston makes this point succinctly clear:

... that metaphysical science is concerned with being as such, is the study of being qua being. The special sciences isolate a particular sphere of being, and consider the attributes of being in that sphere; but the metaphysician does not consider being of this or that particular characteristic, e. g. as living or as quantitative, but rather being itself and its essential attributes as being (Copleston, 1946, p.76).

The main point here is that each specialised discipline focuses on or studies a specific part of reality. In this way, every science can be seen as a form of specialised metaphysics since it explores an aspect of reality, and metaphysics itself is the study of reality. Therefore, metaphysics appears in every specialised field of study and in all theoretical efforts. This is why there are often competing theories within each discipline. These competing theories are expressions or demonstrations of their metaphysical foundations. It is this that enables disciplines to explore new ideas, concepts, and approaches to expand their influence and coverage. When you hear phrases like "ontology of engineering" or "ontology of computer science," they are describing the metaphysical principles behind these disciplines. This is the first sense of metaphysics already adopted by the specialised sciences. Moving on to the second sense of metaphysics, more technically called pure ontology, which deals with pure being rather than particular beings.

Ontology

The main areas of influence of *Metaphysica Specialis* were originally identified as theology, cosmology, and psychology (Unah, 1997, p. 31). These have since fragmented into the diverse specialised sciences as the question of what reality is has become increasingly fluid and fragile, expanding the scope of the Kantian spectacle—the categories of the human understanding. These categories of human understanding are Kant's way of elaborating the infinite capacity of human mental powers—the pure productive imagination, as an incessant reproductive process. It is this

faculty of the human mind, which appeared to Kant as a bottomless pit, a transcendental object X in the Critique of Pure Reason or, as Heidegger designated it, “A vast expanse of uncharted territory of possibilities,” that cleared the ground for an understanding of how metaphysics in general (ontology) is both possible and inevitable. How did Kant and Heidegger arrive at this, and what are the specific terminologies used by these great thinkers who essayed a return to communitarianism, characterising the African lifeworld, which urges a return to authenticity, to the simple, the essential, and the stable? They both achieved this by their critiques of metaphysics or *Metaphysica Generalis*.

In the Critique of Pure Reason, especially the first edition, Immanuel Kant makes a fundamental distinction between the realm of language and the non-language realm, which he describes as Phenomena and Noumena. According to Kant, the human mind is structured into twelve categories of understanding in accordance with the structure of human language, in such a way that the latter (language) can only meaningfully describe. Human language can only appropriately describe and comprehend the things of sense, being as such, instances or aspects of reality, in accordance with the knowledge moulds in the human mind, which exist in the mind before experience. The mind imposes these moulds on objects of sense (phenomena), making them appear or look like these moulds, just like the blockmaker’s mould turns a mixture of sand, cement, and water into blocks or bricks, or as Kant puts it, the categories of the mind impose the colour of the lenses on the visual fields of perception, on the objects of sense, making them appear the way they do. So, only things as they appear can truly be known, not things as they are.

Things as they are, Kant describes as Noumena. Human beings may believe in or speculate about things as they are, but cannot have accurate knowledge of them in themselves. Things as they are in themselves are objects of speculation, not of human knowledge. Entities such as God, angels, spirits, souls, democracy, monarchy, aristocracy, heaven, hell, and so on, are objects of belief or speculation because they cannot be fully known as they are in themselves. We call knowledge of phenomena, or of things of sense, or of things as they appear, empirical knowledge. Kant calls this ontic knowledge, which presupposes a priori knowledge for its possibility. This leads Kant to propose a priori knowledge and to

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characterise it as the source of the objectivity factor, without which objective experience is not possible.

Now, if metaphysical knowledge or a science of metaphysics is not possible, according to Kant, but an act of metaphysics is inevitable within what he calls practical reason, ‘which assumes the existence of metaphysical beings as’ “indispensable for guidance of the understanding and will in life” (Unah, 1997, p. 85; Kant, 1962, p. 189), a programme of the metaphysics of metaphysics, or the source of the factor of objectivity, which makes objective experience possible, has become imperative. It calls for laying the foundation for such a metaphysics, a kind of super-ontology that grounds ontological knowledge, a metaphysics of metaphysics that anchors ontic and ontological knowledge on a superstructure of being. This is where Martin Heidegger comes into the picture, and where the difference between metaphysics and ontology begins.

Metaphysics is the study of being qua being, distinct from the ontical, specialised sciences. But in examining being qua being, metaphysics becomes sidetracked by asking about reality or being in general within specific categories, as if it were imitating the specialised, ontical sciences; instead of properly posing the fundamental ontological question of what belongs to any entity at all. However, ontology—the study of being—attempts to address the fundamental question of what being in general means, but in doing so, it overlooks the ontological difference and confuses the categories. Kant and Heidegger pointed in the right direction towards the proximity of being, which is human being, so that ontology becomes a fundamental ontology, the ontology of human being; thus, recognising man’s priority in the quest for being. This Kantian-Heideggerian intervention began to dispel the fog of confusion clouding the study of being. But this did not resolve the misunderstanding concerning metaphysics as it pertains to the ontical, specialised sciences.

In short, the embarrassment and outrage of traditional metaphysics are plainly evident in the disputes within the ontical, specialised sciences. Among scholars, you hear either that there is no metaphysics in biology or that there should be none; the same applies to mathematics, history, law, and so forth. As if this embarrassment were not enough, professional philosophers lament the incomprehensibility of metaphysics, much to the utter outrage and embarrassment of their already confused students.

Following the demarcation of spheres of influence by the ontical, specialised sciences, which strive to be more empirical than metaphysical, traditional philosophers began feverishly to ape the regional ontologies, demarcating aspects of reality as their spheres of influence, to the extent that the specialised sciences are at a loss as to what precisely the philosophers actually do. You hear traditional philosophers contesting their territories of being and locating true being or real reality in definite entities. Beginning with Plato, you hear that the real is the idea, the real is matter, the real is subjectivity, the real is force or vital force, the real is the Tao, and so on and so forth. Whereas, in point of fact, all these are beings or aspects of being.

What is wrong and problematic is not in seeing reality as mind or matter, or as subjectivity or vital force or the Tao, but in magnifying any of these to prescribe the total norm. Freedom of thought allows everyone to see reality as it is presented. To assume that you can and that others cannot or should not see the aspect of reality available to their consciousness is to decree freedom of thought out of practice, when we have exercised the same freedom in saying or disclosing what we see of the world.

Needless to say, once humans make the mistake of presenting aspects or profiles of being as being itself, the whole of being, or the whole of reality, they inadvertently or deliberately objectify reality, thereby leading to the conceptual freezing of experience. By objectifying reality, humans make things rigid and create a world of inflexible things, ideas, and people. A world of rigidity, inflexibility, and inelasticity creates room for contest and conquest, and the attitude of vengeance which has characterised human destiny from antiquity to the present day (Unah, 2016, p. 9). By so doing, metaphysics and metaphysicians occasion the obliviousness to being, with the result that humans are misguided into constructing practical systems that imperil genuine seeing and saying about the world. It is for this reason that Heidegger indicts traditional ontology, vows to destroy and renovate it by interrogating its foundations. The solution to the problem of misguided metaphysics is an advanced form of metaphysics, which Heidegger calls a fundamental ontology.

Heidegger begins his destruction of the Western metaphysical tradition, which is indeed a reconstruction, after an initial demolition exercise, faithful to the phenomenological method of the epoche. He contends that

all the criticisms levelled against Western metaphysics are well deserved. First, it lacks a foundation. Second, it purports to speak about being but blurs the ontological difference between being and beings, confusing the categories and obstructing genuine understanding. And third, its operations lead to a callous, oblivious disregard for being, with catastrophic consequences for humankind (Unah, 1996a, p. 85). But none of these failings warrants the abandonment of metaphysics. What is required is a foundation. He takes on the task of providing a foundation for metaphysics, since it is ingrained in human nature and presupposed in every discipline or science.

Heidegger identifies the problem of metaphysics as the task of a fundamental ontology, by which he means the ontological analysis of human essence, preparatory to the foundation of metaphysics, which belongs to human nature. Fundamental ontology holds that the metaphysics of human nature is necessary if metaphysics in general is to be possible. He accepts Kant's Critique of Pure Reason as the building block for laying the foundation of metaphysics. But why is this procedure or methodology sacrosanct if the original task was to analyse pure being? How is the concern with general metaphysics interconnected with the analysis of human essence or human nature? Why go through a circuit? Why not confront pure being directly and present it precisely as it is?

Since the theme of ontology is being precisely as being, and not a determinate entity like other entities, it appears that the search for such an entity may be fruitless, or at best incomprehensible, if the researcher did not proceed from the known to the unknown or from the familiar to the unfamiliar. A familiar entity that exhibits similar characteristics to the being of entities would be more appropriate in such a search. That entity is human being or human existence. The method identified for this purpose, of interrogating human being, must be such that it looks at things dispassionately and transparently, making them stand out clearly as they are in themselves. It must be a method capable of probing into origins, and can pry loose all rigid traditions laden with prejudices, biases, presuppositions and preconceptions. That method is phenomenology, although it was originally developed by Edmund Husserl to purify science and guide it against all errors (Husserl, 1970, p. 1).

Heidegger says the theme, or what, of philosophy is the being of entities, and the how, or method, of disclosing such entities is

phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 49-60). The exercise of making the being of humans stand out clearly, as it is in itself, is phenomenological, pure and simple. The ontology of human being, or human existence, is the concrete step in laying the foundation of metaphysics, which belongs to human nature. The ontology of human existence is a description of what pertains to acts of consciousness in general, not a description of acts of consciousness necessary for the constitution of knowledge, for this latter would be a psychology. What is achieved in this sort of analysis of human existence is a metaphysics of human being, as the foundation of foundations, the source of the ontological synthesis, and the embodiment of what makes metaphysics possible, be it *Metaphysica Specialis* or *Metaphysica Generalis*.

Ontology, the study of being, is commonly used to refer to *Metaphysica Generalis*, the proper task or preoccupation of philosophy, and to the increasing calibration of the spheres of influence of the regional ontologies that deal with beings. General metaphysics, pure ontology, or the study of pure being concerns the general features of reality, what belongs to any nature whatsoever, not in a theory of knowledge, and how metaphysics is possible—how it is possible for humans to think metaphysically. In this sense, ontology establishes what Kant calls the internal or intrinsic possibility of metaphysics. It is the establishment of the internal dynamics of metaphysics, or what makes metaphysics possible, that distinguishes traditional metaphysics from ontology. An insight into the analysis of pure being can only be gained through the analysis of the human being, or through a phenomenological description of the structure of consciousness, or of what belongs to consciousness in general. On this count, the ontology of human existence cannot be reduced to regional ontologies or specialised sciences such as anthropology or psychology. This is not mentioned here to disparage any of these regional ontologies because they, too, have their uses and relevance in the scheme of things.

In this context, at this level of analysis, I have begun to play down the question of the analysis of pure being, because that is no longer our focus in this lecture, having introduced us to where we are now. The analysis of pure being has been carried out in chapter three of the *Discourse on the Ontology of Human Being*. From this point, ontology is the ontology of human existence or human being. The ontology of human being is the

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interrogation of human reality and its essential characteristics. It concerns what belongs to human existence in general. It is a metaphysics of human nature concerned with determining the metaphysical capacity and capability of human beings, which makes all other forms of human activity possible. It is an endeavour to help the human person see themselves clearly as they are. It takes human reality as the foundation of foundations, the basis of all forms of earthbound existence (Unah, 1997, pp. 18-44; 2016, pp.41-48); reminding us of the *Homo Mensura Dictum* of Protagoras of Abdera—that man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, of things that are not that they are not. It remains now to be seen how phenomenological seeing and saying can enhance understanding of fundamental ontology and the nature of human existence.

SECTION FOUR

The Nature of Phenomenological Seeing and Speaking

All these ways of understanding how reality is revealed through the mind's intellectual faculties are enabled and presented within the framework of phenomenological philosophy. This is what we refer to as the ontology of human existence, supported by phenomenological seeing and saying. Phenomenology asserts that entities are structured so that they reveal themselves exactly as they are to consciousness. But if that were true, why are falsehoods and inaccuracies recorded in the political, social, economic, religious, and other domains of human experience? Why does the testimony of those who disclose information about entities in the world often not align with the actual state of affairs they describe? Why does untruth appear in human transactions more than we can explain by the truth? Why do human beings not see and say what they see precisely as it is? Two explanations are possible. First, the individuals involved in disclosing the world lack the capacity or inclination to see clearly and describe what they perceive as accurately as possible. Second, most humans engaged in the activities of seeing and saying what they see are products of the metaphysical tradition and thus are unable to disclose entities exactly as they occur. They mostly describe entities through Kantian spectacles, which colour their perception, leading to distortion and concealment.

But in phenomenological seeing, the inquirer is trained to strip the object of inquiry of all obscuring preconceptions and presuppositions, all

biases and prejudices, so that the basic traits of the entity under inspection stand out clearly. This is how phenomenological seeing reveals the essential constitution of the entity or object of inquiry, and results in the saying of that which reveals itself to human beings in many ways. It means that the object of inquiry has a necessary orientation to be seen, to be sighted. Likewise, consciousness is always consciousness of some entity or entities. Thought is always about something. Just as objects have a necessary orientation to be sighted, to be seen, so too is thought or consciousness always drawn towards entities to process them for cognition and understanding. I have detailed how phenomenological training was conducted decades ago (Unah, 1996a, pp. 226-237).

This brief disclosure of how the phenomenological orientation unfolds is intended to guide us toward the trajectory of the culture of authenticity, which bestows integrity, responsibility, and commitment to thought and action, so vital for radical community engagement and nation-building.

SECTION FIVE

Authenticity and Nation Building

The concept of authenticity needs to be embedded in individuals and community leaders as they strive to tread the path of true nationhood. Yet, from diplomacy to taqiyya, contemporary societies, especially in developing nations such as Nigeria, resort to embarrassing strategies to conduct state affairs, portraying honesty as an antiquated concept in modern states striving for national cohesion. This is like attempting to build a pyramid upside down, and members of civil society who call for such idiocies to be checked to arrest social decay and disintegration are ridiculed ad nauseam. Yet, governance, on a daily basis, is presented as a scam by those in the corridors of power.

Can a nation be founded on falsehood and deception by state actors? Many people would answer this question in the negative without hesitation. Unfortunately, some literature in political thought has associated political practice with a double and questionable standard of behaviour for leaders and followers, which has come to be known as Machiavellianism in the public domain (Unah, 2002, p. 38). The Italian political thinker and jurist Niccolò Machiavelli advised the Prince to be cunning and shrewd when dealing with the public, as they are often unreliable, deceptive, and

conspiratorial. In such circumstances, any ruler seeking to build and secure power must learn to be cunning, crafty, corrupt, dubious, and deceptive to stay ahead of the people they lead—since they would do the same, if not worse, if given the chance to be in control. Such a leader may make and break promises if doing so helps maintain their grip on power. They can employ unconventional methods to govern a weak and corrupt state, provided they deliver effective results for the people's welfare. The leader should always keep the big picture in mind, focusing on the end goal rather than the means to achieve the state's purpose—to build and strengthen it. If the means accuse a leader, let the deed serve as exoneration.

It is this Machiavellian doctrine that most state actors, especially in weak and corrupt states like Italy during Machiavelli's time, have tended to imitate to carry out horrendous anti-people, anti-human-rights activities. Unfortunately, such a strategy of statesmanship has never truly resulted in a happy, inclusive, and sustainable society. On the contrary, resorting to heavy-handed Machiavellian tactics has led many countries to protests against human rights abuses, provoking repressive actions by state actors determined to stay in power at all costs, with increasing opposition from civil society, often escalating into state-sponsored terrorism.

Evidently, the upheavals currently shaking many societies result from the culture of inauthenticity that state actors have unwittingly led their citizens into. This affirms our earlier question—human communities cannot thrive in a culture of falsehood and deception promoted by their leaders. Only a community that has fostered a culture of integrity and authenticity, of seeing and speaking the truth as it is, can develop sustainable, inclusive societies. Governments where the state actors lack integrity and authenticity cannot inspire confidence in the citizenry. Such a government will be riddled with trust issues, which, if they persist, can lead to a breakdown of law and order. This is how societies are sent on a downward spiral into cataclysm.

Therefore, what sustains communities is the willingness of their leaders and members to foster a culture of authenticity, integrity, and truthfulness at all times. The holy book teaches that righteousness derived from truth-telling elevates a nation. A culture of integrity, authenticity, transparency, and honesty is generally not too difficult for homogenous communities to develop. The issue of cultural decline arises when multiple communities or groups are united under a single geopolitical identity,

transforming into a diverse nation in which dominant identities vie for political control, often leading to a crisis of nationhood.

Under the circumstances, the suitable strategy is to organise identities into nation-states composed of autonomous communities sharing certain commonalities, with the capacity for self-determination. That is the only way that identities can bring out their best and unlock their potential for the common good and the advancement of human civilisation. Authenticity concerns what one truly feels and thinks. The ability to act and stand by one's actions, to see clearly and speak honestly, and to stand out from the crowd to assert one's distinctive character, constitute the hallmarks of authenticity (Unah, 1996b). Following from this, individuals who do what they say, who make promises and keep them, who propose and dispose, are candidates for authenticity. They are people who have cultivated the virtue of authenticity and wear the badge of integrity as their identity. They are those who envision and execute, who dream and realise. Thanks to these qualities—being dependable and reliable, trustworthy and accountable for their actions, and accepting responsibility for their success or failure—they are described as transparent. Transparency is an enviable hallmark of authenticity because people see the authentic as they truly are and speak of them as they truly appear.

The orientation of authenticity that fosters a culture of integrity, dependability, trustworthiness, accountability, transparency, and truthfulness enables us to see things as they are and to speak honestly. The philosophical approach that supports the development of such capacity is phenomenology. In contrast, the attitude of dogmatism—insisting on and imposing one's perspective on others who are not convinced—is the crystallisation of metaphysics' agency in human affairs. Metaphysics fuels a superior, holier-than-thou attitude, characterised by dominance and intolerance of others, and fosters a conspiracy against the “We” that makes the ‘I’ possible—and vice versa—leading to an attitude of vengeance.

The overcoming of the metaphysical spirit resides in the cultivation of the phenomenological attitude. It is this attitude that we ultimately bring to the conference table of world affairs and world leaders, after they have thoroughly debased the earth and debased humanity, as they are doing today in Iran, in Ukraine, in Venezuela, and in Boko Haram enclaves and agenda in northern Nigeria. It is the phenomenological attitude that guides

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against the bellicose temperament that wills to power and refuses to acknowledge the “I” and the “We” who build a sustainable and inclusive human community. It is the phenomenological temperament that mellows down the metaphysical spirit of dominance and will to power, and the will to dominate, and the might-is-right mentality. It is this attitude that prepares humans to be more truly human—the attitude that lets the entity be seen in its true light and lets the talking and truth-telling about the entity be done precisely as it is in itself.

Truth Telling in Social Relations and Nation-Building

Aside from activists and human rights campaigners who advocate for the realisation of human freedom in tangible form, the societal institution traditionally entrusted with the role of truth-telling on behalf of civil society—the people—is known as the Fourth Estate of the Realm. The profession within this realm is called journalism. Sumonu Oladele Giwa (1947-1986, Wikipedia), a renowned Nigerian journalist who was assassinated during the military regime of General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, is quoted as having said during the peak of his short and eventful career that “The duty of the journalist is to publish news that those in power do not want published”. This reflects a committed and dedicated journalist’s view that it is their duty to observe news as it happens and to publish it as it is. Truth-telling is non-negotiable for the journalist. It is the means by which social justice is advanced in society. Truth-telling by journalists ensures checks and balances among the three traditional branches of government—the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary. Largely due to the truth-telling efforts of journalists and other human rights advocates, public officials exercising state authority are kept from arbitrary use of power and prevented from recklessness and lawlessness.

However, when journalists neglect their duty to civil society, it becomes harder to hold governments, officials, and societal institutions accountable. Therefore, truth-telling is crucial for individuals, state agencies, and societal institutions to operate effectively. In short, as journalists and other human rights advocates increasingly overlook their responsibility to tell the truth, the integrity of truth suffers a haemorrhage, and social justice is consequently weakened. Today, we have Nnamdi Kanu, Omoyele Sowore, Dele Farotimi, Aisha Buhari, Peter Randy, and many other dedicated Nigerians, such as Chidi Odinkalu, actively

confronting the government and its officials to hold them accountable for their conduct of public affairs. Thus, while honest reporting and accurately conveying events as they occur — without distortion — enhance human capacity at the individual and community levels, it is equally vital for genuine nation-building. I have provided details on how to cultivate the existential virtue of authenticity, along with the associated values of integrity, dependability, reliability, and self-confidence, and how to overcome the fixation complex and the confidence crisis in *HEIDEGGER'S EXISTENTIALISM* (1996b, pp. 113-114).

In addition to insisting that journalists as professionals of the Fourth Estate of the Realm uphold the ethics of truth-telling in reporting the news, Africans, nay Nigerians, must revert to a system of truth-telling to decolonise their customary jurisprudence. They must revert to active oath-taking for public officials who are in charge of public finances and the awarding of contracts. Active oath-taking scares Africans because they are efficacious. They deter would-be criminals from lying on oath, and sabotaging the delivery of public infrastructure for development purposes. I have provided some details on how the administration of active oaths can be carried out on public officers (Unah, 2021, pp.208-2013).

I envisioned cultivating the existential virtue of authenticity within individuals as a foundation for the evolution and development of communities rooted in integrity, ultimately guiding the trajectory of genuine nation-building. Authentic revolutionaries have been proposed to reform a corrupt state. Only through the commitment of authentic individuals and revolutionaries can a people discover its own essence (Harries, 1976, p. 657). The question has arisen in my scholarship whether individuals should be reformed before considering the reformation of the state in *The Creative Statesman* (1996a). A symbiotic strategy was proposed and discussed. It must be done side by side.

But what exactly does authenticity in nation-building involve?

Diplomacy, official propriety, craft, and cunning—often layering lies over citizens' lives, security, and welfare—are constitutionally mandated by the State Constitution and serve as the fundamental measures for assessing government performance. So, statecraft becomes an opportunity for falsehoods! Thus, brutal actions are unleashed on perceived enemies of the state (mostly individuals

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who speak truth to power against social injustice), lies are told, severe punishments are meted out for alleged offences that often turn out to be false, and no reparations or compensations are paid to the injured and the wronged. That is official correctness. That is wielding power. Is this politics? Really? This is the strategy of statecraft largely adopted by Western Europe and the rest of the so-called developed and civilised world. What has been the outcome? World Wars! Regional wars!! Insurgency & terrorism!!!

Is the world now at peace, or is it boiling and threatening to explode?

Why not, when you believe you know everything and hold all the answers to the world's problems? Needless to say, genuine nation-building does not require cheating, lying, maiming, and killing. It requires respect, recognition, and participation from all concerned stakeholders. When different people and nations come together to discuss common interests affecting citizens around the world, and to engage in dialogue or discourse on trade, what is needed is mutual understanding, give-and-take, mutual prosperity, and mutual success. Nation-building is about developing people through cooperation, collaboration, partnership, and mutual interdependence, not the superior-master-servant attitude displayed by global gladiators that often triggers the belligerence of men from the metaphysical era who seek to dominate everything, thereby portraying political undertakings as intrinsically risky (Dauenhauer, 1976, p. 628). This attitude ultimately provokes vengeful responses from countries and nations that have been subjected to infantile aggression or unrestrained nationalist machismo.

Nation-building in diverse nation-states calls for inclusion, participation, and mutual cooperation among all concerned stakeholders. That is the only pathway to collective prosperity, mutual success and peaceful coexistence. The ethics to guide social actions for individuals and communities are the ethics of relational and emotional intelligence, of mutual aid, reciprocal solidarity, shared prosperity, and shared success; the ethics of authenticity, integrity, responsibility, trust, and truth-telling for justice to happen in society.

SECTION SIX

Conclusion: Summary of Discussions and Recommendations

Individuals and groups are nothing without their communities.

The community must set standards for individuals and groups within it. But communities must respect their truth-telling members who uphold the touch of liberty, authenticity, integrity, dependability, reliability, honesty, and transparency. Those attributes they harbour are the building blocks of egalitarianism and human flourishing. To update Africans on the strategy of truth-telling that their forebears evolved centuries ago, active oath-taking has been proposed as an antidote to corruption in public office. On this pedestal of reciprocal solidarity, the I and the We, the one and the many, the individual and the community, are reconciled.

The tension between the desire for a single true story driven by the metaphysical spirit, motivated by the will to will and the will to power, and the urge to dominate, conquer, and gain control is resolved through a phenomenological attitude that fosters a culture of truth-telling, of seeing and speaking things as they are, and of letting beings be.

What about the difference between metaphysics and ontology?

Have we achieved clarity on the subject? First, there are two senses of metaphysics outlined by Aristotle, the master of ontology. He describes these as *Metaphysical Specialis* and *Metaphysica Generalis*. The first refers to specialised sciences, which encompass the theoretical tools that help them navigate contradictions in their research. The second refers to pure metaphysics, which questions being precisely as being, not as particular instances of what exists. It should primarily encompass what belongs to any entity whatsoever, not in a particular theory of knowledge. But they are both called ontologies, so it seems there is no real difference between them, apart from the fact that one deals with particular entities and the other concerns the general characteristics of things. So, ontology appears to be a technical philosophical approach to metaphysics.

But that is not all. When the question of what constitutes reality is posed, professionals of regional ontologies identify the territory of reality they investigate. However, when the question is asked about reality in

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general, professionals of general metaphysics begin to respond in ways that suggest they are doing the same thing as regional ontologists, but in an abstract form of inquiry. For instance, when specialised ontologists posit that organisms or electrons are real realities, general metaphysicians respond similarly, asserting that real reality, or ultimate being, is mind, matter, or subjectivity. They are merely juxtaposing two things to laugh at each other; they are simply replacing veridical empirical entities with abstract concepts. In this way, they are doing the same thing, but in a superlative form.

Now, here is the difference between metaphysics and ontology.

Usually, they should relate to the same thing—one for particular existents, the other for general entities. But since regional ontologies deny participation in metaphysics, ontology should be adapted to explore the nature of metaphysics and what makes it possible. Ontology has now been designated as the fundamental ontology, or the ontology of the human being, to establish what enables humans to think metaphysically. This is quite different from what both *Metaphysica Specialis* and *Metaphysica Generalis* have been preoccupied with. It was Kant and Heidegger who carefully clarified this distinction.

Recommendations

For students of philosophy who wish to develop professional and intellectual capacities to address societal problems and create value, undivided attention must be paid to the study and criticism of metaphysics, especially the critiques of Kant and Heidegger referenced in the relevant section(s) of this lecture.

The voracious reader of philosophical literature might explore the critiques of metaphysics by David Hume and some Vienna Circle positivists to expand their intellectual horizons, not because these thinkers have anything truly significant to say about metaphysics. Imagine Ludwig Wittgenstein's critique of metaphysics as an exercise in linguistic holiday — that metaphysics projects language into the void, effectively taking language on holiday. How does such a critique impact the core of metaphysics? If metaphysics is a misuse of language, as they claim, then the positivists are already caught up in it because they are merely debating with their counterparts, as Bradley enthusiastically argued, with a rival

theory of first principles. Metaphysical critics of metaphysics know what metaphysics is about, its shortcomings and its inevitability in human nature. I have referred you to them during this lecture. They are the ones to contact for you to understand what happens in metaphysics. So, consult them.

The second recommendation is that humans, to fully realise the benefits of metaphysics ingrained in human nature, require a metaphysics of metaphysics— as Kant states— or a fundamental ontology, in Heidegger's language. A fundamental ontology necessitates an understanding of ontology, which is the study of being. However, the search for being always results in confusing being itself with beings, leading to the distortion and occlusion of the true meaning of being. The concept of being is absent because researchers did not recognise man's priority in the quest for the true meaning of being. The recommendation is that the researcher should apply the method of phenomenology to the study of being and human being, for only as "phenomenology is ontology possible", or, at the very least, understandable.

The third recommendation is that a student must excel in metaphysics (critique), phenomenology, and fundamental ontology, or the ontology of the human being, to understand how philosophy functions and how to apply it to generate value. Therefore, the third recommendation is that the highest achieving graduating student in the trio—metaphysics (critique), phenomenology, and ontology of the human being—should receive a cash award of One Hundred Thousand Naira Only (N100,000.00), to be announced and awarded to the best candidate at graduation ceremonies starting from the 2026/2027 class.

The fourth recommendation is that the Department of Philosophy, through the Faculty Board of Studies, should submit a paper requesting a waiver for candidates seeking admission without an Arts subject but with a very high score from the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board. These candidates would apply to study philosophy from home, not those low-scoring applicants drafted from other programmes who are unwilling to study philosophy. I applied for this waiver from the 2003/2004 academic session; it was granted and published in the JAMB Brochure for the 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 sessions. It was such a significant success that Professor Adetokunbo Sofoluwe, then Chairman of the Central Admissions Committee, came to ask me in the Department of Philosophy what I did to make philosophy the second choice for candidates at the University of

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Lagos after Medicine (MBBS). He confided that most candidates who missed the credit cut-off for Medicine chose Philosophy for supplementary admission, but he altered the entries in their forms to read Physiology. Curiously, when the list was released, all the candidates protested, claiming they did not want Physiology. They said that since they had not secured an MBBS, they would rather study a course that would develop their critical thinking and logical skills—qualities they had seen in newspaper articles and columns written by philosophy academics. As a result, they were all returned to Philosophy.

I urge the University of Lagos to adopt a broad, multidisciplinary admissions policy that does not unfairly limit candidates. I do not speak for the Faculty of Law, but I see no reason why, for instance, a candidate who applied to Law without a credit pass in Literature in English, yet achieved a very high score in the sciences, cannot be admitted to study Law at this university.

My experience at several universities, especially the Oxford Colleges (which had 39 at the time), demonstrates that high-achieving science-oriented candidates can gain admission, choose any course, and excel in their original subject combinations and requirements regardless. I believe this is the right approach as AI, ClickTech, inundates the 21st century. Once high-scoring candidates have five subjects, including English and Mathematics, they can study a course for which they have no college subjects and still achieve excellent performance.

Finally, Active Oath-taking has been recommended to tackle the hydra-headed monster of sickening lying of public officials, which aids and abets corrupt practices in public office.

SECTION SEVEN

Acknowledgements, Contributions to Knowledge & Important Awards

The primary pillar of support for this lecture is the Vice Chancellor, Professor Folasade Ogunsola, OON, *FAS*, who, during a meeting at her office, prompted me to deliver one more Distinguished Lecture before I exit the University of Lagos. The Dean of Arts, Professor Mudashiru Akanbi Illupeju, repeatedly urged me to take my time and assured me he would have it processed and published swiftly once I provided the manuscript. I am immensely grateful to both of them.

Colleagues in the Department of Philosophy, including the Head of Department, Professor Anthony Okeregbe, shared their inspiration, assuring me they were writing essays to celebrate my departure from academia and that the Distinguished Lecture would be the icing on the cake. I want to thank the HOD and the following colleagues for the various ways they have influenced my life and career over the past forty years: Professor FN Ndubuisi (former Vice-Chancellor, Christopher University), Professor OA Falaiye (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, MS, University of Lagos), Professor GE Azenabor (who kindly processed the recommendation for the award of Distinguished Professor, when he was then Head of Department), Professor DIO Anele (the Pope of Logic and committed Atheist who often talks and writes about what he claims he does not believe), Professor CB Okoro (who has transformed into a Soothsayer, an Ifa Devotee, and a neo-Kantian scholar), Professor CT Osegenwune (the ontology and metaphysics scholar who delivers assignments efficiently and effortlessly), Professor OM Ogbinaka (the Comrade of life, who is practicing comedy for his retirement), Professor PI Oni (the Francophone academic), Professor MN Onyeaghalaji (the reluctant priest and ethicist), Reader P. Osimiri (the serial Master's degree collector and bioethicist), Reader MD Gbadebo (the seeker and manager of the good life), Dr. FO Asodun (the great Sub-Dean of Arts), Dr. SA Owosho (the upcoming phenomenology scholar, and Babadini of Shogunle Central Mosque), Dr. PO Agboro (the dancing aesthetician), Dr. DO Ekere (the television commentator on burning national issues), Mrs. PO Egbe (the academic administrator), and our younger colleagues—Stanley Ebe, Olajumoke Ibidapo-Obe, and Oluwatosin Adewale.

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The Non-teaching staff of the Department of Philosophy are also appreciated for their support over the years, especially the ones available at the time of this lecture, namely, Mrs Adenike Agbi, Mrs Cecilia Ohiomoba, Mrs Eniola Eniolorunda, Mrs Cordelia Okwumabua, and Mr Isiaka Ganiyu. Immense gratitude goes to my spouse, Mrs Caroline O Unah, who likes to introduce herself as a Lawyer and a Farmer, and our half a dozen children who have imbibed the family values of truth-telling, compassion, and contentment.

I single out my co-traveller, Distinguished Professor Ayodeji Olukoju, and all our esteemed scholars in the Faculty of Letters for upholding the values and ethos of the humanities and for answering the call to leadership, despite daunting environmental challenges. May our paths cross again in joyful places.

Contributions to Knowledge

I was first awarded a two-year graduate fellowship (1983-1985), appointed Lecturer in December 1985 at the University of Lagos, and became a Full Professor of Philosophy in 1999. I have authored and edited 27 books in philosophy; contributed to over 52 book chapters and 33 journal articles, totalling 112 publications. I have supervised more than 55 MA/MPE Long Essays, 30 MBA Dissertations, and 18 PhD Theses.

I have researched and published in Phenomenology, Metaphysics, Applied Ontology, Ethics, African Philosophy, Development and Peace Studies. Some of my important works include, among others,

1. Unah, J. I. (2023a). "Thinking Security in Diversity" in Jim I. Unah and Chiedozie B. Okoro (Eds.). *Nigeria, Philosophy and Security: A Critical Reader*. Lagos: Philosophers Association of Nigeria.
2. Unah, J. I. (2023b). "Dimensions and Manifestations of Corruption in African Societies: An Ethical Proposal for a Reversal," in Marie Pauline Eboh and Maraizu Elechi (eds.), *Anthology of Authentic African Philosophy: A Reconstructionist View*, Port-Harcourt: Bereko Multinational Limited, 387-420.
3. Unah, J. I. (2023c). "History and Philosophy of Science" in Jim I. Unah and Iheanacho C. Metuonu (eds.) *Introduction to the History and Philosophy of Science*. Asaba: Department of Philosophy, Dennis Osadebay University.

4. Unah, J. I. (2021). *Is it Leadership or Character?* Monograph: Faculty of Arts Distinguished Professorship Lecture Series, No. 1.
5. "Terrorism, Insurgency and Electoral Violence as a Security Threat in Nigeria." In GA Wahab & CBN Ogbogbo (Eds). *Issues of Terrorism, Insurgency and Security in Nigeria*. The Nigerian Army Resource Centre, Abuja, 2020a.
6. "Gender Rationality and Social Disintegration: A Discourse on Family Ontology" in *African Journal of Applied Research*. Vol. 6, No. 2 (2020), pp. 63-78. Available at <http://doi.org/10.26437/ajar.11.2020.05>.
7. "Cultivating Moral Character and Democratic Values in Nigerian Students: A Curriculum Proposal" in *African Moral Character and Creative Thinking Principles: Volume 1 Moral Character and Virtue Education for a Just, Democratic and Well-Ordered Society*, Jim Ijenwa Unah and Isaac Ehaleoye Ukpokolo (eds.) (2019a).
8. *African Moral Character and Creative Thinking Principles Volume 2 African Folklores and Myths and Pedagogy of Creative and Critical Thinking for National Development*, Jim Ijenwa Unah and Abubakar Zaria Ibrahim (eds.) (2019b).
9. *African Moral Character and Creative Thinking Principles Volume 3 Theorising African Values for the Moral Character Education of Nigerian Children*, Jim Ijenwa Unah and Gbenga Fasiku (eds.) (2019c).
10. *African Philosophy and Phenomenology of Peace*, Lagos: Concept Publications (2018a).
11. "Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: A Template for Character Training, Curriculum Review and Legislated Moral Education in Developing Societies", IAGP, Athens (2018b).
12. Co-Authored "The D&I Philosophy: A Business Imperative for the 21st Century" in *Universal Journal of Management*, 6.8 (2018) 280-286. doi:10.13189/ ujm.2018.060803 (2018c).
13. *On Being: Discourse on the Ontology of Human Being* (2016, 2nd Edition).
14. "Neo-Ontological Challenge to Negative Atheism: Feuerbach's God of Secularism", USA: Lexington Books (2014a).
15. "Finding Common Grounds for a Dialogue between African and Chinese Ethics", USA: Lexington Books (2014b).
16. "The Culture of Peace as Key to World Stability, Progress and Peaceful Co-existence: Evolving a Phenomenological Culture of Peace" (2013).

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17. “Self-discovery: Who am I? An Ontologized Ethics of Self-mastery” (2011).
18. “Ideals of Democracy: Issues, Assumptions, Illusions, and Preconditions” (2009a).
19. “Values and Development” (2009b).
20. “Public Morality and the Phenomenon of Corruption”, NAL (2008).
21. Even Nothing is Something—Inaugural Lecture (2006).
22. Heidegger: Through Kant to Fundamental Ontology (1997).
23. Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy (1996a).
24. Heidegger’s Existentialism: An Essay on Applied Ontology (1996b).
25. Essays on Applied Phenomenology (1996c).
26. Fundamental Issues in Government and Philosophy of Law (1993).

Chapters in Books:

National

27. Unah, J.I. (2025). “The People and the Problem of Democracy: From Demagoguery to Ochlocracy and Kakistocracy,” in Umaru A. Pate (ed.), *Democracy and Demagoguery: An Occasional Publication of the Nigerian Academy of Letters*, No.22, pp.107–129.
28. Unah, J.I. (2024). “The Role of Philosophy—Principles, Character and Critical Thinking—in Recalibrating Nigeria,” in *The Making of a Modern Nigeria: A Humanistic Perspective*, Faculty of Humanities: Rivers State University, Port-Harcourt, pp. 11–22.
29. Unah, J. I. (2023a). “Dimensions and Manifestations of Corruption in Nigeria: An Ethical Proposal for a Reversal” in Marie Pauline Eboh and Maraizu Elechi (Eds.), *Anthology of Authentic African Philosophy: A Reconstructionist View*, Port Harcourt: Bereko Multinational Limited.
30. Unah, J. I. (2023b). “Thinking Security in Diversity” in Jim I. Unah and Chiedozi B. Okoro (Eds.). *Nigeria, Philosophy and Security: A Critical Reader*. Philosophers Association of Nigeria.
31. Unah, J. I. (2023c). “History and Philosophy of Science” in Jim I. Unah and Iheanacho C. Metuonu (eds.) *Introduction to the History and Philosophy of Science*. Asaba: Department of Philosophy, Dennis Osadebay University.

32. Unah, J. I. (2022). "Conceptualizing Security: The Responsibility of the Military to Itself" in CBN Ogbogbo & JGK Myam (Eds), *Soldiering and Nation Building: A Festschrift in Honour of Garba Ayodeji Wahab*, Abuja: Heredotus Publishers Ltd, pp.68-86.
33. Unah, J. I. (2021) "The Niger Delta Crises, Its Roots in Ecological Philosophy and the Imperativeness of Ethnic Federalism", in Akachi C. Odoemene, Jacinta C. Nwaka and Bashir O. Animashaun (Eds.) *Niger Delta and the Nigerian State: Discourses on Politics and Conflicts in Society: Festschrift in Honour of Prof. C. B. N. Ogbogbo*, Lagos: LANUV, pp. 45-73.

Chapters in Books

Foreign

34. Unah, J. I. (2022). "Taking African Virtue Ethics and Character Training principles to the Schools" in Jonathan O. Chimakonam, Edwin Etieyibo and Ike Odimegwu (Eds.) *Essays on Contemporary Issues in African Philosophy*, Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 163-168. ISBN 978-3-030-70435-3 ISBN 978-3-030-70436-0 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978--030-70436-0>
35. Unah, J.I. (2021). Multiculturalism, Multidisciplinarity and Inclusivity in African Education and Healthcare. J. Mojekwu, W. Thwala, C. Aigbavboa, L. Atepor and S. Sackey (Eds.) *Sustainable Education and Development*. Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 21-31. ISBN978-3-030-68835-6 ISBN978-3-030-68836-3
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68836-3>

Articles in Learned Journals

National:

36. Unah, J.I., and Ochala, O.K. (2024a). Before Court of Appeal is Made Supreme Court, *The Nation* Available at thenationonlineng.net/before-court-of-appeal-is-made-supreme-court/ July 24, 2024.
37. Unah, J.I. & I. C. Iqwe (2024b). "Ontological Issues and Dimensions in the Philosophy of Food" in *ESSENCE: An*

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Interdisciplinary International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers: Philosophy, Science and Society, Vol. 13 No. 1, 2024. Available at

<https://www.acjol.org/index.php/essence/issue/view/382>

38. Unah, J. I. (2022a). “The Oxymoronic Rhetoric of Asking Inhuman Humans to be Human” in *Humanity and Social Order: Annals of the Nigerian Academy of Letters*
39. Unah, J. I. (2022b). “Ethical Values and Democratic Culture” in *Dominican University Journal of Humanities (DUJOH)*, vol. 3, June, 2022, 1-15.
40. Unah, J.I. (2021a). “Effects of Contemporary Aberrations on Igbo Traditional Values, Customs, Practices and Usages,” in *Philosophy and Praxis: Journal of the Philosophers Association of Nigeria, New Series*, Vol. 2, No. 1, October 2021, 1-23.
41. Unah, J. I. (2021b) “Philosophy and the Restoration of Public Trust in Governance” *Dominican University Journal of Humanities*. Faculty of Humanities, Management and Social Sciences Dominican University, Samonda, Ibadan, Nigeria, June, 2021, pp. 195 – 215.

Articles in Learned Journals

Foreign

42. Unah, J. I. (2025) “Western Understanding of Averroes’ Arabic-Islamic Philosophy: A Phenomenological Intervention,” *Fujairah Philosophy House Magazine (Fourth Edition): on Philosophical Critique*.
43. Unah, J. I. (2020). “Gender Rationality and Social Disintegration: A Discourse on Family Ontology” *In African Journal of Applied Research*. Vol. 6, No. 2 (2020), pp. 63–78. Available at <http://doi.org/10.26437/ajar.11.2020.05> and <https://share.google/hdPZLagRLGgRe96rf>

Important Conferences

1. Oxford Round Table Conference on Religion and Science: Shaping the Modern World at Harris Manchester College, Oxford University, Oxford, England, July 25 – 30, 2010.

2. 2010 World Philosophy Day Congress at The Iranian Institute of Philosophy in Tehran, Iran, on Philosophy: Theory and Practice, November 19 – 24, 2010.
3. Workshop on Ensuring Credible Elections in Nigeria, Unity Hall, Delta State Governor's Office, Asaba, December 28 – 30, 2010.
4. First Public Lecture, Confucius Institute, University of Lagos, on Aspects of African and Chinese Ethics in Dialogue. AfeBabalola Hall, 27th January, 2011.
5. Oxford Round Table Conference on TRAITS OF WOMEN IN POWER, at Harris Manchester College, Oxford University, Oxford, England, July 29 – August 4, 2011.
6. The Energy Group Leadership Conference, London 2012, Cumberland Hotel, Marble Arch, London; 5th – 9th March, 2012.
7. Oxford Round Table Conference on Higher Education in the Global Marketplace at Harris Manchester College, Oxford University, Oxford, England, July 29 – August 4, 2012.
8. The Energygroup Conference on Roadmap for the Energy Bank of Ghana, Accra, Ghana, May 04-06, 2015.
9. The First Faculty of Arts Retreat, Leadway Assurance Training Centre (ITC), 10 Abebe Village Road, Apex Mill Building (Roof Top), Iganmu-Lagos, 7th October, 2015.
10. The Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation, Lagos, in collaboration with the Department of Philosophy, University of Ibadan: A Conference on Corruption. Theme: The Predicament of Corruption and the Quest for Holistic Development in Africa, University of Ibadan, October 22-23, 2015.
11. The 15TH Emmanuel Onyechere Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Lecture Series, International Conference Centre, Abuja; with Key Note Address By President Muhammadu Buhari, Friday, Dec. 11TH, 2015.
12. The 2016 World Congress of Philosophy: The Philosophy of Aristotle, School of Philosophy, Zografou Campus, Athens, Greece, July 9-15, 2016.
13. 2016 Biennial Conference, The Nigerian Philosophical Association (NPA), Philosophy in Africa Today, University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, October 26–28, 2016.
14. The 24th World Congress of Philosophy on LEARNING TO BE HUMAN, 13th-20th August 2018, Perking University and China National Convention Centre, Beijing, China.

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15. Researchers Workshop on Teaching Moral Character and Creative Thinking in Primary and Secondary Schools for National Development, University of Lagos, Akoka-Yaba, Lagos; organised by the Philosophers Association of Nigeria (PAN), 13-16 May, 2018.
16. The Biennial Conference organised by the Philosophers Association of Nigeria (PAN) in collaboration with UNESCO Regional Office for Teaching Moral Character and Critical Thinking at Pre-Tertiary Levels of Education for National Development, held at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba, Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria, from 13 to 17 November 2018.
17. World Conference on Multi-Sectoral Stakeholders Economic management & Organized Private Sector Solutions, Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 21st January, 2019
18. 2019 Aquinas Day Symposium on University Education and the Democratic Culture, Dominican University, Ibadan; January 28, 2019.
19. CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION: A Predatory Debt –Trap Diplomacy? FOREIGN RELATIONS DISCUSSION GROUP (FRDG), the Senior Staff Club, University of Ibadan, 28th February, 2019.
20. Igbo Nweze Conference on Aberrations of Traditional Values, Customs, Practices and Usages, June 13-14, 2019, Government House, Anambra State.
21. The 31st World Conference of Greek Philosophy, The Possibility of EUDAIMONIA [Happiness and Human Flourishing]IN THE WORLD TODAY, Hotel Amarilia, Vouliagmeni, Riviera, Athens, Greece, 12-15 July, 2019.
22. 8th Applied Research Conference in Africa [ARCA], 15-17 August 2019, Accra, Ghana, Paper on FAMILY ONTOLOGY: A Keynote.
23. UNESCO Regional Conference on “Governance of Diversity: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Development and Peaceful Coexistence in Africa”; 9th to 12th October 2019, Accra, Ghana (UNESCO Sponsored).
24. The African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa’s Development/African Peer Review Mechanism (AUDA-NEPAD/APRM) in Collaboration with the Nigerian Army two-day Summit on “Terrorism, Insurgency and Incidence of Election Violence: Role of Security Agencies”; 10th-11th September 2019 (Sponsored by AUDA/NEPAD/APRM & NA).

25. Second National Conference on “Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity in University Education: Agenda Setting: Inclusivity in a Diverse Nation”; Monday 09 to Friday 13th September 2019 (Sponsored by IED).
26. Conference on “Igbo Enweze: Fact or Fallacy?” by the Anambra State Traditional Rulers’ Council—ASTRC; 13-14 June 2019, State House, Awka, Anambra State. (Sponsored by ASTRC).
27. Biennial Conference of the Philosophers Association of Nigeria on “Nigeria, Philosophy, and Security”; 20-23 November 2019, at the Nigerian Army Resource Centre, Asokoro, Aso Drive, Abuja.
28. 10Th Nigerian Army Resource Centre Seminar, 28th November 2019; NARC, Asokoro, Abuja.
29. 11th Nigerian Army Resource Centre Seminar 5th December 2019; NARC, Asokoro, Aso Drive, Abuja.
30. 12th Nigerian Army Resource Centre Seminar, 18th March 2020, NARC, Asokoro, Aso Drive, Abuja.

Recent Conferences

31. 1st Summit of the Nigerian Army Resource Centre, 28-30 March 2022, NARC, Asokoro, Abuja.
32. 12th International Conference on Sustainable Education and Development in the University of Environment and Sustainable Development, Somanya, Ghana, August 22-26, 2023.
33. Special Guest to the Public Presentation of Books and Commissioning of Projects at the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), Kaduna, 26th May, 2023.
34. Guest Lecturer at the 23RD IKA KA MMA Annual Lecture Series on “IKA PHILOSOPHY. What is it?” at IDUMUESAH Kingdom, 19TH August, 2023.
35. KEYNOTE SPEAKER, 2023 Orientation Programme, Dennis Osadebay University, Anwai, Asaba. Delta State (Invited Lecture)
36. Guest Speaker at a SYMPOSIUM on Elections Monitoring and Observation, 2023 General Elections and the Way Forward, Nigerian Army Resource Centre, Asokoro, Abuja.
37. Participant at the Finalisation of the 2023 General Election Monitoring and Observation Report, at the K-Klass Hotel, Wuse Zone 5, 12Th to 13TH September 2023.

38. International Conference of the Philosophers Association of Nigeria on “Philosophy, Responsive Leadership, and National Development: Interrogating Glocal Realities Amid the Pandemics,” held at the University of Port Harcourt, November 15-18, 2023.
39. The XXV World Congress of Philosophy on “Philosophy Across Boundaries,” held at the Sapienza University, Rome, Italy, August 1-8 2024.
40. The 26TH Convocation of the Nigerian Academy of Letters on “Demagoguery and Democracy,” held at the JF Ade Ajayi Auditorium, University of Lagos, Akoka-Yaba, Lagos (participated online), August 7-8, 2024.
41. The First Covenant University Conference on Leadership and Development, CUCLeD, Ota, September 12, 2024, on Integrating Leadership and Development for Africa.
42. 1ST Hybrid International Conference 2024, Faculty of Humanities, Rivers State University, Port-Harcourt on “The Making of a Modern Nigeria: A Humanistic Perspective,” 13TH-15TH November, 2024.
43. CECAPFI and University of Lagos Celebrate World Philosophy Day: Living Wisdom from Nigeria and Latin America, November 23, 2024, 15:00-19:00 Nigeria-ZOOM.
44. Fujairah Philosophy House International Conference (Fourth Edition): “Philosophical Critique,” 21-23/11/2024.
45. The 2024 International Conference of the Philosophers Association of Nigeria (PAN), held February 26- March 1, 2025, at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, Akoka-Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria
46. Conference of the Canadian Association of African Studies (CAAS), University of Toronto, Scarborough, Toronto, Canada (June 03-June 06, 2025), under the broad Theme: Making, Unmaking, and Remaking Africa. “The Trajectories to Remaking Africa,” 6th June 2025.
47. Conference on “African Phenomenology and the Development Discourse,” hosted by Fort Hare University, South Africa, Virtual participation, 26th July, 2025.

48. Conference of Ika Lawyers Association on “IKA PEOPLE OF NIGERIA: Advancing and Preserving Cultural Heritage through the Instrumentality of the Law,” Vienna Arena, Boji Boji Owa-Agbor, Delta State, 16-17 October, 2025.
49. 2025 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE/WORLD PHILOSOPHY DAY/ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. Theme: Philosophy, Socio-Political Challenges and Sustainable Development in the Niger Delta: Rethinking the Future, Rivers State University, Port-Harcourt, 19-22 November 2025.
50. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: Decolonising the African Mind for Ethical Leadership Through Afrocentric Ethics, “The Concept of Goodness in Recalibrating African Ethics for Enterprise Leadership and Societal Flourishing: A Phenomenological Agenda for Development,” Thursday 27th November, 2025.

Important Appointments/Awards

I was the Head of Philosophy for five years; Consultant to UNESCO on academic Philosophy in Nigerian Universities, presented the UNESCO documentary on Ethical Considerations in the Time of Covid-19 still available in UNESCO YouTube Channel; became member of The Nigerian Academy of Letters in 2005; Editor, Nigerian Journal of Philosophy (2004-2007); Editor, Philosophy and Praxis: Journal of the Philosophers Association of Nigeria, 2016 till date; awarded the Alumnus of Oxford Round Table in 2008, resulting in four consecutive lectures at four of the Oxford Colleges—Exeter, Lincoln, Harris Manchester, and Queens; inducted a Fellow of the Nigeria Philosophical Association (2012); appointed Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academics) at the Premier University of Sao Tome and Principe, Gulf of Guinea (2013-2015); elected President of the Nigeria Philosophical Association (Oct. 2016); conferred with the title of Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, University of Lagos, on January 26, 2017, and elected Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Letters on May 30, 2019 by the College of Fellows of the Academy, Fellow of the Nigerian Army Resource Centre (FNARC) Asokoro, Abuja, since October 2019, and appointed Visiting Dean to set up the Faculty of Arts at the newly established Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State (2022-2023).

New Focus

My main research focus going forward, even in retirement, is to work with all relevant stakeholders to introduce the teaching of ethics, character and creative thinking to the primary and secondary schools in Nigeria; carry it to industry and, possibly, to every home as a way of getting philosophy to impact lives in the positive direction, and thus help stem the tide of the erosion of morals and values which has assumed epidemic proportions in the country.*

*We got Ethics & Critical Thinking listed in the Secondary School syllabus last time in 2025. There was a change during the 2025 National Curriculum Review, first announced by the Federal Ministry of Education in the public domain, but it was later removed by the National Educational Research & Development Council (NERDC) for undisclosed reasons. The Philosophers Association of Nigeria has taken up the matter with both the Federal Ministry of Education and NERDC.

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