

RESEARCH ARTICLE

IJE-UWA: An Existentialist Discourse on the Uncertainties of Life

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Abstract: Life itself is a mystery, characterized by risks and uncertainties. Life is like a moving train; human beings participate in it simply by living it. This means that no one can be certain of any experience or event in life. The issue, therefore, is that even when man proposes solutions through sciences, divine revelations, acts of reason, or natural occurrences, the outcomes remain uncertain. These are the ideas that the term *Ije-uwa* represents. But here are the research questions: (1) Why is the human life full of uncertainties even with human intelligence over and above other creatures? (2) Can anybody avoid risks and uncertainties of life? (3) What is then the responsibility of man to survive the phenomenon of *Ije-uwa*? It is in contemplation on these questions that this paper defended that life is characterized by risks and uncertainties; and that these are existential wake-up-calls unto human beings for authentic living. This paper is expected to (1) analyze and expose the concept of *Ije-uwa* and how existentially philosophical it is, and (2) stand as a huge academic contribution to existentialist discourses from an Igbo-African perspective. The paper adopted hermeneutical approach to analyze and expose the philosophical contents of the term *Ije-uwa*.

Keywords: existentialist, Igbo, *Ije-uwa*, philosophical implications, uncertainties of life

1 Introduction

The concept of life as a mystery has influenced some people to have different perceptions of the human being and the human experiences. Life is unpredictable and this feature portrays the dynamism and uncertainties of life. The human being merely participates in life which is like a flowing stream, and anything can happen on the way on the process of flowing. As a tenant in life as a concept, man shares in the characteristic uncertainties and risks of life; s/he cannot avoid them and thus lives in the fate of what these uncertainties bring along to human experiences in the process of man's living life. This is all the term, *Ije-u.wa* stands to mean and imply.

At this, the questions that may arise in mind include: why is life full of uncertainties? Can there be any possibility for man to escape them? What the responsibility of man as the highest reasoning creature towards these uncertainties in life? These questions are existentially awakening and challenging to man as they question for authentic life. It is in this light that this paper upheld the thesis that the existential risks and uncertainties of life captured in the concept of *Ije-u.wa* characterize life and symbolically stand as challenging factors for a possible human authentic life.

2 The Concept of *Ije-uwa*

The term *Ije-uwa* is etymologically Igbo, formed by the combination of two words *Ije* and *uwa*. *Ije* literarily means 'walk', that is, 'walking', or 'the act of walking'. It therefore means that *Ije* (walk, walking) connotes the idea of movement from one place to another. It depicts movement, not staying one place or being stagnant. But the meaning of *Ije* does not start and end in its literary level; it also implies achievement which could be ideal or has yielded a material result; and the level undertaken before the achievement is materialized. It equally points to increment or decrement, and the level and speed or velocity of progress or retrogress in life. By this, it could be applied to refer to both the ease/enjoyment and suffering or those comfortable and uncomfortable conditions one passes through, in life before one gets achievements. Thus, when one achieves a great height, one may be told *i-jekwara-ije o* meaning, 'you have really gone far (passed through thorns, hard times before achieving such)' or that one has worked

earnestly for such achievements. After suffering and attaining a greater height, one may be commended in words like, *i-jekwara-ije o* meaning ‘you really suffered o – you work hard for it’. It is from this angle that the term *Ije* could also be interchanged with the term *Ihe* or *Ife*. *Ihe* and *Ife* mean the same thing on this context, ‘something or even a thing’. But on this context, the meaning will hang until the concept of *uwa* is attached to them. Now, to *uwa* as a concept. *Uwa* literarily means ‘world’ and the ‘world’ in quote here is the ‘physical world, the earth’ where the subject (human being) lives in. *Uwa* here could equally refer to ‘life’; so, when *Ije-uwa* is mentioned, happenings and experiences of/in life call to mind. Now when one says *Ihe/Ife-uwa*, it means things in life, things in/of the world, the workings/modus operandi of/in the world. These workings or modus operandi have no method, they are not definitive, deterministic, structured and processed. By this, one’s *Uwa* refers to one’s personal experiences, encountered in life as personally experienced and encounters in life as they happen to other people. So, to exist is to exist for oneself and others, and to have personal experiences and experiences of/from others with whom one lives in *uwa*. Personal experiences are therefore not enough to make a whole existence, but witness or participation in the experiences of others. Both the ‘inside’ (self) and ‘outside’ (other self) experiences make a whole being of what existential experience could mean and imply.

It has just been stressed that *Ije-uwa* could be likened to *Ihe/Ife-uwa*. But on extension, it could still be likened to *Ije-enu*. Having explained what *ije* means, *enu* is a dialectical pronunciation of *elu*, which refers to *enu-uwa/elu-uwa*. *Ije-enu* meaning *Ije-enu-uwa* refers to the movement (as in happenings, experiences) of/in the world. Whatever the world or nature brings to the table of experience of man is referred to *Ije-enu-uwa*. These experiences are unpredictable, not fixed, not static. Both the ones you plan for, as a man and they eventually come to pass, and the ones you never planned for, and they eventually force themselves on you to experience them, are all demonstrations of what *Ije-enu-uwa* truly means and implies.

Suffice it to say that all the meanings and implications attributed to *Ije-uwa* could equally be attributed to *Ihe-uwa* or *Ife-uwa* both of which mean the same thing only that the latter is Onitsha Igbo tongue and literarily interpreted as ‘thing(s) of/in the world’. ‘Walking, workings, movement, happenings and experiences’ of/in the world implicate the idea of the ‘things’ of/in the world. Life experiences, happenings are not just the walks, works, movements of the world, they facilitate, by strengthening or weakening, living in the world. This makes man a being who must and necessarily live in the world for self-actualization, and the world becomes an existential sphere where the interactions of beings take place. The indispensability of the world in the existence of (human) beings can never be over emphasized (Ugwu, 2022).

Conceptually, the term *Ije-uwa* which has been likened to *Ihe-uwa* or *Ife-uwa* entails life experiences or happenings, both the ones one plans and the ones one never planned for, both the ones that end in positivity and the ones in negativity. The conglomeration of all these is referred to as *Ije-uwa*. The concept exposes the dynamism of life. In it exposes the strength and weakness, the potency and actuality, the unlimitedness and limitedness of human capabilities. The knowingness and unknowingness, happiness and sadness, successes and failures, ups and down of life express the fact of *Ije-uwa*. It is based on this angle that Okediadi, in Igbo language writes about *Ije-uwa* as the phenomenon that explains the unknowingness and human capacity limitedness in life through the experience of inequality and ups and downs that practically characterize life. Citing her Igbo expression of *Ije-uwa* the English version will be placed beside for explanations and easy understanding:

Ndi na-eje n’elu (some walk on higher level), Ndi na-eje n’ala (some walk on lower level). Uwa adighi levuul ma oli (the world is not level at all). Tufiakwa! (an ‘exclamation of rejection’)! Ije uwa! Ije ahuhụ na-eje n’ogwe nkụ (*Ije-uwa* pictures ants’ experience on a log of dried wood). Ndi elu ezuteghi ndi ala n’uje (those walking on higher level did not meet those walking on lower level when going). Ndi ala ezute ndi elu n’ula (those walking on lower level did not meet those walking on higher level when returning). Mgbe niile o di nke obula osiiso (every time all is in haste). Ije uwa! Onye na nke ya... (*Ije-uwa* implies one-and-one’s-needs...) Ebe a na-ekwoje o dighi onye ma (where they rush to, they do not know). o bu uru ka o bu oghom? (is it gain or loss) Onye ma?... (who knows?...) O bu madu mere? (is it man-caused?) O bu ije uwa (it is *Ije-uwa*) (Okediadi, 2003).

In the above citation, Okediadi attempts to explain her understanding of what *Ije-uwa* is. From her understanding it is clear that *Ije-uwa* is conceived purely social as it is anchored on the social existential affairs of man which gears towards man’s unknowingness to his future and even the very driving force behind his social engagements or activities on earth.

When talking about the mystery of and in life, the negativity and positivity of/in life, the absurdity of/in life, the nothingness of/in life, the coming in into and departing from the world, the term *Ije-uwa* becomes the most appropriate. When for instance, a person dies, or s/he encounters a fatal incident that exposes the powerlessness, weakness of the human person, *Ije-uwa* becomes an adequate descriptive word. The fact of giving birth and death implies *Ije-uwa*. Every existential experience implies *Ije-uwa*. Even life itself implicates the idea of *Ije-uwa* because life itself depicts the reality of uncertainty, indeterminism. The fact of survival/succeeding and failing in the bid to live and live well is described in the word *Ije-uwa*. Encountering an accident scene or visiting the hospital or mortuary and beholding how lifeless and empty material-bodies are like logs of wood, *Ije-uwa* becomes the most qualifying word. *Ije-uwa* as a term and concept could be likened to the Sartre's *nothingness*, Nietzsche's *nihilism*, Unamuno's *existential absurdity* and other existentialist themes like the concepts of *authentic* and *inauthentic life* which Sartre captures as 'good faith' and 'bad faith', the *mystery* and *misery of life*, the *incapacity* and physical and metaphysical *limitations of man* as a physical living being, the *might of the invisible* over and above the visible, etc. All these are there philosophically and existentially grounded and are integral in the composite nature of the term *Ije-uwa*.

In an attempt to recognize *Ije-uwa* as an existential and ontologically effective factor, it takes two statures: (1) godhood or divinity in conception, (2) that there is a god or divinity behind existential uncertainties. In reference to the godhood or divinity of *Ije-uwa*, conceptually, it becomes a divinity or god to be recognized not just in prayers but as an existential factor that is above the mighty and control of man. In reference to the view of a god behind existential experiences, it must be recalled that the African is so religious that every event has a god/divinity behind (or responsible for) it. There is a god behind/responsible for agriculture and agricultural productivity *Ifejiokū* or *Ahijokū* or *Fijiokū*; there is a god behind/responsible for harmattan and rainy seasons, day and night, safe journey/transportation, warfare, fortunes and misfortunes, and even uncertainties where the concept of *Ije-uwa* is clearly expressed. These gods are from a comparative lens, messengers of the Supreme Being or intermediaries between the Supreme Deity and men and other lower beings. In many ways through prayers, sayings and social life of the African, this is clearly expressed. For instance, an Igbo would say during *IgO Qfo* (prayers to God or divinity/deity reverence): *a mag' n'ojekote ad' nwang'*, *bia taa oji* (not knowing that it will be like this, come and take/share in our kola nut). 'Not knowing' here points to the fact of not knowing what the next minute holds for man, the uncertainties of tomorrow and incapability of man not knowing or predicting the exactitude of tomorrow. The uncertainties of life could be expressed or designated with certain names like Onye-ma-echi? (Who-knows-tomorrow?), etc. Some concepts like *Ubo chi* (Day, as in, to-day, Mon-day, Satur-day) or Echi (tomorrow, as in, future) show the meaning and implications of *Ije-uwa* when it is said: *ka anyi rioba/yoba ubochi* (let us pray (to survive) the Day); or, *ka echi hu/fu/zuta anyi* ((we pray that) tomorrow (future) may see/meet us). Apart from the expression of uncertainties of/in life, these concepts portray the fact that the Igbo-African has always been with the insight into the infinitum of future as against some scholars who hold otherwise (Mbiti, 1970). These concepts express the pregnancy of tomorrow, and we solemnly, respectfully, piously and humbly recognize them during deep reflections and prayers/wishes that we may see or witness them. They symbolize hope, and the urge for tirelessness for existential struggle for a meaningful and impactful existence. We recognize them that they protect us and each of the days that make our weeks, months and years would pray/intercede for us that it shall not see the end of our existence. But we must die on a 'day'. The prayer/wish to *ubochi* or Echi to pray for us to keep living therefore only expresses our wish that the 'day' we shall depart shall be a good day for us, that the day may be for our favour to lead us home to peacefully join our ancestors in praises to the Supreme Being. By this, we lean on nature and tomorrow to see for our existential continuity and welfare. Another pivotal concept to this discussion is *Ubu' (Ubu)*. This concept is commonly expressed when, for instance, people schedule to see/meet tomorrow, they say *ka anyi yo. ba Ubu* (we pray to uncertainty of/in life not to disrupt the agreement). It is still expressed in the act of saying good night when one would say *ka anyi yo. ba Ubu ka anyi bo/fofo Chi* (let us pray to *Ubu* that we will live till day break to see ourselves again and continue where we stopped today). Here *Ubu' (Ubu)* takes two phases of implication: (1) uncertainties of/in life; (2) God. Capturing it in another saying, it reads 'man proposes but God disposes'. As you plan, *Ihe/Ife-uwa* also plans its own, and that becomes an expression of *Ije-uwa*. Be that as it may, by implication, the person praying acknowledges his/her human inferiority and limitness, and acknowledges the powerfulness of nature over and above him/her. It is humility, wisdom, respect and smartness for man to explore nature and then has his/her existential struggle easy so as to ask for favours from nature itself. By this, *Ije-uwa* becomes something to bow to, 'bow' means 'humble recognition and

respect' for it is more powerful than man and his might. Recognizing it is sincerity, truthfulness and being open to nature in acknowledging it as a huge factor that can hinge or favour human existential struggles. *Ije-uwá* therefore becomes a way recognized as one through which nature expresses its might, mystery and incomprehensibility over man.

Ije-uwá, still as a concept, could be likened to the religious life of the African life where many events in/of life are taken as divine extensions; that is, the will or manifestation of God or gods over human affairs. By this, the concept implicates the idea of predestination or destiny or fatalism. In a situation when one could say 'it is the will of God or gods', one could equally say and still be considered right, 'that is *Ije-uwá*'. Here the limitedness or powerlessness or incapacitation of human beings over 'things' of the world is expressed. Philosophically speaking, human beings could be said to be the weakest being but ontologically valued and seen as not just the most precious but also sacred and dignity-deserving being in existence. While the weakness and powerlessness and limitedness nature explain the physicality of human beings, the ontology, value, sacred, precious and dignity-deserving nature explain the metaphysical composite nature of human beings. Thus, it could be deductible here that from the concept of *Ije-uwá*, human beings are not only conceived from physical, metaphysical/ontological, attitudinal/behavioural, but also aesthetical perspectives.

3 An Existentialist Implication of *Ije-uwá* and the call for Authentic Existence

In this subsection, the paper shall present a deep analysis of the existentialist interpretation or implication of *Ije-uwá*. In other words, the leading question is: 'how existentialist is the concept of *Ije-uwá*? But before delving into that discussion, it is of great relevance to reiterate the concept of existentialism.

The term 'existentialism' is a nominalization of the term 'existence' which took its root from the verb 'exist'. Existence as a concept is derived from the Latin word *existere* which means "stand out" of the absolute nothingness, but 'stand in' in relation to others and deal with what Husserl (Olawoyin, 2011) would call 'border lines', 'boundary situations', 'existential limits' or the concrete existential problems and situations of an individual and as they are encountered on daily basis. Ordinarily, when existence is discussed, the existence or beingness of realities: man, stone, goat, God, etc, comes to mind. This is a universal and common sense of understanding of existence. But the term 'existentialism' connotes many meanings from different point of views but none doubts that it is 'philosophical'. Some views maintain that it is one of the philosophical 'isms' that could be seen as a "system of belief: a movement, doctrine" (James, 2000). Others hold it is neither a movement (Brown, 1968), nor a body of doctrine (Macquarie, 1989) "because what unites classical western existentialists is not a doctrine but description of an attitude, or a way of doing philosophy" (Brown, 1968). This position corroborates with Solomon's position when he writes:

Existentialist philosophy is the explicit conceptual manifestation of an existential attitude- a spirit of 'the present age'. It is a philosophical realization of a self-conscious living in a "broken world" (de Beauvoir), a "dislocated world" (Merleau-Ponty), a world into which we are "thrown" or "condemned" yet "abandoned" and "free" (Heidegger and Sartre), a world which appears to be indifferent or even "absurd" (Camus)... The existential attitude begins with a disoriented individual facing a confused world that he cannot accept (Solomon, 1974).

The emphasis here is that existentialism is a movement motivated by the reality of existence and as perceived by different scholars with elements of influences from their own backgrounds. Even though "existentialism is not a title for a homogenous school or a coherent system of philosophy," existentialists seem to philosophize on certain similar issues and themes relating to existence, real existential situations, and experiences like: man, human subjectivity, selfhood/individuality, world, absurdity, anxiety/dread/fear, essence, care, guilt, death, finitude, authenticity, in-authenticity, anguish, among others (Unah & Osegenwune, 2010). From these related issues and themes of existentialism, it is clear that existentialism is a discourse that concentrates on what it means to really exist, and that is all the human existence portrays. It is in this regard that Heidegger particularly strongly posits that only man 'exists', while every other reality merely 'is'. He contends thus: "The being that exists is man. Man alone exists. Trees are, but they do not exist. Angels are, but they do not exist. God is, but he does not exist."

Thus, according to Heidegger, the consciousness of man and his/her existential

freedom make him/her to 'exist' and not to merely 'is', while the lack of these makes every other being to merely 'is' and not to 'exist'... suffices that the 'human' existential 'consciousness' and 'freedom' bestow 'existence' on man and 'is-ness' or 'areness' on other beings.

The rationale for this position is based on the human consciousness and freedom to realize the thrownness of being hence consciousness of this leads to self-realization through an existential authenticity. "This view pictures Sartre's perception of man as the only being that is free, for his existence is equal to freedom; hence to be/exist, for Sartre, is to be free. Man cannot be talked about without the concept of freedom. In fact, existence simultaneously emerges with freedom" (Unah & Osegenwune, 2010) hence the Sartrean position that "Freedom is identical with my existence" (Sartre, 1969). Suffice it then to say that to exist is to be free and man himself is this freedom. Be that as it may, it can be said that "existentialism is therefore the philosophy of human existence, a philosophy preoccupied with what it means for a human being to exist" (Omogbe, 1999). To the existentialist philosophers, "human existence does not simply mean 'being there,' human existence is a drama in which every individual is an actor" (Omogbe, 1999). To the Western existentialists, existentialism should more be focused on the existential concerns of man. In as much as their existentialist position is more of anthropocentric than cosmocentric or theocentric, thereby making what affects man the fundamental focus of any existentialist task. Albert Camus has hitherto, based his existential effort on absurdity and revolt in articulating the concept of suicide in man's life as the most coward challenge to man. In this regard, he argues that that philosophy ought to be burdened with the quest for meaning, and not any meaning but precisely the meaning of 'life' and that of man in particular.

There is only but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest... come afterwards... I see many people die because they judge that life is not worth living... I therefore conclude that the meaning of life is the most urgent of questions (Camus, 1955).

Even though life is meaningless, and that is what he means by 'absurdity', but man as a 'possibility' must stand out and face the concrete existential situations to give essence to his life. So, suicide to avert experiencing the absurdity of life is cowardice and a grievous expression of 'bad faith' as Sartre would say. On this ground, he rejects the Søren Kierkegaard's or the Gabriel Marcel's words of advice on taking a *leap of faith in God* or the Karl Jaspers' *philosophical faith* in the transcendence. Suicide is cowardice and betrayal of courage and denial of the strength of living (existential-possibilities). It is with this consciousness that man now 'revolts' against every odd to give meaning to his life(existence). "Revolt gives life its value. Spread out over the whole length of a life, it restores its majesty to that life." With 'revolt' man ought to "remain passive in the face of evil, injustice, oppression, etc. Revolt is the discrimination to fight against absurdity, against evil, against injustice, etc, withal the means at one's disposal" (Camus, 1955).

However, the existentialist and philosophical implication of *Ije-uwa* is more than focusing on man and his existential affairs as the Western conception of existentialism tends to portray. It encompasses the existential affairs of other physical realities, metaphysical elements and even the ontological influences of the gods and generally, beings at large. The concept of *Ije-uwa*, unlike the existentialist implications of many Western existentialist philosophers, renders an existentialist situation of man, gods, divinities, God, animate and inanimate beings and the being of man as it concerns his characters and consequences, destiny, aspirations, fortunes, capabilities and otherwise. This concept could get interpretation in Miguel de Unamuno's position that man is only "man of flesh and bone" (Unamuno, 1954) hence finite and certain knowledge beyond the capability of his mind to grab through reason. The concept is more comfortable with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's position that the "world is not an object such that I have in my possession the law of its making; it is the natural setting and the field for all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). While, as an African existentialist concept, it does not follow the trend of the Heideggerian approach to philosophy, *Ije-uwa* concept, nonetheless, is at peace with Heidegger's concept of death as a big existentialist issue which is part of existence and destiny, especially of man. It is an aspect of the implications of *Ije-uwa* as a concept that man is not just a being but a-being-unto-death. Heidegger stretching this point reiterates: "Death is a way to be which *Dasein* takes over as soon as it is. As soon as man is born, he is old enough to die" (Heidegger, 1962). Death should be seen as part of man's existence and a part of his existential projections and possibilities. Man should not be afraid of *perishing*. "What must be noted first," says Heidegger "is the absurd character of death... Every attempt to consider it as the resolved chord at the end of a melody must be sternly rejected" (Heidegger, 1956). Conscience and consciousness play central role on this state. Heidegger once says:

Being-towards-death is a potentiality-for-being of that entity whose kind of being is anticipation itself. In the anticipatory revealing of this potentiality-for-being, *Dasein* discloses itself to itself as regards its utter possibility... Death is *Dasein*'s own most possibility. Being towards this possibility discloses to *Dasein* its own most potentiality-for-being in which its very being is the issue (Heidegger, 1956).

In fact, the idea of death is an integral explanation of the *Ije-uwa* concept because it has today remained a mystery and the most uncertainty of life. So are health and the act of living. Death visits at its own will and on whom its lot falls.

However, the concept is not comfortable with Nietzsche's ideology of Slave and Master Morality, expressed in the *Superman*, the *Übermensch* and 'The Last Man'. The *Ije-uwa* concept cannot be holistically grasped and explained by human knowledge and lifestyle of being more fortunate than the other or being a superior over an inferior. It is rather indefinite, hence the indeterministic nature of being.

The mystery of death also has its explanation from an African perspective. Death is a very interesting phenomenon, an experience to every living being, especially the human being as perceived from an African perspective. First, it must be understood that death is a process, a process of existence. It is a process following its sequential occurrence. One does not die at once. Before death actually occurs physically, it has already started from the day one is born. One keeps dying bit by bit, part by part from one's birth till the very day of actual (final) physical death. Perhaps this bit-by-bit dying process is what is explained in an English saying that a coward dies several times before his/her real death. If this could be suited in, in an African perception of death, then everybody is a coward because everybody dies bit-by-bit (several) before his/her actual death physically. This explains why man is part human and part spirit being. He exists in dualism: while in physical form, he exists also in the metaphysical form in the form of *Ehihe* (animal part or what could be referred to as the 'doubleness' of man) (Ugwu, 2022). During the very verge of his/her death, the *Ehihe* formal existence would soon turn to *Oyime* (ghost) (Ugwu, 2022). Suffice it to say then that the sphere of ghost-existence in man is the last sphere before the actual death of man. When the actual death occurs, this existential sphere seizes and existence now swings fully into spiritual where full spirit beings exist from a purely metaphysical realm having an ontological influence, interaction with the physically living being counterparts. Even death does not stop the being of death. This explains why death is not seen as a seizure to existence but a continuity of existence and could be described with certain terms like leave(left) or departure (departed). This is why the dead have always been referred to as 'departed-living' (Ugwu, 2022) referring to left-members of the family, community rather than being described as ancestors or living-dead. During leaving, one does not have to be afraid because one still does exist but in a higher existential sphere as a full spirit being. Even though one does not know with certainty which level one would continue existence over there and also the existential principles obtainable in the hereafter. One comes to full knowledge and adaptation of this when one finally leaves or departs from this cosmos. When leaving, many a times, considering the spirituality of one, that is, the level of peace one has already maintained with beings with whom one would continue to exist in the hereafter, one could be found putting up a smiling facial expression. The upright could be found in this situation while going, definitely not the non-upright. The reason is that, during death, companies usually come from the hereafter to lead one home or into the existential domain of the hereafter.

During death, spirit beings are to accompany the departing person home. Many a times, relatives to the leaving or departing person could be found among the spirit beings to accompany the person home. In this accompanying home, a defining force that is determined or attracted by the portion of morality the departing person has observed and lived by, in life, also forms the part of the company. When the force attracts more of positivity, the leaving person could be found smiling home. At this very short existential time, the departing person could feel the heat of the power dominating his/her welcome into the hereafter. If s/he is an upright, s/he already could feel the upright force coming for him/her from the hereafter, but if otherwise, s/he already feels the force descending on him/her from the hereafter. S/he does not necessarily require to be judged before knowing where s/he belongs to in the hereafter, s/he already knows at this snappy time when the company to lead him/her home comes and the force that accompany these spirit beings surfaces.

At death, one first is welcomed to the cycle of one's relatives in the hereafter, and from there introduced to the larger cycle of family and in that order, to the Supreme Being whom one would visit last before descending where is befitting to one. This process of welcome happens procedurally at a twinkle of an eye. This is most suitable to say to happen after the departed

must have been buried; but for those who are not buried may be because of any possible reason, this could happen years after. Significantly, this could explain why the Igbo-African believes in reincarnation and the reality of the ontological influence of the dead on the living because in as much as the body is not buried, the spirit is not yet at rest fully in the hereafter. It could also explain why the debate on the number of times one could reincarnate. Following the possible stretch of the existence of the unburied body, the spirit of the person could keep reincarnating. Finally, it could explain why the argument whether reincarnation could be seen taking place in only human beings or other beings like trees, lower animals other than human being. It could be possible following this position for if a lower animal partakes in the eaten up of the flesh if fallen in the sea or wilderness and unrecovered, the spirit and being of the person could be perceived being reincarnated in another body or being other than human being. The implication becomes that what you know or possess becomes part of you and you become part of it, and you could manifest and influence it as it could manifest and influence you also. Based on this principle, you can feature or produce what is part of you because you know or possess it. That is why one can reincarnate into other beings other than human beings because in whatever becomes a potential being to be reincarnated into, has an element of the being to reincarnate. However, another factor must be of relevance to be reviewed here; that is morality. Morality is a powerful ontological factor central in African discourse on reality. It can make better or mar life, by this, hierarchical reduction of reincarnation implies the level of moral consciousness of the being reincarnating. But maintaining the reincarnation of the existential state into which being is created, or even going higher thereby becoming deified or divinized shows a high level of cordial ontological relationship one has maintained in life.

Be that as it may, the mystery behind death is many when analyzed from an African perspective. Experientially, it is still an expression of the mystery of death that there are experiences where a dead person is said to be seen elsewhere living, sometimes, as a married person with children. They live there and do their daily engagements, but would cease to exist there at once s/he is exposed as dead when seen by one who knew one before one's death. This is not a case of reincarnation.

There are cases where dead has returned to favour the physically living relatives, children using or through another (human)being. At the level of *Oyime* (ghost), this favour could also happen but could sometimes be in form of other beings other human beings. In some occasions, this instance could, by the Western religious, be tagged an instance of familiar spirit manifestation.

From these analyses so far, what is clear is the necessity of befitting burial as a concept. But the concept consists of both all the traditional rituals and observances due to human beings in accordance with the traditional and cultural realities obtainable in a particular community. Thus, it entails all those dues from burial to funeral rites and customary, cultural and traditional observances. It is a worldview, culture that its content is full of philosophy.

Going deeper into explaining this, from an Africa perspective, death could be said to be very interesting, and an experience that places pride on the subject of experience. It stands as the point of real definition of existence. As such, it is a moment that defines the meaning and implication of existence. It defines the moment of rebirth into another existential sphere. Its value is more in essence than the value of the birth into the physical world for it introduces an existence into a higher category- spiritual category. There is a place between birth-into-this-physical-world (pregnancy delivery) and birth-into-the-hereafter (death). When one comes into this physical world, one is far from one's last room in this world, and this room is all one has got, and that is one's grave. As one lives on this earth, on daily basis, one draws closer to this eternal room. One is aware of this existential movement, but unaware of how far or close one is to the last property on earth, one's grave. In other words, living is dying, coming is going. But the spirit beings in the hereafter are not unaware of one's existential distance between the physical world and one's procedural entry into the hereafter. They behold one drawing closer. The hereafter is boundless, everywhere is an entry. Entry into the realm stands significantly for the last record of presence of life in the body. But to live is only but an aspect of existence, so, to stop living (death) does not mean and imply to stop existence for to stop existence implies that there is no being, for existence itself is being and fundamental for that matter. The facticity of existence is the principle of being hence it identifies that which is real, even the being-concept (Ugwu & Abah, 2021).

However, the process of existence which dovetails into existence-towards/into-the-hereafter looks like a drama that presents a scenario where one could be told 'do you know when we started having a look at you, from very far distance (this farness is years on earth) until you

today you finally arrived here. At first, it looked like a dot, until you keep coming closer and it formed a (human)being or structure and till you come this closest that we could now know that it is you. It has been so long.' This procedural existence could picture when one was immediately born till one at 20years or 70years or 120years or 202years then till death. A movement that could be likened to this is the one of moon. At the initial emergence of the moon, it takes a tiny lunar shape, and grows bigger by day and then to full moon shape. After birth, one keeps existentially descending-towards-the-hereafter (death). This descending keeps drawing closer to the last destination/room (grave) until one's drawing-nearer forms a being to the spiritual visibility of the spirit beings in the hereafter, and then one keeps drawing closer until one gets so close that one's being could even be recognized by a relative who may happen to recall one's being through a sort of pre-established knowledge when on earth or the principle of bloodline which would lead one to the cycle of one's relatives in the hereafter where one's judgment would take initiate. However, it has to be noted that while this existential movement-into-death takes longer time here than in the hereafter. When explaining so many experiences associated with the hereafter, it appears to take eternity, but in the hereafter, they take just a twinkle of an eye.

Time is never a factor in the hereafter, but here on earthly realm of existence, it is a big one. Researchers, even from health science areas, who have delved into this aspect of metaphysical discussion, have come up with positions that give reliability to the position maintained here. In life, even in the hereafter, time does not really matter, but wellness matters (King, 2021). Even from a religious angle, people have downplayed the son-God (Jesus Christ) following the point that His second coming is usually qualified with 'soon', hence their satirical position that the soon-ness of His coming has turned to eternity. But indeed, that is a clear show of misconception of time and the nature of the hereafter as an invisible realm of existence. Talking about time and the happening of divine event, the Bible says: "A thousand years to you are like one day; they are like yesterday, already gone, like a short hour in the night". In another place, still on human misconception of time and the timing of divine mission, people are advised not to count time for divine fulfilment the way human beings count time for their own events to happen. In this regard, the Bible advises: "But do not forget one thing, my dear friends! There is no difference in the Lord's sight between one day and a thousand years; to him the two are the same."

Be that as it may, this drawing-closer and the principle of knowing through bloodline or pre-established knowledge when on earth explain why one's descending to the hereafter could be influenced by many factors. One, one's moral consciousness could influence one's descending to the hereafter. On one hand, when one is upright, hence playing in accordance with one's moral consciousness, that could attract on one favours from being for more longevity favour and palatability of existential experience. On the other hand, when one is immoral hence playing down on one's moral consciousness, that could fasten one's existential process of descending towards the hereafter. Two, relative-spirit-beings could influence this existential process towards the hereafter. One descending-towards-the-hereafter could be influenced back to physical life but that does not mean that one would go back visibly in the hereafter. No, because this existential movement is a process, one still descends but here on earth, one may be divinely influenced to live more days or years. Such a case is still in process of descending; no one can ever go back and then start coming/descending nearer to grave. It is a mystery in/of life that accommodates the reality of *Ije-uwa*.

This influence on the existential-process towards the hereafter proves the reality of the spirit of the human as the major driving force of living and the phenomenon upon which everything in man's exercise is to be believed to be real. It features the reality of *Ehihe* which points to *Azu abuo* phenomenon which explains the doubleness of man. Human beings are influenced to return back to life if found spiritually leaving/departing through the *Azu abuo* phenomenon. *Azu abuo* phenomenon starts even from the day one is conceived, formed in the womb. That brings down the discourse of morality to even unborn beings. However, to influence any human being back to life becomes more realistic after one is delivered for the physical has now arrived and then could be brought life back to, from the spiritual counterpart unlike when one is still in the womb. Hence, the major difference is that while the former (that is, the version from the hereafter) is between the spirit-beings in the hereafter and one descending-towards-the-hereafter, the latter (the one that could occur with still-living human being here on earth) is at the level of *Ehihe* existence between at least one physically living and one descending-towards-the-hereafter. But both point to the fact that they occur in one's whole life time (Ugwu, 2022).

Existence is not static, processed, wrapped and kept that it is so strict, rigid and unable to bend to accommodate the fact of *Ije-uwa*. It explains reality in whole: man, lower animals, trees,

spirit beings, objects and even the Supreme Being. Nature of reality, in precision with the nature of the Supreme Being, is mysterious to man that no man has the all-encompassing knowledge to explain it with surety. Funny enough, some professions through their professionals claim or think they have real knowledge of reality especially as it concerns the nature of the Supreme Being. Religion is one, and it even goes further to prove this through some religious languages and words, glorification of God and attempts to explain the nature of God. At this, names like 'Unchangeable God', 'All-good God', 'God through whom everything good comes from', etc. are ways of expressing who/what we think God is, to us. Some of the religious names and attributions given to God demean the substance, nature and essence of God. Some attributions religiously given to God present God as inferior, incapable, limited, imperfect and incomplete in being. As it concerns the unchangeableness of God, it should be reversed and put that in the unchangeableness of God is God's changeableness. This is to accommodate the principle of *Ije-uwa* and the reality of God. If God is really unchangeable, He is unchangeable based on His being-in-Godhood. If His nature, substance and essence does not feature change or change-ability, He would not be described as different and opposing things and finally exist in many things that could be humanly opposing. That explains why He could explain everything if not, He could not have answers to everything. He changes and allows uncertainties to play for many reasons: One, it is part of His nature, substance and essence, and it played out even in the Christian Holy Book as it concerns God and the children of Israel, in the life of Hezekiah, etc. He allows alteration of nature as that is natural and that is typical of the meaning and implication of *Ije-uwa*. Two, it is an intrinsic nature of reality that reality is not stationed and fixed. Things live and to a point stop living. This nature portrays the perfection of the being of God as consisting both good and bad, beginning and ending, and that portrays the *Ije-uwa* of being. Opposition is an intrinsic nature of reality, and that explains the reality of *Ije-uwa*. As it concerns the all-perfect, good God, God is indeed perfect, and this implies that both good and evil are all intrinsic nature, substance and essence of God. By implication, that defies the attribution 'all-good-God' or the God through whom everything good, comes. It has to be known that in Godhood is perfection, and perfection is all-round, and that is the all-round-content of God as a perfect being so as to be able to explain and have answers to all things. If evil or negativity is not from Him, that means that He does not have/possess it in His nature, substance and essence, and therefore could not explain it hence He is no more perfect. When in the bid to explain the holistic nature of God, we say what God cannot do does not exist, that is a way of belittling God and making Him inferior. Evil or immorality exists, God may not do them, but it is part and parcel of God's beingness: divinity or nature, substance and essence hence He could explain them.

4 The Nature of Being

Holism is a fundamental expression of being. In the holism of being then explains the trio cardinal nature of being as 1) being-there, 2) being-with and 3) being-on. Brief analysis of these three aspects of being is paramount thus.

(1) Being is always being-there. In other words, there must always be a 'there' to be-ing. There shall never be a time being-is-not-there. Being is always being, and that presupposes being-there. Being conveys the idea of a 'there' of be-ing. This, therefore, implies that being never finishes or quits existing or stops or vanishes or ceases to exist. There-ness does not only quantify but also qualify being, hence it could be physical or metaphysical. Going by this, there-ness constitutes being, hence to be is to be-ing-there. The being-there-ness of being implicates the idea of being-positive, being found there, always exist there.

(2) While in the there-ness of being, there is with-ness so much so that being-there is being-with. There-ness therefore implies with-ness. Being is always being-with-the-other. Being is never be-ing-without-the-other. Being cannot be conceived without the idea of otherness. Otherness is therefore an integral feature of being for to be is to be-ing-with-the-other, and that explains the holism of being. Otherness is centrally part of being, hence to be-ing is be-ing-with-the-other. The being-with-ness of being implicates the idea of the defining factor of being which is socialization, constant-in-relationship, never being found alone or disjointed from one another. By this, aloneness is not a defining nature of being, rather always being found among, within and in midst of an 'other', are the existential reality of being. In fact, aloneness is what is not being.

(3) Being is always being-on, and the on-ness of being is a pointer to the activeness of being. There are two levels of existential on-ness. One, is the personal, natural, immediate or ordinary capability of a being to act or stand as a cause. In that, the facticity of the inherent capability

of beings to act to a certain level as a being is on play. Two, is the capability of a being to influence an ontological, supernatural effect. By this, a being could be a rationale or being behind an effect of a cause or an action based on its capability to attract higher cause above its personal, normal or ordinary capability to influence such an action. So, a being could be, by its nature, limited, but the end of its limitedness begins its unlimitedness when it could tap from the ontological reality of forces above its capability in order to prove its beingness and activeness.

Generally, the principle of being is unstopable. To conceive the end of being is committing an analytic fallacy or attempting denial of the proposition of the fact of reason. It is self-contradictory that even the act or denial or rejection of the facticity of being is itself a contradiction. Even nothingness to a logical conclusion is being.

The holism of being implies that the concept of being is not discrete or disjointed rather holistic or entirely in nature. By this, being is always being-on; it is always being positive; in other being-there-with. That is the nature of being that explains its essence which identifies with being-with and that gives an insight into its substantial manifestation of always-being-on never off or out. Being is never being-off or being-out. It is always being integrally in and holistic. Then in this holism, being interact, act and influence one another. It could be established that being implicates the idea of existence, and must exist in world, must inter-world-communicate, must create ontological effects from the inter-world-communication and then the effect of the communication felt by beings. Thus the equation for reality could be one that reads like this: Being/Existence-World-Communication-Effects-Feeling.

Existential spheres with their peculiar characteristics may occur, but existence is a continuous and holistic reality. Three factors identifies being: being-there, being-on and being-with. The being-on-ness of being implicates the idea of always mutually influencing and communicating. It explains the activeness or effectiveness of being-with-ness of being through series of activities going through beings in their there-ness. Action, this implies, therefore explains the concept of being which has to exist in community, that is, holism, and definitely that defining action must create effect and that effect must be felt and finally responded to. That is the cyclic nature of the existence of being. A being must be-there, that is positive, and being-there, it must be-there-with, that is, socialization or found among, within or in the midst, and while maintaining this community, action must ensue as a significance of the apex of being from where it gets defining nature of activeness. These trio defining factors about being inhere in the concept of holism of 'being'.

5 Evaluation and Conclusion

The concept of *Ije-uwá* has been presented and analyzed if not in entirety, at least to an understandable level. From the analysis, it could be asked if everything could be described as *Ije-uwá*. In other words, is every life experience explainable by the concept? Is *Ije-uwá* categorizable as a philosophy or an aspect or expression of culture or tradition or is it a way of perceiving reality or what exactly? *Ije-uwá* as a concept is etymologically, literarily or denotatively not a philosophy, but conceptually and connotatively, it conveys a philosophy with huge existentialist implications. The existentialist nature of *Ije-uwá* as a concept encourages many things in life.

Firstly, it encourages good living. By this, it conveys the sense of living a moral underlined lifestyle knowing that nature, many a times, responds to actions of man in accordance with the level of morality inhere in them. This response could be here on earth, or thereafter after this life.

Secondly, it holds hope for survival tendencies in man. By this, it equips the human mind with the readiness to stand up for uncertainties of life. Life today is threatened with many uncertainties and unbelievable experiences. The concept encourages for acceptance of some happenings in life. It instills in man the undying mind to persevere to withstand whatever nature comes up with.

Thirdly, it equally encourages the mind to always be expectant and accept whatever life brings to the table of life. The reality of life is that not every experience of man in life is premeditated or man-caused. Some of these experiences have cause man to suicide, or put man in depression in life because they are unbelievable or never expected or have always expected in life but never came. Significantly, some experiences in life are beyond man's control ability and hence, the necessity to be able to accept certain life experiences for they are all the expressions of *Ije-uwá*. It is a clear biblical show of understanding of the concept that even the bible records that "they may drink and they may forget their sorrows, and their miseries would not be remembered

anymore” (Proverb 31:7, Aramaic Bible in Plain English). In many other biblical translations, ‘sorrows’ here would be replaced with *poverty* or *wants* and ‘miseries’ replaced with *troubles* or *unhappiness*. This phenomenon which men should be given drink to take to forget about, is the phenomenon of *Ije-ṽwa*. When it takes the negative dimension, it becomes so dangerous to health and misery, but when it takes to positive dimension, it becomes fortune or luck.

As noted earlier *Ije-ṽwa*, has both ontological and social interpretations. It has a lot to do explaining existential situations of man. The Igbo in his language would conclude the concept in sayings like *ṽwa di egwu* (the world is scary/weird) or *Ije-ṽwa/Ihe/Ife-ṽwa di ubu* (‘life is unpredictable’ because, many a times, a tree expected to fall could still stand strongly and the one never expected to, eventually falls) or *Ije-ṽwa Ihe/Ife-ṽwa adighi mfe* (life is not easy or fair... full of un-predictions, ups-and-downs). It is from this angle that an African view of existentialism entails the fact that even life is unfair to human beings or that life or living is a high risk itself. By this, an African existentialism raises questions about life challenges like death and life, sickness and healthiness, abortion, euthanasia, suicide, anger and happiness, confidence and fear, success and failure, peace and war, betrayal and trust, truth and lies, natural disasters like flood, earthquake, etc., production of ammunition or technology that makes life worthwhile, among other numerous examples.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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