

**EPISTEMETHICS: A VIABLE AND INDISPENSABLE PHILOSOPHY FOR
THE REALISATION OF AN EGALITARIAN NIGERIA**

Elias Ifeanyi E. Uzoigwe, Ph.D

Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar, Nigeria

Email: fruzoigwe@gmail.com; eliasuzoigwe@unical.edu.ng; +2348038268449

ORCiD 0000-0002-3809-7114

ABSTRACT

Since after Nigeria's independence, the yearning of the majority of her citizens to have an egalitarian society where the right of every citizen is respected simply because he or she is a human being has remained elusive. This problem, among other problems Nigerians are grappling with, has been identified by various scholars to have been grounded in lack of good leadership and good governance encapsulated in bribery and corruption, parochialism, tribalism and un-patriotism. This study, which employs critical analysis, contextual, historical, and textual methods of inquiry, holds that the above problems are orchestrated by lack of a specific philosophy Nigerians would boldly call their own; which guides the activities of all the citizens, both the leaders and the led. Through education, knowledge is acquired. Acquisition of knowledge has been identified as a major tool for the development of any nation across the globe. However, this study strongly holds that acquisition of knowledge has to be accompanied by good moral values that must be practically demonstrated in the manner people live their lives both in public and private places. It is this kind of education where acquisition of knowledge and practice of good moral conduct work in synergy that such an education will be useful to the society. The kind of knowledge that is embedded in good moral behaviour is described in this research as *epistemethics*. It is a strong principle of *epistemethics* that any knowledge that is not geared towards advancing the course of humanity is not qualified to be called knowledge. Keywords: Bad Governance, Moral-Leadership, Egalitarianism, *Epistemethics*, and Tribalism.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of Nigeria is not only lack of moral-leadership, bad governance, bribery and corruption, parochialism, tribalism and un-patriotism, but most significantly, lack of 'a philosophy or philosophies' that Nigerians call their own, which will practically demonstrate knowledge and morality at the same time in the day to day activities of the people of the nation. Nigerian leaders and, indeed, all Nigerians need some kind of integration of their lives with a mental maturity that is symbolically embedded in a specific philosophy. Giving support to this postulate, Titus argues that: "The life of a person who is matured mentally is integrated around a philosophy of life."¹ There should

¹ Harold H. Titus. *Ethics for Today* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021),13

be basic ethical principles inculcated side by side different educational backgrounds and qualifications acquired by the people in governance of the Nigerian state. Within the context of *epistemethics*, learning, knowledge and, in fact, acquiring education without good character is a waste of both time and resources. Knowledge and practice of morality (epistemethics) practically expressed in day to day activities of our personal and interpersonal relationships should be a unifying factor between those in governance and the rest of the Nigerian citizens for the realisation of the Nigeria of our dream – an egalitarian state. Often times, candidates vying for various offices at different levels of governance in Nigeria showcase a catalogue of degrees (some forged) without a corresponding good ethical conduct or good moral behaviour. This has remained a major part of our problem as a nation. Unfortunately, even the so called elites do not exhibit maturity and good character at any little opportunity. They help in rigging elections for greedy politicians, they ensure, with their parochial mindset, that their family or clan members must have a share before any another person even when those people they are pushing forward are without requisite knowledge and capacity for the office. Achebe was therefore right from his own perspective to argue that, “the trouble with Nigeria lies in the leadership.”²

Apart from delineating some of the key concepts, Nigeria as an amalgamated entity, Nigeria after independence, military rule in Nigeria, democratic dispensation in Nigeria, and Nigeria at the High Point of Undemocratised democracy form part of the crux of this study. However, it is considered necessary to explicate some of the key concepts that form the core of the study, which includes:

Epistemethics: *Epistemethics* is a construct of two words namely: epistemology and ethics. These two concepts are also among the major branches of philosophy. Epistemology derives from two Greek words: *episteme* (knowledge) and *logos* (study or science of). Therefore, when these two concepts are joined together, it becomes ‘the study or science of knowledge’. As a branch of philosophy, epistemology is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge about reality. It also deals with the nature, forms, scope, functions and limitations of knowledge. *Epistemethics* emphasises the functions of knowledge and considers the most important of all the functions of knowledge as promotion and advancement of the welfare or wellbeing of humanity, bearing in mind that man is the image of God – *imago Dei*, and humanity is the handiwork of God.

When knowledge is employed against humanity, it is no longer knowledge; and the person who possesses such knowledge would be described as someone who went to school, but not educated. The educated person within the context of *epistemethics* is the person whose knowledge and good moral conduct are inseparable, a person of integrity. When good moral behaviour is not practically

² Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1983), 3.

demonstrated within the dynamics of personal and inter personal human relationships, it is not qualified to be knowledge. Yes, integrity is found wanting in such a situation.

Ethics: There is no univocal definition of ethics. However, ethics derives from the Greek word ‘ethos’, which is synonymous with ‘moral’. Both ethics and moral connote customs, habits, and an individual or community’s acceptable ways of behaviour. Ethics is a branch of philosophy which deals with the rightness or wrongness of human act. Ethics is the study of whether there are any values each and every person should pursue, whether there is a set of virtues as a code or principles of conduct for everyone and what these are if they do exist. Ethics is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the rightness or wrongness of human behaviour. Within the context of philosophical discipline, another name for ethics is moral philosophy.

Egalitarianism: Egalitarianism is the doctrine that moral and political life should be aimed at respecting and advancing the equality of persons.³ State as employed in this study is synonymous with country; for instance, Nigerian state, Italian state, and Ghanaian state. By making Nigeria an egalitarian state, this study envisages a Nigeria where political and moral life should be intertwined and synergised in such a manner that what should ennoble, enhance, and advance human life, common good, wellbeing and welfare of all the citizenry both the rich and the poor alike, the enlightened and the un-alphabetically oriented will be considered equal before the law. Egalitarian state or society is being advocated here with a view to the equality of all citizenry, which should be encouraged and promoted at all times and in all circumstances. It is a Nigeria where citizens are judged based on not just quality of their education and certificates, but most importantly, the quality of their moral conduct both in private and public places. In an egalitarian state people are free and their freedom and lives are respected and preserved simply because they are human beings.

All these might sound utopist to someone who do not understand the power of the human mind and the asset we have as humans when we employ the capacity to believe when noble ideas are conceived and work towards realising them. In the tripartite definition of knowledge as justified true belief (JTB) espoused by Plato and advanced by the like of Descartes and Chisholm, and all the modifications to it across diverse ages, belief has remained an essential concept in the definition of knowledge. Tigner recognises and appreciates the huge impact of belief in human existential struggles when he articulates that: “This capacity to believe is the most significant and fundamental human faculty, and the most important thing about a man is what he believes, in the depth of his being.”⁴ This is the thing that makes him what he is; the thing that organizes him and feeds him; the thing that keeps

³ Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 144.

⁴ Hugh Stevenson Tigner, *No Sign Shall Be Given* (New York: Phoenix Publishers, 1993), 15.

him going in the face of circumstances; the thing that gives him resistance and drive.”⁵ In fact, belief is an indispensable variable in all human quests.

Moral-Leadership: Moral-leadership is a construct of two words namely, moral and leadership. Morality as it is applied and employed in this research is one and the same thing with ethical conduct. Morality is: “The study of the concepts involved in practical reasoning, good, right, duty, obligation, virtue, freedom, rationality, choice.”⁶ Leadership is a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others towards achievement of a goal. Moral-leadership is leadership that is guided by good conduct or good behaviour. In such a process of influence, all the efforts are geared toward good.

Philosophy: Philosophy derives from the two Greek words: *philo* (love) and *sophia* (wisdom). Therefore, philosophy is a construct of two words which means “love of wisdom”. According to Okere, “Philosophy is an effort to understand or comprehend reality as a whole, an effort to discover its meaning, an interpretation of life and eventually of culture understood as the objectivization of life.... it is an act of intellectual creation where the new creation is a meaning borne from the melting of one’s total experience.”⁷ Philosophy is a rational, critical reasoning about God, man, and the world.

Tribalism: Tribalism is defined as social phenomenon associated with the identity of members of a competing communal group (s) seeking to protect and advance their interest in a political system. Here the relevant communal factors are often language, common history (origin), race, religion, etc. Tribalism is a state of being overly loyal to one’s own group at the expense of common good.⁸ In the Nigerian context, tribalism, ethnicity and nationality are often times employed interchangeably, but they have their subtle differences, which discussing them will mean going outside the scope of this work. Often, tribalism is employed by political elites to achieve their political gains. This must have been why Olukoju argues that, “tribal movements may have been created and instigated by the new men of power in furtherance of their special interests. Tribalism then becomes a mark of class privilege.”⁹ Tribalism is the placements of where one comes from first at the expense of the general welfare or common good.

⁵ Maurice M. Rudolf, *Essentials of Moral Philosophy*, 2nd Edition (London: Homo-Sapience Publishers, 2021), 87.

⁶ Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 126.

⁷ Theophilus Okere, *African Philosophy: A Historic-Hermenautical Investigation on the Condition for Its Possibility* (New York: University Press of America, 1993), xiv

⁸ Success Hilary Coleman, *The Values of Education* (New York: Rex Publishers, 2021), 23

⁹ Alfred Olukoju, *The Dynamism of Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Nigeria*. (In A. Osuntokun & A. Olukoju (Eds.). *Nigerian Peoples and Culture*, 1997), 298-307.

Nigeria as an Amalgamated Entity

The name Nigeria was invented in 1897 by Miss Flora Shaw, the Lagos correspondent of the London TIMES who later become the wife of the Nigeria's first Governor, Sir Frederick (later Lord) Lugard.

In the words of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, "Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no 'Nigerians' in the same sense there are 'English' or 'Welsh' or 'French'. The word Nigeria is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not."¹⁰

The amalgamation of 1914 by Lord Lugard, no doubt, has remained the foundation of the problems Nigerians are facing today. In Nigeria, people of diverse cultural, religious, ethnic, and socio-political orientations were amalgamated without consulting them. This forceful amalgamation or what I call 'non-dialogical assemblage' has remained a hydra-headed monster in Nigeria. It is no longer news that some of the ethnic groups in Nigeria are large enough to be countries of their own.

The population of over twenty million people in Lagos State, Nigeria, for instance, is larger than the population of some of the countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and America. Nigeria is a creation of the British government based on administrative convenience. There has never been a time in history when its unity was established. This is instantiated by Alhaji Tafa Balewa, the first Prime Minister of Nigeria (as cited in Hansard 208) when he writes: "Since the amalgamation of southern and northern provinces in 1914, Nigeria has existed as one country only on paper...It is still far from being united. Nigerian unity is only a British intention for the country."¹¹

The fact remains that the highest disservice done to over two hundred million people in Nigeria by Lord Lugard was the amalgamation of people of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-tribal, and multi-social background as one people. Besides having a philosophy that defines the roadmap, vision, and mission of the country, non-dialogical assemblage of people of diverse background is the fundamental problem of the Nigerian state. Corroborating this view, Prof. Ango Abdullahi, the former Vice Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria argues that, the amalgamation of Nigeria was a great mistake. In his work titled, "Nigeria 1914 Till Date – A Chequered Journey So Far", he describes the amalgamation as the greatest mistake that had befallen Nigeria.¹² It has remained an incontrovertible fact that the amalgamation of northern and southern

¹⁰ Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (London: Faber Publishers, 1947), 47-48

¹¹ Tafa Balewa, *Quotes in Hansard*. Lagos: March 20 to April 2, 1947, 208.

¹² Ango Abdullahi, "Nigeria 1914 Till Date – A Chequered Journey So Far" www.naijapundit.com

protectorates as one entity has contributed in no small measure to the lopsidedness that has characterised Nigeria as a country. The people of the northern and southern parts of the geographical location called Nigeria are not the same people apart from the fact that they share in one humanity. All the diversities that are not consciously and conscientiously harnessed and harmonized with ‘a philosophy or philosophies’ are part of the reasons why Nigeria is too far from being an egalitarian state.

To close this gap, *epistemethics* necessarily has to be employed as a common philosophy, which if adopted, will help diffuse the tension that is evident in all spheres of the lives of the people as a country.

Independent and Still Over Dependent

Historically, Nigeria gained her independence on October 1, 1960; but existentially, Nigeria is still very much dependent almost in all spheres of human endeavour. Why is it that amidst a plethora of human and natural resources in Nigeria, there is almost nothing that is indigenous that Nigerians are proud of calling their own? Even the democracy she claims to be practising was copied from America. Unfortunately, Nigerian leaders practise democracy in paper and through social media propaganda, but in reality, Nigeria has been practising undemocratised democracy or tyrannical democracy where there is zero tolerance for freedom of the citizenry in almost all spheres of their lives. Even freedom of movement has become almost impossible in Nigeria where terrorism, insurgency and banditry are on the rise. Nigeria claims to be independent but “in reality, she is over dependent on Asia, America and Europe for importation of almost everything including toothpick.”¹³ This is the case not because Nigeria does not have the human and natural resources to sustain herself and be great, the fact remains that corruption has become a culture in the most populous country of the black race. Going through various republics in the annals of history of the country, things seem to be going worse as day goes by. Why? There is no philosophy that Nigerians can call their own; and that is why the urgency and expediency of employing *epistemethics* as a viable and indispensable philosophy in positioning Nigeria to the status of an egalitarian state.

Nigeria Under the Military Rule

What is to be presented here is a sketchy account of military rule in Nigeria. The military rule in Nigeria was characterised by coup and counter coup as well as deliberate and divisive conspiracy theories surrounding the coups. This has remained a key factor in the problem of entronement of

¹³ James D. Yusuf. *The 21st Century Nigerian Politics* (Lagos: John and John Publishers, 2021), 15.

incompetence in the name of ‘it is our turn or it is my lifetime ambition to govern Nigeria’ in the leadership and governance of Nigeria. Under military rule, Nigeria was on fire and experienced the full weight of impunity, tyranny and dictatorship. As a brief historical survey, military rule began in Nigeria with the coup and counter coup of January and July, 1966 that brought Major General J.T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi and General Yakubu Gowon into power, respectively. As General Yakubu Gowon took over government that lasted for almost a decade, he was also dethroned in a coup that brought in General Murtala Mohammed in 1975. Another coup was experienced in Nigeria in 1976 which enthroned General Olusegun Obasanjo into power.

The General Mohammadu Buhari regime dethroned Alhaji Shehu Shagari and his government who were elected into power in 1979 after Obasanjo’s regime. General Ibrahim Babangida dethroned General Buhari in 1985. In 1993 General Sani Abacha took over after dethroning Chief Ernest Shonekan’s interim government put in place by General Babangida while leaving office. General Abacha died in 1998, and General Abdulsalami Abubakar took over and handed over to ‘the so called democratic dispensation’ of 1999 that brought Obasanjo back into power as a civilian president of Nigeria.

Undemocratised Democracy and the Era of Individualism and Secularism

From the administration of Olusegun Obasanjo to Shehu Musa Yar’adua, Goodluck Jonathan to Muhammadu Buhari that is, from 1999-2023, the kind of democracy that is practiced in Nigeria could be described as tyrannical or dictatorial democracy or at best undemocratised democracy. There has never been a time in the history of Nigeria even under military dictatorship where masses in Nigeria suffered the kind of hardship they are suffering presently. Considering the present situation in the country, it is unheard of even during military dictatorship that people do not have their opinion on issues concerning them. The current situation in Nigeria could be likened to the scenario in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, where ‘all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.’ As a matter of fact, all Nigerians are citizens, but some Nigerian politicians and their sycophants are more equal than the rest of Nigerians. In fact, “since 2015 till date, Nigeria has lost its soul in so far leadership and governance are concerned”¹⁴ and “for Nigeria to be an egalitarian society it will require a special intervention”¹⁵ Among the characteristics of democracy are indispensability of the rule of law, and upholding of the fundamental human rights namely: freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of worship and so on. Unfortunately, none of these are obtainable in Nigeria today in the strictest sense of it. In a democracy, the citizens have ‘strong voice’ in electing their leaders, but since 1999 that Nigeria claimed to have embarked upon democratic

¹⁴ Solomon B. Norbert, *Nigeria at a Cross Road* (New York: Phoenix Publishers, 2019), 51

¹⁵ Boniface C. Williams, *An Introductory Text for Leadership* (Enugu: Harmony Publishers, 2022), 23.

dispensation, the will of the citizens has never been respected by the electoral umpire by giving the citizens the candidates of their choice. Putting it in another way, Makinde holds that: “Since 1999, there has never been an election in Nigeria that was not characterized by electoral malpractices. What is most devastating is that, the youths whose future is being toiled with and destroyed by the greedy and ungodly politicians were often used to rig elections because of mere peanuts.”¹⁶ Also more pathetic is that some of these youths graduated from higher institutions without ‘character’.

The kind of injustice, impunity and insecurity characterised by insurgency, terrorism and banditry experienced in Nigeria in recent times could be best described as the high point of cluelessness in the administration of the affairs of men called democracy. Some of the political parties are into crisis because of some level of breach of agreement, especially as it concerns zoning and power rotation. Though Nigeria has not had a true democratic government, it has to be recalled that, “When in 1978 the NPN adopted the zoning and rotation policy in respect of important positions in party and government...Thus some persons reasoned that rotational representation and zoning had some virtues and worthy of incorporating into the constitution.”¹⁷ As a matter of existential reality, the present administration in Nigeria has shown the high point of undemocratised democracy where citizens are afraid to leave their homes and embark on a journey no matter how short the distance. Farmers in some parts of the country no longer go to their farms because of high level of insecurity. Similarly, appointments into various offices in the administration of diverse areas of the country is not done based on competence, but hugely a matter of tribalism. Ezeanya, reacting to this argues that: “everyone knows that where one comes from: north, south, east or west is a powerful factor in determining what kind of post one gets in the Government or how far one can go in promotion to a certain rank irrespective of objective criteria.”¹⁸ *Epistemethics* abhors this kind of attitude because it is counter moral and counterproductive in nation building and in advancement of the course of humanity. One can now understand why Achebe comparing Nigeria with advanced countries of the world that operate with their own philosophies when he argues that advanced countries reached where they are because they “will never hire a man to perform an important task unless he is the best they can find.” But in Nigeria, people who are grossly incompetent are employed because of their tribal and ethnic affiliation, or at worst, how much they used to bribe their way through

¹⁶ Damian M. Makinde, *Money Politics in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Vin-Chris Publishers, 2023), 6.

¹⁷ Chuba Okadigbo, “The Problem with Politics in Nigeria.” In *De Jury Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1999, 119.

¹⁸ Steve Ezeanya, *An Introductory Text for Leadership* (Enugu: Harmony Publishers, 2022), 23.

The issues concerning the 2023 general elections and how the new administration of the country emerged will not be delineated here simply because the court is already adjudicating on the matter. However, it has to be noted that Nigeria is enmeshed with individualism where most of the leaders care only about themselves and their families at the expense of millions of Nigerians who live in abject poverty. Again, there is a manifest secularist behaviour in Nigeria where both some of the leaders and the led live as if there is no God. These have been translated into lawlessness and care-free lifestyle where no one seems to be taking responsibility for anything. Insurgency, banditry and terrorism have become a new creed and the government and her agencies seem to be doing nothing to ameliorate the unfortunate situation.

The fact remains that democracy has never worked in Nigeria. No wonder Hoffmann writes: “Nigeria’s democracy was severally weakened by civil war and centralization of power during the military era. The conflict helped concentrate oil revenues in the hands of army officials and seeded a powerful, wealthy and often corrupt military elite. The dictatorships militarized Nigeria’s political space and disrupted the flourishing of democratic institutions and culture.”¹⁹ Despite all these, there is a way out. The only possible way to put these experiences to a final rest is for Nigeria to imbibe a philosophy that Nigerians can proudly call their own, encapsulate or enshrine it in the constitution, live it out in practical terms, and the viable and indispensable philosophy that will ameliorate this situation is *epistemethics*.

Epistemethics: A Viable and Indispensable Philosophy for the Realisation of an Egalitarian Nigeria

The level of atrophy, impunity, and lopsidedness orchestrated by lack of a viable philosophy in the leadership of Nigeria remains one of the greatest challenges the country continues to face since after independence. As a philosophy, *epistemethics* has been identified as a viable and indispensable solution to the problem of leadership in Nigeria. One of the principles of *epistemethics* holds that for one to be said to have acquired knowledge, one has to live out in practical terms those moral values for which one can be classified as being moral or ethical. Devoid of good moral behaviour, one can be said to have gone to school, but uneducated. Within the context of this philosophy, education, acquisition of knowledge and good moral conduct are inseparable. There is an ontological synergy, an unbreakable tie between acquired knowledge, education and good moral conduct. Acquiring knowledge or being educated in any field of human endeavour must be encapsulated in good moral conduct. For example, a medical doctor, who has acquired knowledge in the field of medicine, but

¹⁹David Hoffmann, *Democracy in Nigeria* (<https://www.chathanhouse.org/2023/06/democracy-nigeria> retrieved 12/6/2023), 8.

does not respect human life as sacred by deliberately involving himself in willful abortion to make money, went to school but uneducated within the context of *epistemethics*. The question that naturally arises here is: what if the medical doctor in question is pro-abortion, or even an atheist who neither believes in God nor sacredness of human life? The advocates of the philosophy of *epistemethics* respond by reminding the interlocutor that *epistemethics* is a contextual discourse; and within the context of *epistemethics*, such a medical doctor, or an atheist should be discouraged from willful termination of human life, because just as Alfred postulates: “An unborn child also has right to live just as a pro-abortionist, and an atheist have right to life which is their inalienable right.” All knowledge must be at the service of man or rather humanity. Little wonder, Alfred further argues that, “when knowledge is employed to deliberately destroy life and cause pain, it becomes useless.”²⁰ Knowledge ceases to qualify as knowledge *epistemethically* when it is not geared towards the betterment of the lot of humanity. This position has been corroborated when Passy strongly interrogates: “Of what benefit is knowledge or education when it cannot be employed for the good of humanity? Of what use is having catalogue of degrees and certificates without applying them to renew the face of the earth that is being ravaged by poverty, hunger, war and all forms of man-made catastrophe?”

In line with the above Passy writes: “The unenlightened quest for superiority and its economic and political undertone has increased the loss of human lives across the globe. The war between Russia and Ukraine, for instance, would have been averted if not for politics of relationship that is not morally guided. It is really unfortunate that a lot of human lives have been lost in Russia and Ukraine. Humanity cannot do without morality.”²¹ One of the reasons for the lopsidedness in almost all spheres of human endeavour in Nigeria today is because Nigeria has a plethora of people who went to school but graduated without morality. It is a common experience to see elites who should be exemplary to others publicly and deliberately tell lies simply because of what they would gain from the government in power. It is a common experience to see some politicians in Nigeria who do not care about their integrity both in the private and public domains. Unfortunately, too, some of the youths whose future are being destroyed receive peanuts from such ungodly politicians and boldly align themselves with them, sing their praises and do all manner of things for them like ballot box snatching and thuggery during elections.

This is because there is no specific philosophy Nigerians are employing as a guide in their day to day activities whether in private or public sectors. Taking United States of America as a case in

²⁰ Maxwell N. Alfred, *Foundations of Moral Philosophy*. Enugu: De Thinker Publishers, 2019), 22.

²¹ Gabriel T. Passy, *Ethics (Moral Philosophy) at a Glance* (New York: Eagle-Eye Publishers, 2022), 31.

point, even children at the nursery and primary (Basic) schools are aware that pragmatism (workability and cash value philosophy) guides the activities of the government and the people of America.

A philosophy that Nigeria calls her own is grossly lacking in the country and that is why both leaders and the led move in a clueless direction and so, transforming Nigeria into an egalitarian state becomes elusive. In Nigeria, “anything goes” just like the approach of the fore-father of postmodernism, Feyerabend, and the postmodernist thinker, Richard Rorty, to knowledge, when they unequivocally proposed that “all forms of grand totalising or grand norms or grand narratives should be jettisoned in all quests for knowledge.”²² However, for a people who want to grow and have an organised system, there should be grand norms (philosophy or philosophies known to all and practiced by all), which serve(s) as a guide for all the citizenry. It should not be like George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, where “all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others” as it is the case in the present day Nigerian society. It is a kind of philosophy where it will be inculcated in all even the new born babies that our slogan is: “humanity first” or “do everything humanly possible to advance the course of humanity simply because man is God’s image-*imago Dei*”.

In order to achieve this, it is important to note that nations are developed by a class of people that have similar characteristics. Nigeria needs a sincere, human and humane leaders who are morally sound with leadership skills in all the 774 council areas, 36 states houses of assembly and their governors, the president, and members of the national assembly who must practically demonstrate that they have national development at heart. Once the leadership gap is closed at all levels of the three (3) tiers and three (3) arms of government, Nigerians will witness leaders with a collective leadership purpose and focus. There is need to have leadership schools of politics, policy and governance at nation’s capital and in all the 36 states of the federation. Arguing that there is no money in Nigeria to establish and fund such schools is an argument that is dead on arrival. In the words of Makinde, for instance, “the money some of the political parties in Nigeria realized from the sale of presidential nomination forms and buying of delegates of their parties to vote for them during primary elections in 2022 in preparation for the 2023 presidential elections will be more than enough to build a small refinery.”²³ By implication, establishing those schools would be a ‘walk-over’ if the government decides to do so. The gap in leadership in Nigeria can be filled when Nigeria has leaders of similar mindset, attitude, character, and disposition who would take responsibility and be ready for a sincere service. If Nigeria has leaders from the president to the local government chairmen with similar orientation and characteristics, there will be zero tolerance to corruption and all other forms of sharp practices in public and private offices of governance in the country.

²² Success H. Coleman, *A Contemporary Approach to Epistemology (Theory of Knowledge)* (New York: Eagle-Eye Publishers, 2021), 13

²³ Damian M. Makinde, *Damian, Money Politics in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Vin-Chris Publishers, 2023), 75.

It is in having leaders of like-minds with similar views, prospects, aspirations, and characteristics that Nigeria would have for example, 30 years development plan and pursue it vigorously, consciously and conscientiously. Another factor that must be considered is intergenerational conversation that will be collaboratively and corroboratively orchestrated. People are today clamoring for youths to take over Nigeria, but *epistemethics* advocates for intergenerational conversation where both the older and younger generations with similar characteristics synergise in bringing to table diverse ideas and influences as well as experiences to salvage and move the country forward. Such a conversation and synergy must be honest, sincere, truthful and wholesome. Nelson Mandela tried national conversation in South Africa and Paul Kagame equally tried it in Rwanda, and the fact remains that had it been they had people of similar characteristics who keyed in into their mindsets for good governance at various tiers and arms of their government, South Africa and Rwanda would have been far developed.

In August 2022, towards the end of his tenure as the Kenyan president, Uhuru Kenyatta and some other political class in Kenya gradually began national conversation by openly asking for forgiveness from one another. If this is sincerely followed by honest national conversations, Kenya will rise to the admiration of all. In all these, one might not be mistaken to state categorically that, “greed is a basic problem of leadership in Africa²⁴ with its capital in Nigeria.”²⁵ When the Nigerian political leaders in particular and elites in general adopt *epistemethics* as a viable mechanism of their governance and operation, they will think of what they will do to better the lot of Nigerians and not their selfish interests.

By egalitarian state, this study construes a Nigeria where no ethnic group, region, religion, and political party will be regarded as superior while others are inferior or at best, where no people of the country will be regarded as second class citizen. It is a Nigeria where federal character will be fully employed both in appointment, allocation and sharing of resources. It is a Nigeria where people’s inalienable rights are unconditionally respected because all citizens are equal before the law. It is a Nigeria where the representatives of the people at the local council areas, state houses of assembly, federal house of representatives, and senate (national assembly) have the people of their constituencies whom they are representing at heart in the course of decision making; and not people who are so parochial in their thought and actions.

²⁴ Success H. Coleman, *A Contemporary Approach to Epistemology (Theory of Knowledge)* (New York: Eagle-Eye Publishers, 2021), 13.

²⁵ Success H. Coleman, *A Contemporary Approach to Epistemology (Theory of Knowledge)* (New York: Eagle-Eye Publishers, 2021), 19.

If Nigeria becomes an egalitarian state, some of the representatives of the people will stop diverting funds allocated for their constituencies to themselves and their families in foreign banks. It will be a Nigeria where people who take decision on behalf of others think about common good and not for the good of the decision makers alone. In Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative, he admonished that: "people should exercise their duties as if it is a universal law."²⁶ The egalitarian Nigeria advocated in this study is a Nigeria where nobody is above the law both "in principle and in reality"; a Nigeria where leaders and the led obey court orders; a Nigeria where the citizens determine who becomes their leaders, and not where electoral umpires impose leaders on them; a Nigeria where government workers - political or non-political appointees with First School Leaving Certificate do not earn higher salary than professors. This study suggests *epistemethics* as a viable and indispensable philosophy that will usher in an egalitarian Nigeria where there is no lopsidedness in appointment of persons into key sectors of the economy; a Nigeria where the masses will openly without fear or favour, without fear of molestation, etc. call their leaders to a town hall meeting for feedback. It is in such a Nigerian society where *epistemethics* is employed, imbibed, internalised, and lived out (in practice) as a philosophy that egalitarianism as an ideology and a system of government would thrive.

It is so because it is a philosophy that is anchored on both acquired knowledge and practice of such knowledge by the application of good moral values in real life situation. It is a philosophy where theory and praxis cohere and intertwine in an integrative and complementary manner. That is why *epistemethics* has not been fully realized when one acquires knowledge but fails to put it into practice for common good. *Epistemethics* emphasises the functions of knowledge. It strongly holds that knowledge cannot at any point in time divorce its functionality. As a new nomenclature and approach in 21st century philosophy, *epistemethics* also holds that any form of knowledge that is not geared towards solving human problem and advancing common good is not worth the name knowledge. Knowledge should actually be at the service of man, or humanity. If knowledge fails to advance goodness and eliminate evil, such knowledge fails the standard of knowledge within the context of *epistemethics*. This study strongly suggests that good moral behaviour should be an intrinsic part of knowledge acquired in various branches of study at all levels of governance in Nigeria as well as the Nigerian educational system. With this mind-set, one would not be said to be educated or to have acquired knowledge without being seen to live and promote good moral values in practical terms.

One would ask, is this not what various institutions of learning in Nigeria are already doing by making it public at the conferment of various degrees to candidate during convocation where it is said

²⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomenon to any Future Metaphysics*, Revised Edition (New York: Pabulum Publishers, 2018), 32.

that such honours are being conferred in character and learning? It is part of it, but *epistemethics* goes far beyond peripheral expressions of this by insisting that both those who are vested with the powers to award degrees (whether meritorious or honorary), and the recipients of such degrees must be inseparably persons of knowledge and good moral conduct. It is only when the awardees and the recipients of an academic award or degrees accompany their academic qualifications with good moral conduct that they will qualify to be called 'educated'. In this wise, teachers, for instance, who lure their students into bribery or any form of sexual misconduct before such students are graduated or given their merited grades are too far from being teachers. As it were, such teachers and students who give bribe or yield to be sexually abused without any proof of resistance to such ungodly acts could be said to have gone to school but not educated. Within the context of *epistemethics*, teachers' and students' lifestyles must not downplay good moral values that are indispensable functions of knowledge. Though *epistemethics* is applied to Nigeria in this research, however, I strongly suggest that Africa should adopt it, too, as her own philosophy just like America adopted pragmatism as her own philosophy. By so doing, all the clan or village heads, local council chairmen and chair persons, governors of states, law makers at various levels, and president of Nigeria necessarily have to personalise this philosophy in order to realise the Nigeria of their dream.

It is because of lack of a viable philosophy like *epistemethics* that people are pious in their various churches and mosques (even those who neither go to Church nor Mosque) but turn to be wolves in the market places, offices, at the political arena, and in other spheres of human endeavour. Such should not be the case in a society where *epistemethics* is the guiding norm, a philosophy which propels the activities of the citizens. It is when *epistemethics* is imbibed as a philosophy and becomes a way of life that the same person in the church or mosque, or even a pagan is the same person in an elective office, who strives to uphold the good moral values in all things and at all times. In such a situation, probity, honesty, accountability and forthrightness becomes a culture; and in a society that lives out such a culture, people's rights are respected simply because they are human beings. It is in this very important sense that this study suggests that ethics or moral philosophy be made a compulsory course for all departments in the Nigerian Universities and, in fact, all the institutions of learning.

No matter the philosophy of education adopted in Nigeria, devoid of putting such philosophy of education into practice with good moral conduct, the desired result will be far-fetched. In addition to diverse philosophies of education suggested by scholars of various field of studies in Nigeria in the past, *epistemethics* is suggested as a foundation upon which they can stand and thrive. It is so because no philosophy of education can be viable without a people; that is, both leaders and the citizenry who have the willingness, political empathy, goodwill and good conscience to go into office with clean hands and exit from same with clean hands. This might sound utopist, but let us try it and see if any result can be gained. Why Nigerians continue to receive news about looted funds and re-looted funds

is that there is yet to be a morally-based-governance where people apply their wealth of knowledge in their various areas of employment or appointment not losing sight of putting into practice good moral behaviour side by side the knowledge they acquired and experiences they have gained in their various disciplines of specialisation. It is in such a situation that the wealth generated in Nigeria from her God-given, multi-dimensional resources will be used to solidly build and develop all regions, geo-political zones, and in fact, all sectors of the Nigerian economy. In this wise, there will be no need for those in various offices of governance to look for where to hide the common good of the country for their children yet unborn, because their future is already secured and assured by the basic necessities of life on ground.

On the part of those who are entrusted with leadership and governance of Nigeria, leaders who are *epistemethically* oriented must be both critical and creative thinkers with good moral conduct. If they are morally sound but cannot think outside the box in order to do things differently, there will still be a lacuna. Again, though criticality and creativity must cohere and complement each other with a solid moral base, they must not be misplaced. As Uzoigwe, Chukwuma-Offor, and Ategwu put it: “Critical thinking is sometimes referred to as ‘critic-creative thinking.’ Thinking critically and thinking creatively can be seen as the same but undoubtedly, there are basic differences between the two. Creativity is the process of making or producing something, while criticality is a process of assessing or judging situations, events...Creativity is known as a skill which can be found in every human at different stages of human life whether it is latent or manifest. The continuation, improvement, and level of creativity differs from person to person. Creativity has various features: flexibility, multiple thinking, sensitivity to environment, being always awake and interested in new situations, rationalisation, thinking, treating matters easily and quickly, originality of thought and ideas, reaching to different results.”²⁷ This research is not ignorant of the fact that logic and critical thinking are part of the curricular in the universities, but holds that criticality and logic without morality can breed leaders who are very sound in reasoning without the moral will to implement what has been critically and logically analysed. The outcome will be going back to square-one where there is availability of the best of brains in diverse fields of study devoid of honesty, accountability, transparency, moral rectitude, probity, fairness, sense of duty, etc. for which morally sound and critical-minded leaders are known. Good moral conduct, criticality, logicity and creativity must synchronise, synergise and collaborate in an *epistemethically* oriented society.

Nigerians do not even trust their leaders for obvious reasons. However, it is true that in areas of knowledge and leadership trust is key and that is why Dormandy argues that: Trust is fundamental

²⁷ Elias Ifeanyi E. Uzoigwe, Amara M. Chukwuma-Offor, Patrick O. Ategwu, “The Indispensability of Critical Thinking and Moral-Leadership in Management of Higher Education in Nigeria”. In *GPH International Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 5, no. 5 (2022):09-21, accessed June 30, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6777382>

to acquisition of knowledge and in leadership.²⁸ Unfortunately, the leadership of Nigeria has proved themselves untrustworthy when education is not in her list of priorities.

Epistemethics is viable in the sense that, as a living philosophy, when applied in Nigeria, it will launch the country into the path of unprecedented growth and development. This sounds unrealisable, but unfortunately for the skeptics, it is very possible. Just as Emerson says: "If you say you can, you can; and if you say you cannot, you cannot. This is an indisputable, inexorable law."²⁹ Indeed, those with the right attitude and power of positive thinking often succeed beyond their estimation.³⁰

Similarly, the indispensability of *epistemethics* in driving Nigeria towards an egalitarian society of our dream is based on the fact that, if good moral conduct is divorced from leadership and governance as well as the socio-political life of any people anywhere in the world, not much will be achieved by her leaders because any government that neglects morality would be likened to a house built upon sand. It has been proven beyond every reasonable doubt that whether in Europe, Asia, or America, all systems of government that guaranteed common good of its citizens have some modicum of moral commitment embedded in it. That is why there is one form of corruption charges or the other against the former leaders, relatives, or children of some of the advanced countries of the world, especially after leaving office. In Africa, especially in Nigeria, the reverse is the case. No Nigerian president or head of state has been brought to book after leaving office in spite of the atrocities some of them committed while in office.³⁰ The so called corruption that is being fought by each successive administration is simply fight against their fellow corrupt leaders - governors, senators, etc. especially from the opposition parties, and not fight against corruption in reality.

CONCLUSION

Any knowledge, learning, or education that is not human based and oriented, or that is not geared towards the advancement of humanity is not qualified to bear such a name. *Epistemethics* strongly holds that knowledge necessarily has to be at the service of humanity; and so, the essence of acquisition of knowledge is advancement of the course of humanity, to renew the face of the earth for the wellbeing of man - the *imago Dei* (image of God). Whenever knowledge, or education one has acquired or gained is employed for the destruction of lives and property, it ceases to be knowledge, or education. That is why *epistemethics* is suggested in this study as a philosophy that can place Nigeria

²⁸ Katherine Dormandy, *Trust in Epistemology* (New York Routledge, 2021) <https://www.routledge.com>

²⁹ Ralph W. Emerson, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (New York: Pearls Publishers, 2019), 17.

³⁰ Sanctus K. Agbakoba, *Philosophy: An Introduction* (Enugu: Regal Publishers, 2021), 79.

on the right track that will metamorphose into an egalitarian society where everybody's right is respected. Good moral conduct should be the thread that holds Nigeria's social, political, economic, religious, intellectual, psycho-spiritual, cultural and general life. It is when there is morality underlining human activities in personal, inter-personal and intra-personal relationships that fundamental human rights and human life will be respected. Similarly, citizens, for instance, those at the corridors of power and the artisan in the field will be equal before the law; appointments into various offices and promotions at different cadre of the nation's civil service will be done based on merit and competence and not based on tribal, ethnic, and religious affiliation. It is in such an atmosphere that Nigeria will metamorphose into an egalitarian state of our dream. Therefore, this study proposes *epistemethics* as a viable and indispensable philosophy towards achieving this goal.