

CORRESPONDENCE AND PRAGMATIC THEORIES OF TRUTH VERSUS PHILOSOPHY OF EZIOKWU-BU-NDU ON THE ISSUE OF OBJECTIVITY/SUBJECTIVITY OF TRUTH: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This study centers on a comparative analysis of correspondence and pragmatic theories of truth versus philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' on the issue of objectivity/subjectivity of truth. Truth is very important in human existence. The search for the nature of truth is the major preoccupation of epistemologists. The issue of objectivity/subjectivity of truth is a very controversial issue among epistemologists. The fundamental questions are: Is truth objective or subjective? Are there things that are universally true? Is truth dependent on individual's perspective or opinion? What is the position of correspondence and pragmatic theories of truth on the issue of objectivity/subjectivity of truth? What is the submission of philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' on the issue of objectivity/subjectivity of truth? Does philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' agree or disagree with correspondence and pragmatic theories of truth on the issue of objectivity/subjectivity of truth? These and other related questions are the major concern of this study. Employing analytical and hermeneutical methods, this study undertakes a comparative analysis of correspondence and pragmatic theories of truth versus Philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' on the issue of objectivity/subjectivity of truth. It discovers that philosophy of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' agrees with correspondence theory of truth on the objectivity of truth, but totally disagrees with pragmatic theory of truth that upholds the subjectivity of truth. This study concludes that truth is intrinsically objective in nature, and that any theory of truth that upholds the subjectivity of truth distorts the nature of truth, which automatically implies the distortion of human existence. Hence, pragmatic theory of truth and other theories that uphold the subjectivity of truth are unacceptable.

Key Words: Truth, Correspondence, Pragmatic, 'Eziokwu- bu-ndu' and Philosophy

INTRODUCTION

Generally, philosophy offers rational explanation of phenomena and seeks to attain truth in all dimensions of reality through the instrumentality of human reason. The employment of rationality in the explanation of phenomena as well as in the search for truth is one of the basic distinguishing features of philosophy. Throughout the different periods of philosophy (Ancient, Medieval, Modern and Contemporary periods), philosophers have pre-occupied themselves and are still occupying themselves with the search for truth. Certainly, the search for truth has been one of the major concerns of philosophers. Remarkably, Rene Descartes was known in the modern period of philosophy for his systematic search for certain truth. With his 'methodic doubt', he sought for an indubitable truth, and discovered it in the very act of doubting. This gave rise to his famous *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) which became the foundation of his philosophy. According to Anetoh (2024A): "The attainment of certain and indubitable truth was the major preoccupation of Descartes in his philosophy. This was due to his strong desire to establish a solid and unshakable foundation for human knowledge." (p. 129). Though Descartes made a landmark achievement in

philosophy, his idea elicited varied reactions from different scholars.

Specifically, the branch of philosophy that is specifically concerned with the issue of truth is popularly known as 'Epistemology'. It is the branch of philosophy that investigates the nature, source, justification, validity, extent and status of human knowledge. In the attempt to offer valid explanation of the nature of human knowledge, many definitions of knowledge were advanced by different epistemologists. However, among such definitions, the most generally accepted definition of knowledge is that which defines it as 'Justified True Belief'. In this definition of knowledge, the three terms, namely: 'Justification', 'Truth' and 'Belief' are very significant. Among them, the term 'truth' occupies a central position (Anetoh: 2021, p.12). This partly explains why truth is the central issue in epistemology. Attesting to this, Ozumba (2015) states categorically that “The idea of truth is one of the central issues in epistemology. Epistemology deals with knowledge and knowledge is only knowledge if it is true. This has made truth to stand as one of the cardinal criteria for knowledge.” (p.53) Over the years, epistemologists have made scholarly effort to understand the meaning of truth. This search for the meaning of truth gave rise to many theories of truth, namely: correspondence theory, pragmatic theory, coherence theory, Semantic theory, Relativistic theory, Redundancy theory and Dialectical theory. However, this article limits itself to only correspondence and pragmatic theories of truth.

Among the issues that pre-occupied the minds of different theorists of truth is the issue of objectivity/subjectivity of truth. The fundamental questions are: Is truth objective or subjective? Are there things that are universally true? Is truth dependent on individual's perspective or opinion? These questions are very controversial, and they bother on the issue of subjectivity/objectivity of truth. While some theorists of truth uphold the objectivity of truth, some theorists conceive truth as a subjective concept which is totally dependent on the individual's point of view.

The traditional Igbo people also preoccupied themselves with the issue of truth. Their deep reflection on the issue of truth gave rise to the ideology of 'Eziokwu-bu-ndu' (truth is life). Anetoh (2024B) propounded the philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* through hermeneutical and analytical investigations of the traditional Igbo ideology, *Eziokwu-bu-ndu*. On the issue of truth, philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* argues consistently that truth has ontological relationship with human life (Anetoh: 2024, p. 81). Obviously, philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* has its unique concept of truth, and its specific position on the issue of objectivity/subjectivity of truth. This study, employing analytical and hermeneutical methods of philosophical enquiry, undertakes a comparative analysis of correspondence and pragmatic theories of truth versus philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* on the issue of objectivity/subjectivity of truth.

This study is partitioned into four Sections. The first section examines correspondence and pragmatic theories of truth. The second section focuses on the tenets of philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu*. The third section undertakes a comparative analysis of correspondence and pragmatic theories of truth versus philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* on the issue of objectivity/subjectivity of truth. The fourth section is the conclusion of the study.

EXAMINING CORRESPONDENCE AND PRAGMATIC THEORIES OF TRUTH

The issue of truth is very indispensable in Epistemology. Epistemologists have given detailed and very serious attention to the issue of truth. Ascertaining as well as determining the real meaning of truth sharpens our understanding of human knowledge. However, it is not a simple task to ascertain or determine the exact meaning of truth. Hence, in the words of Anetoh (2021), “...in the domain of

Epistemology, the concept of truth is not as simple as it seems to be. It is a very difficult concept to define because of its ambiguous nature.” (p.15) Epistemologists have made several attempts to define truth, and these initiated the different theories of truth as articulated above in this article. However, this section of the article focuses only on correspondence and pragmatic theories of truth.

Correspondence Theory of Truth: This theory of truth could be traced back to the ancient period of philosophy. Hence, it is one of the oldest theories of truth. The basic questions that are very pertinent at this point are these: What is correspondence theory of truth? Who are the proponents and exponents of the theory? What are its major tenets? These questions need to be addressed in order to establish good understanding of correspondence theory of truth. This theory of truth is associated with Aristotle in the ancient period of philosophy. Other philosophers that are associated with this theory include: Thomas Aquinas, Rene Descartes, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Wittgenstein, Russell, Moore etc. This theory presupposes that there are real things independent of the perceiving mind. Thus, it is a realist's approach to truth as against idealist's approach. It defines truth as the conformity or agreement of one's idea or judgment with the external reality. From this perspective, something is true when one's judgment pictures or represents the external reality accurately. Describing correspondence theory of truth, Ozumba (2015) states:

It holds that truth is correspondence with reality or state of affairs. It has its mental, physicalistic and linguistic dimensions...An idea in the mind is said to be true if it corresponds to reality whether physical, spiritual or mental. It is the mind that pictures reality. When its picture is exactly the same with what it pictures, we have truth as the result. Here, Wittgenstein's picture theory is a correspondence theory of truth. When what we say corresponds with the existent state of affairs, then it is true. The physical aspect is when our perception corresponds with the physical object of our perception...The linguistic dimension is when our statement represents or corresponds to the state of affairs, which it describes or pictures. (pp.58-59)

From the foregoing, a statement or proposition is said to be true if it specifies what is actually the case. Articulating the basic tenet of correspondence theory of truth, David (2025) states that it entails “...the idea that truth consists in a relation to reality, i.e., that truth is a relational property involving a characteristic relation...to some portions of reality...” (para. 1) The reality in question includes events, objects, facts, situations etc. This entails that there are objective realities independent of one's idea or judgment. One's idea or judgment is true if and only if it is in agreement or in accordance with the objective reality in question. Hence, this theory approaches truth from objective point of view, and denies every form of subjectivism or relativism with regard to truth.

Pragmatic Theory of Truth: On its part, Pragmatic theory of truth approaches truth from a different perspective. It offers a unique conception of truth that is quite different from that of correspondence theory of truth. In fact, it contradicts completely the correspondence theory of truth, and offers an explanation of truth that questions the basic tenets of correspondence theory of truth. For a better understanding and appreciation of pragmatic theory of truth, there is need to explain briefly the meaning of pragmatism. This stems from the fact that pragmatic theory of truth is an offshoot or product of pragmatism in general.

Pragmatism, as a contemporary philosophical orientation, was initiated by Charles Sanders Peirce. Other pragmatists include: William James, John Dewey, Richard Rorty, George Herbert Mead, Jane Adams etc. Generally, “pragmatism emphasizes the practical consequences or the usefulness of ideas and hypothesis” (Anetoh: 2021, p.14), and upholds close relationship between ideas and actions. Hence, it is action oriented, and it emphasizes the workability and usefulness of ideas in

practical terms. It condemns speculative or theoretical ideas that do not have practical relevance, and champions the view that every idea must terminate in actions or have relationship with actions. This claim has a lot of influences on pragmatic concept of truth.

Pragmatism approaches truth from the perspectives of utility, workability, usefulness and practical consequences or implications of ideas. Hence, a true idea is an idea that is useful, an idea that has practical consequences and an idea that works in practical terms. According to Ozumba (2015): “The pragmatic theory of truth holds that it is what works in practice that is true. What does not work is not true. Truth is tested through consequences of ideas or statements whether they are beneficial or adverse to human well-being. Pragmatism is a kind of humanism.” (p.63) This implies that the truth of an idea is not fixed or static, and it varies based on circumstances. It becomes very obvious that pragmatic theory of truth differs remarkably from correspondence theory of truth. Pragmatism introduces relativism and subjectivism to the concept of truth, and approaches truth from relativistic perspective. Truth becomes a relative concept. This is as a result of the fact that what works or what is useful to an individual may not work or may not be useful to another individual. This gives room for different individuals having different truths at the same time. Pragmatism denies completely the absolute and objective nature of truth, but rather conceives truth as a changing as well as subjective phenomenon.

PHILOSOPHY OF *EZIOKWU-BU-NDU* AND THE ISSUE OF TRUTH

Philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu*, as articulated by Anetoh (2024B), is a contemporary philosophical orientation that emerged through analytical and hermeneutical examination of traditional Igbo ideology of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* (Truth is life). *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* is one of the remarkable ideological legacies of the traditional Igbo people. Philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* conceives truth from the perspective of human life in its entirety. Hence, truth pertains to all dimensions of human life, and has ontological relationship with human life. Its uniqueness lies in its firm conviction on the deep and indispensable relationship between human life and truth. This implies that falsity has no ontological relationship with human life, but rather, it is a contradiction as well as a distortion of human life in all its dimensions. According to Anetoh (2024B), Philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* “unravels the ontological status of truth in human existence.” (p.79). This demonstrates the fact that truth pertains to the essence of human life such that every human being ought to say the truth in all circumstances of life. Truth belongs inseparably to the essence of human life. Anetoh (2024B) identified ten features/principles of Philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* thus: (i) Truth is the fundamental factor of human existence. (ii) Truth is inseparable from human life. (iii) Truth is pre-eminent in all dimensions of human life. (iv) Truth has ontological relationship with human life. (v) Truth determines the authenticity of human life. (vi) Truth is life-affirming principle. (vii) Truth leads to development in all dimensions human life (viii) Truth is one, but has many dimensions. (ix) Truth is unchanging. (x) Truth is the foundation of justice. (pp. 81-82)

The above features/principles enshrine the basic tenets of philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu*, and they are very necessary in the understanding and appreciation of the claims of philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu*. It ought to be noted that philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* is a positive philosophical orientation that portrays the richness of Igbo traditional ideology which is deeply rooted in Igbo cultural heritage.

Philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* conceives truth as statement of things (actions and thoughts) as they are, without distortion of any kind. It has its specific position on the issue of objectivity/subjectivity of truth. It champions and upholds the view that truth is an objective concept. Hence, it conceives truth as an objective reality, and denies completely the relativity or subjectivity of truth. This stems

from the fact that since human life remains human life irrespective of the life of any particular individual, truth also remains truth irrespective of the opinion of any particular individual. This demonstrates the fact that truth is intrinsically objective and universal in nature. Hence, one thing cannot be true for an individual, and be false for another individual. Furthermore, since truth is life, and life is objective, then, truth cannot but be objective. Subjectivity in the domain of truth is not life-affirming, but rather life-destroying. Such gives room for chaos and anarchy. Obviously, truth is intrinsically objective and universal in nature.

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In the first place, there is need to make a fundamental distinction between the terms 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity'. Such distinction sharpens our discourse in this section, and at the same time enables us to appreciate the analysis on the issue of subjectivity and objectivity of truth. According to Mulder (2020):

The terms “objectivity” and “subjectivity,” in their modern usage, generally relate to a perceiving subject (normally a person) and a perceived or unperceived object. The object is something that presumably exists independent of the subject's perception of it. In other words, the object would be there, as it is, even if no subject perceived it. Hence, objectivity is typically associated with ideas such as reality, truth and reliability. The perceiving subject can either perceive accurately or seem to perceive features of the object that are not in the object. For example, a perceiving subject suffering from jaundice could seem to perceive an object as yellow when the object is not actually yellow. Hence, the term “subjective” typically indicates the possibility of error. (para. 1-2)

Objectivity connotes universality, while subjectivity connotes individuality. An objective judgment is free from personal or individual sentiment, while subjective judgment is influenced by personal sentiment. Objective judgments lead to unity, while subjective judgments lead to multiplicity and proliferation. Distinguishing further between objectivity and subjectivity, Mulder (2020) states:

Objective judgment or belief refers to a judgment or belief based on objectively strong supporting evidence, the sort of evidence that would be compelling for any rational being. A subjective judgment would then seem to be a judgment or belief supported by evidence that is compelling for some rational beings (subjects) but not compelling for others. It could also refer to a judgment based on evidence that is of necessity available only to some subjects. (para. 9)

From the foregoing, it becomes obvious that objectivity of truth is totally different from subjectivity of truth. Objectivity of truth connotes universality, and it is not in any way limited to a particular individual's opinion or point of view. Certainly, it transcends individual's perspective. Hence, truth remains truth irrespective of individual's perspective. Objective truth implies that truth is universal. This demonstrates the fact that one particular thing cannot be true for one person, and be false for another person. On the contrary, subjectivity of truth has nothing to do with universality of truth. In this context, it is completely dependent on the individual's opinion or perspective. Subjectivity of truth implies that truth is deeply influenced by the individual's sentiments. The individual determines what is true and what is not true. Subjectivity of truth connotes relativity of truth. Hence, one particular thing can be true for one particular individual, but be false for another individual.

The issue of whether truth is an objective or subjective concept has been a controversial issue among epistemologists. Some epistemologists argue that truth is objective, while some insist that truth is a

relative concept. In the ancient period of philosophy, Protagoras argued consistently that 'man is the measure of all things,' which implies that man determines what is true or not. This view upholds the subjectivity of truth. The pragmatists like Charles Sanders Peirce, John Dewey, William James, Richard Rorty etc., who are the proponents of pragmatic theory of truth, see truth as a subjective concept. For them, nothing is objectively true. William James went to the extent of arguing strongly that truth is not a permanent quality in an idea, insisting that "truth happens to an idea" (James: 1991, p.89). This implies that truth is relative and changes regularly. Also, existentialist philosophers such as Jean Paul Sartre, Karl Jaspers, Simone de Beauvoir etc. promote the notion of subjectivity and relativity of truth. Among the essential features of existentialist epistemology is the subjectivity of truth. On the contrary, the proponents of correspondence theory of truth such as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Wittgenstein etc. conceive truth as something that is objective. Hence, whatever that is true is objectively true, and cannot be said to be false by anybody. Anyone who denies it involves himself or herself in a total contradiction. Furthermore, the position of philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* in this epistemological controversy is very clear as well as straight-forward, and has already been demonstrated in the earlier part of this article. It propagates, promotes and champions the objectivity of truth. It upholds the view that truth is an objective concept, and cannot in any way be subjective in nature.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* agrees with correspondence theory of truth on the objectivity of truth, but totally disagrees with pragmatic theory of truth that upholds the subjectivity of truth. This is as a result of the fact that pragmatic theory of truth contradicts the tenets of philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* on the issue of truth.

CONCLUDING REFLECTION

This study preoccupies itself with a comparative analysis of correspondence and pragmatic theories of truth versus philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* on the issue of objectivity/subjectivity of truth. The search for truth has been the major preoccupation of philosophers in general, and epistemologists in particular. The issue of objectivity/subjectivity of truth is a very controversial issue among epistemologists as demonstrated in this discourse. Epistemologists have varied and conflicting views on the question of objectivity/subjectivity of truth. While some scholars uphold the objectivity of truth, some others insist on the subjectivity of truth. It is obvious that philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* affirms strongly the objectivity of truth. Hence, in this controversial debate on the objectivity/subjectivity of truth, philosophy of *Eziokwu-bu-ndu* agrees with correspondence theory of truth, but totally disagrees with pragmatic theory of truth. Truth can maintain its nature only when it is conceived as an objective phenomenon. Certainly, truth is intrinsically objective in nature, and any theory of truth that upholds the subjectivity of truth distorts the nature of truth. The distortion of truth automatically implies the distortion of human existence. This is premised on the belief that truth has ontological relationship with human life. The importance of truth in human life cannot be over emphasized. This study rejects and condemns the view that truth is a subjective concept. Truth cannot be a subjective or relative phenomenon. Thus, pragmatic theory of truth and other theories that uphold the subjectivity of truth are unacceptable. Such theories multiply truths, and pave way for confusion in human life. Truth can perform its indispensable role in human life only if its objectivity is upheld and maintained.

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