

## THE AFRICAN (IGBO) CONCEPT OF AKARA AKA: A PHILOSOPHICAL REASSESSMENT

UGWU, ANAYOCHUKWU K.

Philosophy Department

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

anayochukwujp@gmail.com; anayochukwu.kingsley.pg82208@unn.edu.ng

08060587835;09025356644

### Abstract

*The issue of human success and failure has raised series of questions in history. Some argue that all human experiences (success and failure) are solely Akara Aka based, that is, pre-ordained or predestined by 'Divinity' and that man can never alter them; others argue in very opposite, that they are all man's conscious effort and determination to maximize his existential potentiality to explore nature; whereas many others posit that they are the combination of Akara Aka and man's effort to maximize his existential possibilities. At this, we may ask: (1) If there is Akara Aka, why must some be pre-ordained for success and others failures? (2) In the face of Akara Aka, what is the fate of human endowments, tendencies and capabilities and most of all, the human freedom and volition which are the core ingredients of human existence? Or what is the difference between luck/fortune, God's blessings on hard works and Akara Aka? (3) Is God still an impartial and just God if some people's Akara Aka are failures or hard-going while some success or easy-going? (4) What is then the true nature of God and man vis-à-vis the question of evil and moral judgments on people's actions? Nevertheless, we will here try to analyze and evaluate the whole idea of Akara Aka and the implications from its Igbo understanding and then try to evaluate if there is limit to divine interference or penetrations in human affairs. In doing this, we will employ expository, analytical and comparative methods.*

### Introduction

Generally speaking, *Akara Aka* in Igbo understanding is understood as that which God, during creation has ordained or destined man to be in life. The encounter Jeremiah had during his calling expressed this clearly, he was told: "I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born I selected you to be a prophet to the nation" (Jer. 1:5). Jeremiah's ordination had been before his lifeless mortal body was molded or before the divine breath through which the lifeless body gained life. But was this divinely purposely for him, or for every existing being? What is the significant difference and similarity between man's destiny

and the point when life is put (perhaps breathed) into him, and their workings in man's affairs? Be that as it may, for the Igbo, *Akara Aka* can never be altered, it must come to be, nothing can stop its fulfillment or accomplishment. Thus, it portrays the concept of "Predestination" or "Pre-ordination" or even "Fatalism". It is a bit different in conception from the general philosophical discourse of the concept of "Determinism" though they are all under the same field of discourse. Predestination is the view that "everything that happens has been decided or planned in advance by God or by FATE and that humans cannot change it" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary). Perhaps it is best explained in the biblical saying that "what I have written stays written" (Jn. 19:22), or "I will have mercy on whom I will". But the question is: why should God now be selective on whom to have mercy on? Is it based on individual please to Him or predestination? In some interpretations, it is the view that "God has already decided for each soul whether it will be saved or condemned" and this position is traced to the Bible: Romans 8, 9, and Ephesians 1 (Mautner, 2000:442). But souls are conceived as God's particles in men, how then can God's sparks in men be destined for doom? Can God— represented by the soul— be destined (by Himself) for 'hell fire' or doom? Fatalism is the position that "all events are decided in advance by a supernatural power, and humans have no control over them" (Oxford Dictionary of Current English). Mautner (2000:195) even adds that the argument is three-dimensional: based on 'Logical Principles', 'Principle of Causality' and 'Assumption of Perfect Divine Foreknowledge.' Determinism is "the belief that people are not free to choose what they are like or how they behave, because these things are decided by their surroundings and other things over which they have no control" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary) or "the belief that people are not free to do as they wish because their lives are determined by factors outside their control" (Oxford Dictionary of Current English). The cardinal difference between the two concepts is that in "Predestination", *God* is the sole cause of human actions, man is like a robot being controlled from somewhere towards a pre-ordained course, but in Determinism, *natural and physical laws, biological and mechanical factors* of human nature are the attributive causes or determinants of human actions towards a course. Again, there are no versions in the discourse of Predestination like that of Determinism. Finally, as a similarity, both question the fate of human freedom and volition in the bid to carry out a course.

In Determinism (Omoregbe, 2011:186-191), there are *Soft-Determinists* who do not rule out entirely the moral responsibility. They do not deny the involvement of human freedom in human actions. Man as the agent who acts should thus be held morally responsible for his actions. By extension, these 'Indeterminists', 'Libertarians' or "Compatibilists maintain that freedom is possible under determinism" (Mautner, 2000:137-8). They support the institutions of moral codes, legal systems, the establishment of customs, norms and ordinances, judicial interference, courts, and legal punishments like prisons. All these are to avert the emergence of the Hobbesian State of Nature sort of. But in the very opposite are the *Core or Hard-Determinists* who rule out into to moral responsibilities. They deny human freedom in human actions. For these Incompatibilists, man is like a robot in the face of certain factors in his nature and generally the laws of nature, for his actions are all determined by these factors. "Nobody would be blamed, condemned or punished" for his actions; and this implies that the ideas of regret, reproach, remorse or feeling of sorry and even penance for actions are invalid and unnecessary, the question of choice or decision-making is not there for there is no freedom or consciousness for it. Still splitting them, we have:

- (i) **Physical Determinists** who hold the view that man is an essential part and parcel of physical nature, and the implication is that all his actions are determined by physical laws of nature. Natural forces in the human nature cause man's actions, that is to say that man is essentially mechanic—matter-component only.
- (ii) **Historical Determinists** who contend that historical events are determined or motivated by some factors— economic, material possession, socio-cultural, religious, natural laws or human nature or even in a sense "fated" to occur through some people with high valor. Some even see these events as "moments" through which the *Absolute* manifests or rather develops itself.
- (iii) **Ethical Determinists** who assert that man's actions are determined by what he conceives as good. Hence man sees and knows an act to be good, he is automatically pushed by his instinct to will for it for his human will is controlled by that which he has conceived as good.
- (iv) **Psychological Determinists** who posit that psychological factors like the human instincts, emotions, motives, environment, desire, appetites and aversions, libido, etc determine the actions of man. He is therefore a slave to his psychological instincts and generally his human nature.

Some exponents could be termed emotivists, motivists, situationists, etc.

- (v) **Theological Determinists** whose view is that God knows all that man will experience and what will experience man in his life. Here, the foreknowledge of God in human affairs is reiterated but *knowing* is different from *interfering* in man's affairs. God is like being there, watching how you, with your human nature and freedom, can fulfill his knowledge of your existence. In clear terms, it is written: "From the beginning, I predicted the outcome; long ago, I foretold what would happen. I said that my plans would never fall, that I would do everything I intended to do. I am calling a man to come from the east; he will swoop down like a hawk and accomplish what I have planned. I have spoken, and it will be done" (Is. 46: 10-1). Note: 'the outcome' (of what?) and 'what would happen' (before and after what?) are unknown. Again, 'he will swoop down like a hawk and accomplish what I have planned' means that there has been a plan, it is now left for man to *realize* it. Further, those plans are equally unknown— they could be bad or good ones. We must also note that He (God) would do everything He intends to do, but may change the time and how He wants to do them— refer to His reverse in Hezekiah's case and His words of seriously dealing with the Israelites and the reverse of the punishments, etc. But the point remains that here, man *will* descend and then *accomplish* God's plan. Man is therefore assigned some *duties* through which the *divine plans* would manifest. God has plans, or has foreknowledge of man's future, but it is man who will make them to manifest. Perhaps for clarity to our suspense mind it was explained in another place thus: "I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for. Then you will call to me. You will come and pray to me, and I will answer you." (Jer. 29: 11-2). Prosperity and hope are on what man has already established. It is only after then (conditional) that man's prayers and requests would then be answered by God. So, work precedes prayer just as man's effort precedes divine penetration on man's affairs. On the other hand, is it right, having seen that I am heading toward doom, yet allow me to continue? Is God that unemotional, unsympathetic and rigid towards the affairs of men even

when He says that our situation touches Him and the bible says that He is kindhearted!

However it is, the point remains that the Igbo (generally African) understanding of and approach to *Akara Aka* is apt for critical, philosophical and rational review. This follows the fact that the attitudinal approach to life proceeding as influence from the Igbo understanding of *Akara Aka* is posing threat to human capabilities. The understanding has made the African too weak, to live unfulfilled life and with no worries, irrationally and aimlessly dependent on 'Divine' and to ignorantly refuse to maximize his natural endowments and potencies for a better life and as a justification to creation. It has made him to see all things as *the will of God*, and as consequences, he appears non-responsive to nature for his survival and has inculcated in many the thought that their actions are justified at all time hence pre-ordained. This is nevertheless, not to rule out the whole idea of 'Divine Penetration' in human affairs, but to recommend a mediation where human freedom, inherent and expressive in life, should be primary, and all 'Divine Involvement' will then be attracted and become secondary. By this, we maintain that man as a free agent, has a say, obligation and responsibility/duty to fulfill in his own life, survival and safety, and as a moral being. Hence, we posit that there must be an existential shift in the conception of *Akara Aka* to accommodating human freedom and allow the 'Authenticity' of human living proved by man. This is because man as a free being must accept his faults and irresponsibility and glories for the idea of *Akara Aka* has ever served as an avenue to excuse his evil, partiality/prejudices, injustice and certain negativities in life thereby making it difficult for him to even differentiate between what he calls *Akara Aka* or 'Divine Will' from his 'human will' or 'freedom/human right' and when they apply in his life.

### **CRITICAL EXPOSITION AND ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF AKARA AKA**

The term *Akaka Aka* is an Igbo word literally meaning the 'lines in palms'. It cannot be well analyzed and understood without the concept of *Chi*, and this we will expose later in this work. However, it is believed that no two persons, not even twins have the same exact lines of the palms or *Chi*., and that is why the Igbo say that *ofu Nne n'amu, mana ofu Chi anaghi eke* (even though one mother bears all, *Chi* is exclusively individual). Mbonu was more explicit on this when he asserts that "no one's *chi* is like another because no two persons are identical.



A rich man's *chi* is rich and a poor man's *chi* is poor. A man's *chi* is masculine and a woman's *chi* is feminine. A man's *chi* is equal to that man" (1955:183). Gender, richness and poverty as existential qualities of *Chi* is something worrisome for they portray both good and evil as natural hence *Chi* is a natural existential phenomenon. And when Mbonu says that a man is equal to his *Chi*, what does it really mean: physical correspondence of one's qualities of *Chi* or in terms of one possessing the exact power and functional tendencies with one's *Chi*. But if it is the second option, then why do the Igbo say that no one fights against one's *Chi* will survive because *Chi* is supernatural? Achebe on her own was critical and quite insightful to quickly stress that this instilled *Chi* in every man is to continue the work of creation in man as he lives, but will be recalled to the Creator immediately he dies (Achebe, 1986:16; Isichei, 1976:25). Thus, as many as there are different existing persons are difference in *Akaka Aka*, hence these palm-lines so stand as the principle of individuality.

However, ideally, these palm-lines (*Akara Aka*) are what the Igbo conceive as predestination or preordination. They represent that which 'Divinity' during creation has kept for or preordained one to be in life. Conceiving *Akara Aka* as identifiable with *Chi* and a product of creation, Ilogu (1974:146) maintains that "*Chi* is the divine particle in man by which he shares in the Supreme Being and the basis of which rests in man's immortality and communion with the ancestors." As the Creator's element in man, man now becomes ontologically empowered to have an easy access to the spiritual realm— the Creator, the ancestors, among other spiritual deities. For Metuh, it is "the immanent presence of God in man or man's guardian angel in life" (Onyibor, 2019:90). At this definition, it appears like the 'Biblical Soul' in one hand, and the general African conception of *Chi* as an individual's guardian angel on the other hand. Apparently, Achebe (1986:17) contends that "at creation, God entrusted each human being with a *chi*, a creative force, this creative force... is God's representative and emissary on earth, which helps or works in every delicate collaboration with each individual to fulfill those life's possibilities and attributes which the individual personally chooses." It can be said here that an individual's *Chi* is God-still-in-creation in him, which implicates the individual's natural inclinations of creations and strength for tireless-life-survival. This is quite a commendable conception of *Chi vis-à-vis Akara Aka* which aligns with the critical position of this paper in regards to dismantle the Igbo conception of *Akara Aka* that enhances weakness towards life-struggle-tendencies. More interesting is

Arinze's position that *Chi* (Akara Aka) is given to an individual at conception which contradicts the Biblical position which says: "I chose you before I gave you life" in Jere. 1:5 hence he writes:

Most Ibos [sic] believe that each individual has a spirit, a genius or spiritual double, his *chi*, which is given to him at conception by *Chukwu* and which accompanies this individual from the cradle to the grave. *Chi* is strictly personal... The ordinary *Ibo* [sic] man regards his *chi* as his guardian on whose competence depends his personal prosperity (1978:88-9)

This conception raises the question as to when an individual is created: at conception or has already been made and stored but inserted in the womb at conception after conjugal actions, or even during foetal development? Nevertheless, while some believe that *Chi* is recalled to the Creator at death, Arinze holds the opposite that it goes down to the grave with every man. However, as a concept that is individual, it is believed that nothing can stop *Akara Aka* from happening to the person it is apportioned to, and this explains why the saying, 'destiny can be delayed but cannot be denied.' But the begging-for-an-answer-question is: Does it mean that no two people can have same destiny? But we see many people doing same thing almost perfectly same way and manner! How can we differentiate *Akara Aka* from (talents and lucks/fortunes) and the tireless efforts one makes to add meaning to one's life or progress one's natural endowments and their true manifestation? If *Akara Aka* is entirely divine, and that man cannot alter it, why should it even be 'interfered' with (delayed) or even finally be diabolically taken away or destroyed? Some even hold that there are destiny-helpers or fulfillment-instruments. These are both human/non-human entities through whom/which one's destiny gets realized. But the question is: if destiny is so conceived, why should God need these human/non-human intermediaries to ensure that one's destiny is realized as if He (God) is no more Omnipotent? Can't He from his 'Omni-nature' do everything and divinely, to ensure that everybody is driven or flown to where his destiny lies await for him? Though, this does not imply that two persons cannot have the same talents or inborn endowments (*Onatara Chi*), but the extent of their play-out and the mode of identifying them lays the question of their distinctness. Some Africans also believe that that which one finds so easy even when it is hard for others is one's *Akara Aka* or *Onatara Chi*. So, the ease in doing something goes a long way in identifying destiny or natural endowment.

It is believed that every person has his own *Akara Aka*, but they differ. Some people's *Akara Aka* are good, some others' are bad. Professor C. B. Nze once told us that he believes some people are destined for doom, to perish. Jokingly we added, *ya bu na Ekwensu ga enwenata customers* (that implies that Satan must have customers (in the hell)?). Perhaps this could imply the content of the biblical expression when it is said: "Everything the Lord has made has its destiny; and the destiny of the wicked is destruction" (Prov. 16:4). But how does one acquire wickedness? Where and when is its fundamental root? Nature or human? If natural, the person's doom-existence is of and by God. But if human, man can fortunately twist it by twisting his way of life.

But there has been a serious argument among the Igbo scholars on how *Akara Aka* is acquired. To this point, Onyibor (2019:84) contributes:

While some scholars argue that the choice of destiny was made by the individual in [sic] co conjunction with his/her chi before birth, after which the child suffers total amnesia after birth with regard to destiny package earlier chosen. Others are of the opinion that chi whom Chinaeke/Chukwu the Igbo Supreme Being created with the individual was assigned the role of dispenser and guardian of destiny already allotted by the Creator

While some insist that to explain *Akara Aka* is subsequently to explain *Chi* and they are assigned to an individual before birth, others hold otherwise by contending that *Chi* in man remotes his *Akara Aka* while living. However, nature-bestowed-doom-destiny clearly played out in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame* (1998:2-3) at the Shrine of Ogun— "the God of War, of Iron, and doctor of all male children" when the "purblind old man" Chief Priest— Baba Fakunle declared the destiny of the Prince. He said: "This boy, he will kill his own father and then marry his own mother." This implies that people like this Prince are essentially evil and their lives surrounded by and lived in evil. In the light of this position arises big questions on the nature of God and man and the emergence of evil. By this, is God not partial in His dealings with men? Is He also not the originator of evil— for bad destiny is evil? Perhaps, evil is in God's nature, substance and essence and that is why it is very easy for Him to bestow bad destiny on some while even creating them— He cannot give what He does not have! However, some, just like the Yoruba, also hold the view that *Akara Aka* is acquired through *choosing* from the Spirit World of Ajala the god who is in charge of *Ori* (Destiny) (Gbadegesin, 2004:313-23). But if one has a say in choosing one's destiny, God is then free for one's life is preplanned by oneself,



not God or any divinity again. Now being a product of human, God is therefore justified in all these accusative questions above for man alone remains the architect of his own existence and success/failure. The outstanding point is the conceptual misunderstanding about *Akara Aka* or *Ori* concept and the hazy line of distinction between it and natural endowments, fortunes and the exercise of human freedom.

Apparently, having likened the concept of *Akara Aka* to that of *Chi*, nevertheless, *Chi* has variously been described and defined as an individual's "personal god-divine afflatus- the spirit that animates human beings," (Madu, 1995:33) "a unique life force which each person possesses," (Ekennia, 2003:27) "individual personal god which accounts for the fortune or the misfortune that one experiences in life," (Achebe, 1975:94-5) and so "really a personal god... the Supreme God shared by each individual but more specifically in his aspect as giver and author of destiny" (Okere, 1971:142). Similarly, the concept *Chi* as likened to that of *Akara Aka* explains why when something— whether positive or negative— happens to one, people quickly respond: *O bu ya na Chi ya* (It is his destiny), *O bu Chi ya nyere ya* (It is his *Chi* that (divinely) gave or provided it for him). So, on this context, *Chi* is someone's *Akara Aka*. *Chi* is therefore a full embodiment, entity or phenomenon of someone's life, happiness and sadness. The Igbo conceive *Akara Aka* as 'that which will be must be.' They see it as unavoidable, that even if one is not following the right path to realizing one's *Akara Aka*, one must surely get to it, and when one is not in the right path to it, one, no matter the amount of effort put in, can never get to it. This is explained in the saying that *agbaka m mbo bu ego nri* (that I have truly tried (suffered) can only provide food (if that is not my *Akara Aka*)). But the question is: Why must it be attained even when on wrong path, but can never be attained even on the right path if it is not one's *Akara Aka*?

Obviously, there are elements of doubt in the Igbo conception of *Akara Aka*. It is indeed a discouraging one, and that is where the problem lies. This is where they encourage weak existence among themselves. Some use it to cover their weakness towards struggling in life and say, 'if it is mine (destined for me) I should have got it'. They equally say 'when the time for God's promises reaches, it surely will manifest on me' or 'He (God) has not opened my page (remembered me)'. They keep lying in wait for the right time and name their children *Oge Chi kachasi mma* (God's time is the best). They keep lying in wait for the promises of God, as if it will fall down from heaven like that of biblical old story of 'manna from heaven' instead of *acting* so as to establish justifying-

grounds for the promise-fulfillment. However, the question now is: when is the God's time, the time for the promise-fulfillment, the time God will open your page? The biblical case of Hezekiah should have influenced this conceptual position. Was Hezekiah 'destined' to die the very time his death-proclamation was brought to him? If it was his destiny, it was changed even by He who destines, just as it happened also in the biblical story of Jabez. It was changed following their *reactions* when the 'destiny' was made known to them. That implies that 'destiny' (even on this context) comes into fulfillment after your own human actions. So, even if there is divine interferences— say *Akara Aka*, promise, time, etc— they all depend on when you want yours and how you help them to manifest. But what is the level of the ontological force/influence of *Akara Aka* on man and his human freedom and volition if it truly exists? Are all those who are in political offices today, even when they are rigged in there, predestined to be there? If yes, why must their destiny and destiny-helpers be dubious all the way? Why must these dubious destiny-helpers commit sins against the prevalence of the exercise of human nature— 'will' of the people?

Unfortunately some even reject negative life experiences as parts of their *Akara Aka*. If God has 'predestined' every experience man will encounter in life, why do we then blame those who are drunk and enter steering and drive out and smash themselves and other people? Why is it possible for some to use charm, poison and other facilities to kill others? If I do not stand and respond to my instinct by writing this paper on this concept, how would it have come into fruition? Or has God 'predestined' that it must come today and in this way? What if I had chosen to sleep all these days, what would have happened vis-à-vis this paper? Or is Divinity (or precisely God) the one using my body and thinking to do all these? Is He still the one using my body to commit sins and behave improper? I equally hope He will not judge me at the end! At this therefore, there is no need for moral codes, decorum, legal system, punishment, moral judgment by both man and God, reproach and sorry, even for the establishment of purgatory (as the Catholics hold), hell fire and even heaven. And if the Igbo believe that death is part and the very last of someone's *Akara Aka*, and that there must be difference in our *Akara Aka*, why should certain deaths like dying in labour, being drowned, suicide-commitment, among other means of death, be termed abomination? But all these are nature manifesting and in its own ways and times. All of us cannot live long like Methuselah and die peacefully on our home beds. Some must have been 'predestined' to die in those ways and at early age, for immediately after birth, what ends the life is nothing but death. Why

then should natural ways, times and manifestation be culturally conceived as taboos? What is then the need for 'Die so Soon', 'Die too Young', '*Ugegebe Etiwaa/Akuwaa n'Ike*' which are all about (Die so or too Soon) syndrome on the postals of the deceased? When and how they die are their destinies, and as such, there is no sacrilegious or abominable death, and the cultural speculation or belief that they would be rejected in the cycle of their ancestors in the spirit world.

### **Influence From Religion**

Interpretations of religious assertions, event and incidents have become troublesome that if it does not kill us, it will save us. Many have interpreted the biblical scenario of Jesus' death as obtainable through only faith. Just have faith and then be in the church daily from morning to night praising God, all other things, including your destiny will come after (locate) you, after all it is written: "Obey the Lord and nothing evil will happen to you" (Prov. 16:6), not even exam failure. This explains why some churches hold prayers and gatherings every day and during working-hours when people should be on their workshops, and after that, the men of God would resort to extorting their members, and when the members now have nothing again to give, they themselves resort to shameless begging all in the name of *oziuma* (evangelization), charity works, religious and region works where they hungrily and unconsciously display gluttony. They would say that one day, their prayers would be answered and money will come, things will be better. Some students among them would engage in this act of all-day-prayer-and-fasting after which they resort to malpractice or belief that God will come down from heavens-above to write their examinations for them, mark and score them 100% equally. How can they fail while they pray and have faith in their prayers and God? They would comfort themselves that their prayers would one day lead them to their *Akara Aka*, provide money and food for them (after all, God will provide); and then avert certain social and family challenges from them and their families. Through the touch of religious faith, they now derail from their supposed human efforts and now hope that divinity will come down unto them. They would quickly quote that "all living things look hopefully to (God), and (God) gives them food when they need it... (God) gives them enough and satisfies the needs of all... (God) supplies the needs of those who honour him" (Ps. 145:15-6, 19). But they forget that hoping is hoping on 'something', your own 'contribution'. You do not have to hope on what you do not contribute in, for your contribution guarantees and justifies your hoping.

Something always comes out from something, unlike nothing, and that is why it is written: “your reward depends on what you say and what you do; you will get what you deserve” (Prov. 12:14). The simple expression from this is that you deserve nothing when you do not contribute— say and do— anything. Perhaps it is for this category of faithful-but-lazy persons that it is written: “Some people ruin themselves by their own stupid (decisions and) actions and then blame the Lord” (Prov. 19:3). They forget that to work and to pray are the same thing in different ways. Achebe summarizes this sort of belief thus: “It is a belief by backward people that some day without any exertion whatsoever on their part, a fairy-ship will dock in their harbor laden with every goody they have always dreamed of possessing.” (1983:57). But I know that even the bible discourages laziness, for a lazy man is no different from a destructive someone— see Prov. 11:1; 18:9; 19:24; 28:19.

Insightfully, the Northern Nigerian Muslims might have been influenced with this kind of predestination concept which made them to believe that they are predestined to rule. Perhaps that could be a manifestation of the biblical assertion that we will be the head (rulers) not the tail (ruled), lenders, not borrowers. But the point remains that this religious belief and orientation of the Northerners has encouraged politics of do or die and reclamation-of-stolen-mandate. That explains why when a Northern Muslim is not in power, they feel cheated and can apply any means whatever cost, provided a Northern Muslim takes over. Regrettably from the same religious experience, in Nigeria, not even the whole Africa where vocation boom has become the order of the day, we see people go for religious interview, and only those who are from that diocese, district or region are successful or those whose relatives are top on the affairs of that congregation or diocese. At the end, the unsuccessful are told in consolation that many are called but few are chosen. Who are the called-many and the chosen-few? Who are the caller and the chooser? Are all ordained men of God predestined to be? If that is true, then God must be questioned on His purity, impartiality, holiness and justice-claims! Where is the limit of human freedom? Where and when should man accept the application or effect of his freedom?

To this end, we must recall that it is said that faith without work is dead. *Akara Aka* is no more sought for, through *trial and error* which is the only way to find *Akara Aka*. But it is never kept for, if it is, then rarely would man succeed in life. This explains the Igbo saying that *mkpughari/nkwughari ka e ji ere nwa mkpi* (it is

through location and relocation that we sell the he goat), *akwughi otu ebe ekiri mmonwu* (you do not stand one place to watch the masquerade). If you stand one place, you will end up seeing only one masquerade. It is this '*nkwughari* phenomenon' that makes it possible for one man to become highly talented and almost perfect in many fields of life. If man had stayed at one place (field of life), he would have definitely ended up being an expert in one field. And so, man's life ought to portray the fact that reality is multi-faceted. In this light, when man *acts*, his destiny will find him for he has established that justification-ground for it to happen even if it is termed superstition.

No one is predestined to be poor, ever live in bad economic condition and underdevelopment, technologically backwardness, poor education system, poor infrastructural outlook, political instability, etc. All these are products of what one wishes for oneself through one's inactions. Africans are not predestined to be poor, and ever live in this present pitiable condition. They are in this mess because they have not yet sincerely determined to say 'no' to their pitiable, disgusting and pathetic condition. The Europeans are not predestined to be ever better than the Africans. It is the Europeans' tireless effort, sincere determination to painstakingly work harder and harder towards making their lives better, and today, we envy them in their comfortable homes and pay billions to be there, and if we cannot afford the price, we give ourselves as sacrificial phenomena, we submit ourselves to their whims and caprices, to their mercy and pity, provided we smell and experience their comfortable homes. In our words, we say *obodo oyibo amaka* (European world is fine), but we forget to ask ourselves, when will Africa be that fine also? When will the Europeans also pay heavily to come and visit her? What has now happened that the Europeans no longer seek for employment in Africa, precisely Nigeria as it was the case in the 50s-80s? Has the African destiny now changed and the reverse being the case? We believe that *Akara Aka* can be changed through diabolical means, perhaps, the Europeans came and changed ours to replace theirs and the consequences include self-dependence on the European products, development, economy, standardized education system, commerce etc which are the by-products of their painstaking suffering, and self-denial of certain comfort for the societal development, sweat and hard-intellectual-labour. We now, with no qualms of conscience, consume their products without even asking questions as to how what we consume come about. Consequently, we unfortunately never cared to enquire on the negative effects on our economy, politics, religion, technology, security, tradition and



cultural values. We are now identified by the problem of *Consumer or Squandermania Mentality or Consciousness*, which is all about “that disposition in a people by which they conceive and judge things mostly in terms of their consumable value. On the whole the [people] become dominated largely by acquisitive rather than productive instinct.” (Okolo, 1994:9). The African has forgotten that “the real big man, the man truly great is and should be the creative individual who has transformed the environment through industry, initiative, resourcefulness, that is to say, through his creative labour.” (Okolo, 1993:27). First, Divinity cannot come down and tell you your *Akara Aka* and still drag (force) you to work towards accomplishing it. In fact, to me, there is no *Akara Aka* in this sense. The Igbo may have misconceived conscious determination to explore nature with ‘human possibilities plus divine blessing’ onto hard work, to be *Akara Aka*. The book of Proverbs (16:3) was insightful when it says: “Ask the Lord to bless your plans, and you will be successful in carrying them out.” Life or existence is destined and determinedly pursued to be fulfilled all by the liver. “Your joy is your own; your bitterness is your own. No one can share them with you,” it is what you destine for yourself (Prov. 14:10). By this, the principle of destiny portrays individuality as the cardinal of existence, for destiny is exclusively personal, there is no communal destiny even though the African is identified by communalism through which he acquires communal identity. The Igbo cites it and says *let he who works eat, otherwise let he not eat*. Equally, it is a popular saying that *heaven helps those who help themselves*, not those who do not help themselves. Man should define himself and existence and then, set his daily dreams, direct his motives in life towards whatever he wishes himself. Divinity does not wish you what you have not wished yourself first. Yesteryears, marrying-people didn’t seek for ‘the face of God’ to know if the two are predestined for each other before marriage, and 90% of them lived well. Today, almost everybody going into marriage seeks for ‘the face of God’ and many a times, it will say yes, ‘I approve it’. But before it is known, divorce is the next action. What then happened? Many never sought because they have seen handsome or rich guy, or a guy whom they have feeling for. Greater percentage of them end in peace because they follow the ‘move’ from their mind, while many failed because they think that all that glitters are diamond. Thus, even marriage is contained in understanding and accommodation, not predestination.

### **Evaluation And Conclusion**

The Igbo must be aware that *Akara Aka* as denoted by the concept of predestination is quite symbolic. *Akara Aka* is not *Akara Ukwu* (lines of the leg-palms), and why? This is because action (and thinking) is one thing that man is predestined with and for, when coming into existence. He has been predestined with inclinations to act towards his instincts. This power to decide and define his destiny is what is been referred to when it is written: "Today I give you authority over nations and kingdoms to uproot and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10). 'Today' as used above refers to the creation day, and since that day, man has been endowed with power to say who he really is, to triumph over the two ruling natural powers: *evil and good*. It is clearly stressed in Sirach when it is written:

Don't blame the Lord for your sins, the Lord does not cause what he hates... he does not need the help of sinners to accomplish his purposes... in the beginning, the Lord created human beings. He left them free to do as they wished... He has placed fire and water before you; reach out and take whichever you want. You have a choice between life and death; you will get whichever you choose (15:11-20)

Man's destiny is searched for and realized through his actions— what he does. It is earned, not given. His safety, existential situations are defined by what he does. Nothing has been kept (predestined) for him. He destines himself, defines himself and leads himself home through his admiration (motivation or likeness/love) and determined subsequent actions toward realizing that admiration or dream.

The Igbo say that *mgbe onye jiri teta ura, oburu ututu ya* (when one wakes becomes his morning). This hinges on the fact that existence (and dream) is exclusively one's even though interrelational. The earlier one wakes (consciously realizes) his existential aloneness and the bound obligation to pursue his dreams instead of *Akara Aka* belief, the better for one. This may implicate Kierkegaard's position that a child may attain the third and last stage of self-development (Religious) while the elder is still in the first (Aesthetic). Hence time to wake is important, and age is indeterminate and insignificant in dream and self-development. Sartre similarly has posited that existence is strictly for the individual, and that existential freedom naturally roots in existence. So, in one's existence, one exercises his nature-bestowed freedom so as to add essence to his life. "To exist means to be personally committed to a freely chosen way of life... to be at the

helm of one's affairs, personally directing its main course... living one's own life the way one has freely chosen and assuming responsibility for it" (Omoregbe, 1999:38). This explains why he disgusts crowd-existence, for to exist is to be free and to answer to existential responsibilities individually. "This means that man first of all exists, encounters himself, emerges in the world, and defines (and destines) himself afterwards... because he is first of all nothing. He will be nothing until later on, and he will be what he will make himself" (Sartre, 1970:21, 22). Existence for him should be freely personal for dream-fulfillment is never an affair of the crowd but the individual, and following this trend, one's destiny is in one's hands and dependent on one's dream and manner of pursuing it in life. This sort of life is nothing but 'Authentic life'. One's existence goes with boundless freedom from where he is unlimited to fulfill his existential dream. This aligns with Heidegger's position that one of the existential characteristics of *Dasein* (man) is his 'Existentiality' which is his nature of full of 'possibilities'. Thus, man, the conscious and being who asks questions about his existence, is the being that exists— "The being that exists is man. Man alone exists," every other thing merely 'are' (Kaufmann, 1956:215). As the being that exists, he must define and destine himself, there is no predestination therefore.

Apparently, the Igbo caution that *ka onye si dozie akwa ya o rahu otu ahụ* (the way one makes one's bed one lies on it), or *onye kwe, Chi ya ekwe* (if you say yes, your *Chi*— Personal Guidance/god or in this sense *Akara Aka*— will also say yes). So, upon your own agree (by your work), God will then agree (to bless/progress your work). There is no fixed destiny for anyone. Destiny is what one chooses and pursues its course seriously. The implication in this caution is that one's determination and serious and conscious commitment towards one's desire— that which motivates one or which one becomes hungry of, which is all-embodiment of motivation or force that motivates one to work towards acquiring it— goes a long way in determining one's success in life. Your personal and serious decision, by implication of this caution, changes your *Akara Aka* or direction or success or failure in life. But on the other side, he believes that *agbaka m mbo bu ego nri* (that you are trying (suffering to survive) ends only in providing food) or *ama ka mmiri amana Ogazi, akika ya kadi ya n'ahụ* (no matter what circumstance one encounters, one's destiny never escapes him). While the first is nothing but an encouragement for one to be one's life-architect, the other portrays the strong belief and dependence on *Akara Aka* that no matter how the concept 'die-trying provided success guides one', all the suffering and even the

eventual death can only end in ordinary food provision. What a contradiction! But on a critical note yet, when the bible says that he who does not make good use of the one given to him, that the little one he still has would be taken away from him, what exactly does it mean? Denial or revocability of destiny? But even the Bible also says that the gift of God is irrevocable. Does it implicate the African saying as explained above? Which way exactly is the safe way to survival in life? However, the inevitably and unexplainable problem associated with this belief is that one may tirelessly be working towards one side while unfortunately his *Akara Aka* is on the other side. Even when he says that the ease in what he does defines his destiny, it is logically fallacious for it is not always obtainable *ceteris paribus*.

Epistemologically, how can one identify one's destiny? How does one really know that this discovered walk of life is where one is predestined to be in? What is the different between dream and its pursuance and destiny? At the face *Akara Aka* as a concept, what is the reward or encouragement for hard work? If Okonkwo in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* did not start towards success, he would have become just as wretched and hopeless as his father. In describing the person of Okonkwo, it is written

His life had been ruled by a great passion— to become one of the lords of the clan. That had been his life-spring. And he had all but achieved it... He had been cast out of his clan like a fish on to a dry, sandy beach, panting. Clearly his personal god or chi was not made for great things. A man could not rise beyond the destiny of his *chi*. The saying of the elders was not true— that if a man said yea his chi also affirmed. Here was a man whose *chi* said nay despite his own affirmation (Achebe, 1985:vii)

Okonkwo, unlike his weak father, created his own destiny, consciously followed it through actions and it became realized.

Supposedly, the Igbo mistake talent or the fruit of painstaking effort for self progress and future betterment for *Akara Aka*. Determined and continuous effort for self development are misunderstood by him and that is why he seemingly believes that those experts and professionals who endlessly work harder and harder every day in their different fields of life— say football like L. Messi, C. Ronaldo, and other great football legends, wrestling like the Undertaker, R.

Reigns, B. Lesnar, etc, other sports entertainments, arts, music, science and those who risk their lives researching among numerous others, are all destined to be like that. But the Igbo seems to forget that some Africans who can measure up with these Legends— because of their tireless efforts added to their career— are before, with these destinies familiar or locatable in their environment. But when the Africans leave Africa, they quickly become measurable on the same scale of success with the European Legends. Perhaps there are different types of destinies for different races/continents and that of Africa is negative. Or, may be, destinies are infectious, and that is why Africans who leave the continent quickly become successful in life as those of the Europeans would now affect them; or that their destinies get changed, which if it were in their continent, it would not be realizable. We must grow above ethnic conceptions and environmental peculiar factors. Outside Nigerian schools and Universities and indeed Africa today, the students are limited by financial constraints, hardship, dilapidation in the school facilities, buildings/structures and equipments, consequently leading to discomfort and high level of disorganization in the system, internet challenges, poor level of intellectuality among teachers/lecturers, among other limiting factors, but all these were the problems of many Western countries in the 15/16<sup>th</sup> centuries. When the African students cannot compete with their mates outside Africa, it perhaps, becomes their destinies to remain globally ever underdeveloped and academically poor. Thus, it is deducible that where destiny is highly effective is only in Africa— because we have refused to do the needful and exactly the way those who do it and it works for them do theirs. We are in Africa blindly believing in *Akara Aka* while others outside Africa are excelling as a result of their different views on certain things, hard-work and determination and commitment in their life-professions. We blindly console ourselves and in our ignorance. As a matter of fact, this concept of *Akara Aka* (predestination) has affected Africa and particularly Nigerians negatively as we see in their belief system be it a Muslim, a Christian and even a Traditionalist that we cannot go above our destiny as if we can certainly epistemologically say ‘this is our destiny, and this is the level it stops’. And to summarize it, we hear the aphorism: *omeworo ma Chi ekweghi, ndi uta atakwana ya* (if you try and it does not work out, let no one blame your *Chi*). And the question is: ‘why won’t the person be blame?’ What effect has his trial made in knowledge development if there will be no epistemic enquiry on his attempt as to know why the failure, whether the person does it exactly as supposed and as successful others did theirs, which place, when and what are facilities used, among other enquiries. By this, such



intellectual attempt will be useful. Heaven (Divine interference or penetration—blessings on your hard-work) can only come in form of *help* onto those who help themselves. He who is fed (the weak, need, hungry) brings his mouth closer to the feeder and not the other way round because, if you refuse to bring closer your mouth (refuse to work harder), you will certainly not be fed (not attract the heavenly blessings). So for heaven to help you, you have to lead the way— do something as a testimony, mark and justified-ground for the heavenly mysterious blessings. If this is the case, then nothing has been kept for anyone 'pre' his existence as his destiny. Existence is only justified on trial/error-ground. It is when you are going this trial-and-error-way that success or luck will 'jam' you and then bless your efforts. Your *Akara Aka* even in that core Igbo sense of understanding will not locate you, rather you will locate it or rather them— if one could be destined with more than one destiny. Perhaps this is also possible for we have seen one man being an expert in many walks of life. Even though if followed by this Igbo understanding God appears bias in nature, nevertheless, that is true for it is said in the bible that I will have mercy and bless those I wish. If there is no chosen class of people, why should God select those to be blessed and have mercy on? But the point remains that the Igbo understanding of *Akara Aka* portrays God highly and shamelessly partial for some, assumedly, appears more endeared to God (destined for success) than others— who are destined for failures. If men are small gods and truly are created in the likeness and image of God and possess God's sparks in them (soul) and this soul is the sole and absolute driver who drives the lifeless motor (human body), then in this sense, God should be held responsible. Again, punishing the soul is punishing God (inserted in man in creation) and by God. How rational is that? If sinned souls go to hell fire— the eternal place of gnashing of teeth in agony and laments— how rational does it appear that God goes to hell fire to be punished for His actions? In the first place, how could it (He) commit evil? Is it in his nature? Man, if at all should be punished, should not because it is still the soul (small God in man) that uses the body to do evil for which the human would be punished after life. If man is predestined, there is no need for human freedom and volition. Man becomes a robot-like-creature to his *Akara Aka* which he never knew. Many occurrences are thus justified for they are preordained to happen. Suicide, killings, oppression, partiality and injustice are all predestined or preordained that they MUST happen on a particular day, place, through a particular person (s), at a very hour, to a particular extent, etc. The Hobbesian State of Nature is allowed, the predicaments that have befallen and bedeviled the Africans are all

justified and preordained to happen accordingly as happened. Thus, those historical determinists like Hegel, Marx, Hitler, Napoleon Hill, Alexander the Great, etc are all justified and right in positing that through such history, different levels of consciousness emerge, the Absolute develops and manifests Himself, globally recognized events evolve, historicism emerge and is preserved for posterity (Kanu 2015a&b).

Thus, before entirely believing on *Akara Aka*, it is vital to ask: what am I doing? Where? When? How? To which extent? For who? At which aim or for what purpose? In what frequency? When the Igbo fails these and subsequently fails to emulate on the daily evolving strategies and skills, they reflect on his career, business or work, and when this condition lasts for years, he would console his adamant to these indispensable factors for success, with *agbaka m mbo bu ego nri*. So, no matter how much one tries, one can never succeed in it so long it is not one's destiny and that presupposes the saying that man proposes but God disposes. And in Proverbs, it is reiterated: "We may make our plans, but God has the last word" (16:1). In the same passage it is said: "You may make your plans, but God directs your actions" (16:9). At this, the question now becomes what is then the need for man's volitional exercise if God has the last say in one's plans and equally directs his actions? What if in his humanity he makes plans toward what is not his destiny, would God still direct his actions toward fulfilling the plans? But if God directs man's actions, man should not border to struggle for life-survival and he ought not to be blamed for any error in life!

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