



THE HUMANISM OF EMMANUEL MATHEW PAUL EDEH'S PHILOSOPHY OF *MMA-DI*

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Abstract

Human beings and the society at large have faced existential challenges and inhuman experiences. Finding the causative factors behind this, the paper came to a conclusion that it was misconceptions, especially, of the human beings as articulated in some philosophical articulations and ideologies that have encouraged them. However, it is still left for human beings to resolve these challenges that have become perennial tasks to both philosophers and non-philosophers. With regard to this, philosophical thoughts and attitudinal dispositions have been postulated to address them. Emmanuel Mathew Paul Edeh has contributed his own philosophical thought which is referred to as the 'philosophy of *mma-di*': a philosophy that views the human being as the 'good that is'. This philosophical postulation had two cardinal features: (1) the conception of the human being as a stereotype of his/her Creator who is the 'good' itself, (2) the 'good that is' becomes the gateway to grasp what being is, hence the identification of being within the meaning and implication of the concept, 'good that is'. But this calls for questions. First, how could this conceptual scheme intervene in the inhumanity and dehumanization bedeviling human beings today? Second, how rationally justifiable was it to express the idea of being with the etymological meaning of the name of one being? Nonetheless, addressing these questions, the paper argued that abiding by the humanistic perspective of Edeh's philosophical thought certainly encouraged humanitarian understanding and facilitated more humanistic approach that enhanced mutual relationship among different peoples of the world regardless of race, intellectual and social statuses, etc. It is expected to analyze Edeh's humanistic contribution to the development of African philosophy hence the postulation of humane conception of the human being that universally stood for what it is like being. It adopted hermeneutics and conceptual analysis as methods.

Keywords: Humanism, Philosophy, *Mma-di*, 'Good-that-is', Edeh, Human Being

(1) Introduction

Inhumanity has also existed alongside humanity as an intrinsic part of nature, in the form of conflict, fights, racial discrimination, war, violence, injustice, among others. It has threatened human posterity, health, social progress, social peace and tranquillity, possibility of mutual relationship among peoples from different backgrounds, cultures or



ethnic nationalities. It also raises questions with regards to human rationality and guiding values. Sometimes, it manifests between two people, among communities and even nations. Human beings consequently have attempted proffering solutions to address these threats to human existence, progress and peace. Some have come in the form of attitudinal dispositions, others, ideologies. Edeh as a religio-ontologist has hermeneutically and analytically come up with his own ideological contributions through his conceptualization of the human being which is interpreted as *mmadu* but whom he constantly refers to as *mma-di*, meaning 'good that is'. By this ideological postulation, the human being, regardless of any accidental feature, is essentially the 'good that is' through the virtue of being a product of creation by the 'Supreme Good'. This goes with a lot of implications. (1) that every human being is 'good that is'; (2) that to harm 'good that is' is unacceptable hence the need for concretization of the ideology through humanitarian services in all angles; (3) that harming 'good that is' demeans the essence, and poses threat to the posterity of 'good that is'; (4) that harming 'good that is' subsequently means an indirect provocation to the 'Supreme Good that is'. It is upon these implications that the humanistic perspective of Edeh's philosophy of *mma-di* becomes very clearer.

In this consciousness, the question thus becomes, how can Edeh's ideology ameliorate the prevailing inhumanity in the world and equally enhance more humanistic approach among people of different cultural backgrounds? Addressing this, the paper argues that by the humanistic implication of Edeh's philosophy of *mma-di*, inhumanity could be curbed among (human) beings.

Adopting hermeneutical and analytic approaches to undertake this discussion, the paper presents more insights into the African concept of humanism and how Edeh's ideology is humanistic enough to facilitate human welfare and peaceful and cordial relationship among peoples of different cultures. By this, Edeh's philosophical contribution breaks the barrier of inhumanism expressed in racism, ethnicity, cultural bias, etc., that have excelled even till today. This paper would do an analytic presentation of Edeh's philosophy of *mma-di* as a Universalist concept that addresses human existential challenges and ensures global humanism and mutual relationship.

(2) Motivational Factors behind Edeh's Philosophy of *Mma-di*

Emmanuel Mathew Paul Edeh has severally narrated in both public functions and some of his books (Edeh, 1999; 2012), factors behind the initiative and subsequent articulation of his philosophy of *mma-di*. Generally, three main factors stand prominent: (1) the destruction done with technologically manufactured war weapons, and as peculiarly experienced in the Nigeria-Biafra War; (2) the question on who the human being really which is finally dovetails into the question being; and finally, (3) the production of a firsthand literature on African philosophy as a discourse addressing the question of being from an African perspective.

With regard to the first point, Edeh noted that series of destructive events like Wars most prominent among which include the 1st and 2nd World Wars and the one that befell Nigeria (1966/7-70), that have happened to humanity. These were events that called for



interrogation of the place of human beings and the question of human dignity. Be that as it may, Edeh was highly devastated coming in contact with the effects of the Nigeria-Biafra War which were at their peak when he returned from studies overseas. People from the two parties were suffering the effects though much heavier on the Biafran part. The War really affected greatly the humanity of the people so much so that at the experience, Edeh, out of reasonableness, began to ask what the worth of human beings is, and what the place of humanity in the face of some events that threaten human posterity is. The horror of the scene alone was heartbreaking indeed!

Talking about the second point, at the sight of the scene, Edeh personally asked who truly the human being is, and how on earth could s/he best be conceived that would influence the manner to approach him/her so as to still recognize the dignity of humanity. The humanity of the people, their human values, sacredness and worth were brought to dust. There was indeed a dire need for consolation and reconciliation beyond political statements of 'No Victor, No Vanquished' and the 3-R (Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation) and behavioural approach. All these were what Edeh attempted to address by postulating a theologico-philosophical ideology that would restore the devastated and dehumanized dignity of the people.

The third and final point is a reference to how best could Africans be written about and truly be presented to the world. He thought that already existing literature were not well written to picture the reality of African thought, African philosophy. In addition to this, he thought the ones written by non-Africans did not represent the reality of the African peoples and their philosophy, hence the dire need for an indigenous literature invention. Doing this, he was greatly concerned about originality, hence, the approach to the task through Igbo culture and language. He thought that articulating a firsthand literature on the philosophy of Africans through his own Igbo ontological conceptual scheme as an instance to picture, to a great extent, some similar conceptual schemes in other African cultures, would best describe Africans than what have been written about the people by non-Africans like Tempels, etc.

These three pointed features were fundamental factors that stood as factors that influenced Edeh's philosophy of *mma-di*. Many scholars have equally written on these influential factors as to the motivation behind Edeh's *mma-di* philosophy (Melladu, 2011; Edeh, 2012; Onukwube, 2012; Chukwu, 2012, Onyewuenyi, 2012). However, having pointed them out the paper shall embark on the analytical presentation of the philosophy.

(3) An Analysis of Edeh's Philosophy of *Mma-di*

The philosophy of *mma-di* is Edeh's philosophy (metaphysics) of the human being. It is, by extension, an ontological articulation on being. This metaphysics is Edeh's academic or intellectual gift to the world. In the metaphysics, Edeh tried to articulate what he thought could be a firsthand literature on African Philosophical discourses. Suffice it to say that he articulated the African Philosophy through an Igbo conceptual ontology through which the question of being is raised. By this metaphysics, Edeh came up with an Igbo conceptual scheme of being as epitomized in the beingness/existence of the



human being. It is a philosophico-theological conceptual framework about being as holistically portrayed in humanity as the foremost principle into the enquiry on being as a discourse. This metaphysics was first articulated elaborately in his literary prime titled *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics* (Edeh, 1985, 1999 reprinted), and later expatiated in his handy material titled *Igbo Metaphysics: The First Articulation of African Philosophy of Being* (Edeh, 2009). In these pieces of literature, a philosophico-theological conception of the human being is presented and the human being became known as the 'good that is' and his existence characterized as a God-man-relationship, implying that the 'good that is' must be shown through (1) a socio-ontological participation in the goodness of his/her Creator, and (2) concretization of the 'good' among fellow human beings. It is therefore a human-centred philosophy, hence by extension, it could be described as an African philosophical brand of humanism.

Edeh in his *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics* presented an theologico-ontological perspective of the human being from an Igbo viewpoint that has aesthetic *cum* anthropological dimensions. Edeh said that he took an empirical method which involved field work through questionnaires, interviews and personal chats on certain metaphysical phenomena among the Igbo people. For him, this methodological approach was the best because the motivational events for the philosophical articulation were mostly Igbo-African experiences as related to the following: (1) the devastating effects of the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War, (2) the dire need to restore the dignity of human beings through the Igbo-Nigerian persons, and (3) the absence of suitably qualified and original philosophical work that could tell the philosophy, but more precisely, metaphysics of African peoples, especially the Igbo ethnic nationality, for which he produced the aforementioned book. At the end, he was able to come up with what he said was the most original, and explanation of the metaphysics of the African people through the articulation of Igbo metaphysics. To start this epistemological journey in enquiring what being is, he came up with two hypotheses: *Onye* and *Ife*. After series of Language Game he showed with the term *Onye* in '*Onye Hypothesis*', as an Igbo, no doubt, he rejected it following his reason that "it cannot include inanimate, vegetative or non-human animate entities" (Edeh, 1999, p. 94). For the term *Ife* in '*Ife Hypothesis*', he considered *Ife* as being nearer to portray the exact Igbo meaningfulness of the term 'being', but the challenge there was "that *ife* does not bring out completely all that *being* means. *Ife* does not emphasize the important aspect of *being*, namely, the fact of existence" (Edeh, 1999, p. 96). But the adequacy of *Ife* over *Onye* hypotheses is that "*ife* standing on its own can be used to refer to both existent and nonexistent entities" (Edeh, 1999, p. 96). But this lacuna in *Ife Hypothesis* is not unsolvable "when we remember that *Ife* can be affixed to any adjective or to a verb to mean a specific thing. The Igbo verb to *be* in the sense of to *exist* is *idi*. *Idi* used as an adjective can be suffixed to anything to show that it exists" (Edeh, 1999, p. 96). It is at this point that Edeh therefore interpreted 'being' as *Ife-di* (that which is/exists) so as to answer the question of being. But how do human beings know 'that which is/exists'? Now to pose the question: 'what is being', which interprets 'what is that which is?' demands an answer. When taken to the extreme, the question turns rhetorical like *Ife-di bu Ife-di* (that which is is that which is); and by this, no point is made. At this point, Edeh returned (Heideggerian influence now in play) the question and the answer to the human being;



by this, he contended that the knowledge of the human being stands as a stepping stone to the true knowledge of being, that which is, anything that is at all. However, it can be arguably posited that not only Heidegger has influenced Edeh, but also the saying which has, hitherto, been argued to be of African origin (the Egyptian Mystic School) 'Man Know Thyself' as much as the Igbo saying, *Akụ ruo Ụlọ* does. Even though *Akụ* here primarily refers to wealth and riches, it denotes the idea of 'Think Home Philosophy' where 'Self-Knowledge' is encouraged to be the fundamental process. It is at this very point that the foundation upon which one can stand and describe the philosophy as an African philosophical brand of humanism takes justification.

Nonetheless, for Edeh, the proper term for 'being' would become "*lfe-di*"... because it covers all entities, both visible and invisible, as well as the note of existence which we commonly associate with being" (Edeh, 1999, p. 96). He further maintained that the understanding of *lfe-di* begins with the understanding of the 'subject' of the enquiry (human being). Going fundamental, the scholar maintained that the Igbo etymology for the 'human being' is *Madu* which "is a short form of *mmadi* (*mma-di*) "*Mma*" is the Igbo word for "good," "a good," or "the good." "*Di*" is from "*idi*" which, as we have seen, is the Igbo verb "to be"" (Edeh, 1999, p. 100). From this position, *Mmadu* which, he, though, calls *Madu*— is a derivation from *mma* (good) and *du* which now, as an application of linguistic game, turns to *di* which in turn, derives from the Igbo verb (Ngwaa) *idi* or *ɔdidi* (meaning, 'to be' or even 'existence'), means 'the good that is'. Having given it a theoretical meaning, the scholar went on with the practical implication of this theoretical postulation, thereby raising a question of how this goodness could be sustained so long it is a derivation from participation (*iketa oke* or *isonye n'ife*), or, belongingness to the goodness of the Maker. In his word, "the Igbo notion of "good that is" must be understood in the context of creation... divine creation. To say that man is the "good that is" is not to say that man is "good *in se*", for no one is "good *in se*" except God" (Edeh, 1999, p. 100). Thus the goodness or man's status as the 'good that is' is only by participation or sharing in the goodness of his Creator. He contended that this Igbo disposition of ideal-practical orientation differentiates the Igbo-African from the Western disposition of divisiveness or individualization of the two holism of reality. Hear him:

The distinctive feature of African philosophy is that it cannot be thought of, in terms of an objective abstract science as was fashionable in Western philosophy. In African philosophy, we are dealing with a practical theoretical science in the sense that by nature, African metaphysics is a lived philosophy rather than a purely theoretical science enterprise (Edeh, 2010, p. 1)

In addressing this point, Edeh advised that human beings must restore this existential paradigm of 'goodness', and so, must treat fellow human beings with everything replicating goodness. Blending this theoretical conception with practice for humanitarianism, he (Edeh) came up with a philosophical postulation that tries to blend theory and practice as working ideals for the betterment of human being. Naming it after his own name, he coined the term EPTAISM- to represent Edeh's Philosophy of Thought and Action (which has today become the name of the academic Journal of the



Department of Philosophy of one of his Universities). In this philosophy, the ideal (goodness) is practically concretized in humanity, that is, ensuring the welfare of human beings (Melladu, 2011; Onukwube, 2012). His thought towards Practical and Effective Charity (PEC) is equally a by-product of his EPTAISM as widely enunciated elsewhere (Edeh, 2010). To this end, Edeh's metaphysics takes an anthropocentric perspective where the primacy of existence becomes man-centred.

Identifying the African personality with the fact that human beings, especially judging from his experiences of the communalistic personality of the African people, are communally and ontologically centred in the universe, Edeh opined that they are essentially 'participatory-beings'. In the human communalistic participation towards one another, Edeh argued that the paradigm of the nature, substance and essence of the human Creator who is the *Summum Bonum* (the Supreme Good), ought to be the watch word; that is, the centre of the ontological communal participation. Suffice it to say that for him, in human communalism, the human nature (goodness) which is derived from the human Creator must be the identifying characteristic.

Edeh also went on to define the Igbo human being as a core communal being. This is where his cultural background of anthropocentric world view played out vividly in his articulations and equally facilitated or made it feasible for his orientation towards theoretical-practical dispositions. He elaborately put this communalistic disposition thus: the Igbo way of life emphasizes 'closeness' but not 'closed-ness.' There is a closeness in living because each person 'belongs to' others and in turn, 'is belonged to by' others. By adopting this life of 'closeness' or 'belongingness,' an Igbo becomes immersed in the culture's spiritual substance, love, and by love he acquires a fulfilment as a person beyond mere individuality (Edeh, 1999, p. 105)

In a conclusion, the welfare of the human being is at the centre of this ontological interrelatedness for the human being is the weakest and seemingly takes the central stage. The sense of humanism characterizes African communalism where priority is on the consciousness of the feeling that the being with whom s/he exists and communes, is a fellow human being, and by that essence, ought to be approached with a more humane 'face'. Significantly, humanism and communalism are two existential qualities that define what could ever be referred to as value among Igbo-Africans (Ugwu and Ozoemena, 2019).

In a pure metaphysical attempt to address the issue of duality of reality with regards to the components of human being according to the Igbo, Edeh posited that the human being is made up of *Ahụ* (Arụ) which depicts "the notion of being visible, that is, perceptible by the senses," *Mkpurụ-obi* which he identified as 'the nut or seed of the heart' implying that it is still a part of the visible components, *Chi* which he identified as 'life' "in the sense of life from God, or the presence of God", that is, 'life of God (in human) or life from God (to human)' and *Mụọ* (sometimes written: *Mmụọ*) which he identified as 'soul' (Edeh, 1999). Differing from many Igbo scholars especially fellow priests and those highly influenced by Western religions, he rejected the idea that the term *Mkpurụ-obi* represents appropriately the 'soul' concept because: (1) the term was



an invention by catechists who worked with the first missionaries in their bid to explain what they understood from the foreign religious colonizers (missionaries) as the Western concept of soul to the locals; (2) that “the term conveys the idea of the physical concentration of the soul in one part of the body.” But it has been established from an Igbo ontological perspective that what Edeh has presented as the components of the human do not show his status as a metaphysician, hence there are other essential constitutive elements of the human being. For a more elaborate view on this, Ugwu writes:

For the Igbo, in the Umuokan scheme of thought, *mmadu*, or *maadjvu(ru)*, is basically a composite of two main ‘existential phenomena/spheres’: Physical and Metaphysical. His Physical existential phenomenon/sphere comprises of the presence of *Ahu* (Body). In his bodily existential sphere, we have *Mkpuru Obi* (Heart), *Uburu/Uvuru* (Brain), *Akpukpo Anu-Ahu* shortened (Anu-Ahu) (Skin) *Aji* (Hairs), *Obara* (Blood), *Okpukpo* (Bones), *Akwara* (Veins), *Anu* (Flesh), *Mmiri* (Waters including the sex cells and all the moisture-contents) and *Ihe-Mmebiga* (Wastes). His Metaphysical existential phenomenon/sphere comprises of the presence of *Mmuo* (Spirit) *Onwe* (Self), *Uche* (Mind/Intellect), *Echiche* (Thought), *Akọ* (Wisdom), *Onyinyo* (Shadow), *Nghota* (Understanding), *Ume* (Breath), *Oyime* (Ghost), *Ehihe* (the Doubleness of Man) *Agwa* (Attitude), *Obi/Mmụọ-Ikpe* (Conscience), *Onatara Chi* (Natural Talent/ Skill), and *Chi* (2022, p. 159)

However, quick and simple objection to his position on the *Chi* concept is that it cannot be the life from God, rather it is an enigmatic term explaining many existential principles of life (Ugwu and Ozoemena, 2019a).

(4) The Humanism of Edeh’s Philosophy of *Mma-di*

The term ‘humanism’ implies two main points: (1) the facticity of being a human, and (2) the rationality of humanity. It therefore means that humanism reinstates the beingness of humanity; that is, the reality or existence of human beings, or their being human beings; and the rationality that entails qualities/attributes of being a human. By reinstating the beingness of humanity or being human, humanism as a concept implies that human beings and their existence are different from other beings and their existence. It intrinsically involves reasoning and that sense of empathy in dealing with fellow human beings. Thus, it does not mean only being more humane in dealing with fellow human beings, but also for a reference to the rational tendency of human beings to think beyond the immediacy and more than other beings in the physical categories as the case may be. The rational meaning of humanism implicates the idea that human beings are inherently thinking-beings and this ought to differentiate human existence from that of other non-human beings.

So far, both as a term and concept, humanism is all that is to be human; that is, to exist as human beings and not as non-human beings. It revolves around being human which expresses in human rationality which accommodates, on one hand, criticality and logicity to make a sound reasoning process than every other being, and empathy which accommodates, on the other hand, emotion and feeling that dilute the high



criticality and logicity of human reasoning thereby reminding the thinking-mind that human beings are the subjects and must be considered as such through the activities of the feeling-heart (Ugwu, 2022). By this, the African conception of human being is not in separations as exemplified in the Western dualistic conception of human beings as expressed in Plato's Ideal-Physical Worlds, Kant's Noumena-Phenomena Worlds, Descartes' *Res cogitas* and *Res extensa* where the mind or the thinking-self, the human ego, the abstract human component does not only exist independently but given/attributed the human substance. The African conception of the human being is rather in holism or inseparable or dependable dualism where the human being is perceived not only as a thinking-being through the activities of the human mind, but also a feeling-being through the activities of the human heart. Humanism thus stands as all there is to be human, human being, as the thinking-mind with its criticality and logicity standing symbolically for the metaphysical component of the human being, and the feeling-heart with its humanitarian emotions and feelings standing symbolically for the physical component of the human being (Ugwu and Asuquo, 2022).

From this perspective, all that Edeh's philosophy of *mma-di* stands for, is humanism. Edeh articulated this humanistic philosophy for the welfare of fellow human beings, for more humanistic understanding of human beings. It was motivated by the humanist concern about the fate and future of human beings and the sacredness and value of their lives in the face of fast-growing production of nuclear weapons all in the name of national defence and security and reinstating of national sovereignty. By the production of such life-threatening objects, to bring about peace and protection and to prove love for the nationals, human beings have invented what would ironically not only enhance but also fast forward their death. This is the reality and irony of humanism, and this is one of the main motivations behind Edeh's philosophy. This irony has manifested severally, but beholding its manifestation in the Nigeria-Biafra War made it more real and directly affective to Edeh as his kin and kiths were victims. The beholding of the reality of the effects of what human beings could produce out of their own rationality which is a manifestation of humanism, prompted his conceptualization and articulation of the *mma-di* philosophy. At this experience, he became worried by what the worth of human beings has become that it no longer has any recognition. Human beings and their humanity upon which their existential sacredness and values stand firm, are insignificant and conceived as a whole lot of mess when the produced weapons of mass destruction is involved in human affairs, and these worries are the grounds of humanistic basis to Edeh's *mma-di* philosophy.

The philosophy of *mma-di* stems from curious questions about the fate of humanity and the value accorded or ascribed to it. In this realm of consciousness, the humanistic bent of the philosophy draws from being a product of human conditions as expressed in the humanity of Africans as it concerns Nigerians after the Nigeria-Biafra civil war. Human conditions were so dehumanized and inhuman-characterized that to raise these humanitarian questions again became a paramount task to undertake. Thus, the *mma-di* philosophy could be interpreted as a product of humanism; the humanist understanding of the human conditions. It is a humanist enquiry into what human beings really are, what constitute the human being. It is a philosophy that chats humanity and



human value in the face of rationality as expressed in technological innovations especially war arsenals all in the name of intellectual supremacy and security. These innovations have deterred and questioned the posterity of humanity thereby disregarding who/what truly the human being is: the good that is. The sense of humanism inheres in the term and concept *mma* (good) for goodness should be part and parcel of humanity, and should characterize the day-to-day activities of human beings. Though the question is, is the good centrally characterizing human day-to-day activities even till today?

Furthermore, the humanism of Edeh's philosophy takes its root from the worry and how it would be sustained: practically be proved to the world. By this, the action would, by affection, influence sense of humanism in other peoples of the world other than Africans alone. From this angle, Edeh's leading question and concern were how to ensure an improved human welfare through the application of the philosophy he postulated. This proof (to make it more a broader space to touch every aspect of human endeavours), has to extend to religion, education, charity, conflict resolutions and reconciliatory engagements, etc. Edeh has ideologically stipulated and stated what and how the *mma-di* philosophy is and would be upheld, and to practically prove this so as to be in concordance with the ideological postulation, he tries in many practical charitable ways to re-state and concretize the philosophy in the society, among the people and most importantly, in their psyche. This aspect of humanism of *mma-di* philosophy gave rise to the emergence of the following ideologies and institutions like EPTAIMS (Edeh's Philosophy of Thought and Action(ism)), PEC (Practical and Effective Charity), RJPR (Restoration of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation), MICPA (Madonna International Charity Peace Award), CAPM (Catholic Adoration Prayer Ministry), CCF (Caring Centre Facilities), A/ES (Academic/Educational Scholarships), among others like youth empowerment, economic orientations, entrepreneurship *cum* self-development and reliance, mental improvement, etc. In an attempt to reinstate the humanism of the philosophy, and to practically restore the humanism within the people and in the society, all these and more emerged. The aim behind this is not only physical-focused, but metaphysical-focused as they touch the religious *cum* spiritual, academic *cum* educational, mental *cum* skilful development, legal *cum* customary life of the people among many other aspects. These are efforts to concretize and prove the humanistic basis of the *mma-di* philosophy. Of course this aspect has been extensively written on, but from the perspective of Edeh's achievements and equally ways of concretizing or corresponding his thought with action-touches (Melladu, 2011).

Edeh has always maintained a distinction between the Western and African concepts of ontology and metaphysics of the human nature when he says that African philosophy cannot be thought of, in terms of an objective abstract science. African ontology deals with a practical theoretical science in the sense that by nature, it is a lived philosophy rather than a purely theoretical science enterprise (2010). But the Western concept of ontology can be thought of in terms of objective abstract science. By this, it deals distinctively with and could even be independently theoretical and practical sciences, and could by nature be never a lived one, and that is highly utopic. To practicalize this, the methodology adopted to establish the philosophy of *mma-di* is primarily empirical



through fieldwork engagement and then secondarily hermeneutics where the conceptualization process picks an ontological status through analysis. This is equally made clearer by Tempels (1959, pp. 51, 60) explaining the African ontology in the Bantu ontology when he writes that “just as Bantus ontology is opposed to the European concept of individuated things, existing in themselves, isolated from others” hence it could be concluded that Europeans “hold a *static* conception of ‘being’, [whereas Bantu Africans] a dynamic [one].” From an explanation, theory is real and best valued when practicalized because they are inseparable to discussing reality (Ugwu, 2022; Ozoemena, L. C. *et al.*, 2022).

Thus, Edeh’s *mma-di* philosophy is a human(ist) conceptualization attempt to address human conditions and proffer solutions to the conditions hence the need to situate the human being at the foundational level and then go beyond humanity to divine original source of humanity hence the inherency of ontological status of the conceptualization. The human being is located at the primary and centre of the philosophy. By this, it takes the structure of beginning from the known to the unknown, from human beings and the human world to the non-human beings and the non-human world. By this method, the physical and non-physical are intrinsic parts of the philosophy. Both physicalism and abstractism are simultaneously engaged in the philosophy. The philosophical conceptualization of humanity is reduced from being taken whole and entire by the ideal or abstractism as fashionable in the philosophies of Western scholars like Plato, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, etc. Philosophical nucleus is, by this, made simple (even though to some scholarly critics, ‘too simple’) and equally brought down to humanity as the subject and this significantly stands as an attempt to retrieve, from abstractism, the philosophical conceptualization of reality as epitomized in the beingness of human beings. This is where Edeh exhibits some level of Heideggerian influences.

Another perspective of the humanism of the *mma-di* philosophy is religion. Edeh is a Christian Catholic denominational priest who studied Christian theology and ethics under the watchdog of Catholic faith expressed in its teachings and doctrines. As a Catholic priest, he was heavily influenced by the Christian ethics and beliefs as documented in the scriptures where preaching is characterized by love and peace and the orientation and belief that the Christian God is all good, epitome of what good should be and the architect of anything good as a reality. Anyways, scholars have refuted this position and argued that it is a sort of reductionism on the nature, substance and essence of God (Ugwu and Ozoemena, 2019b). Some have equally argued that it is an over exaggeration over the nature of God (Agada, 2024). It must be noted that of a huge influential factor inherent in Edeh’s initializing of the *mma-di* philosophy is the biblical account of creation; and based on this influence and belief in it, *mma-di* stems from the facticity of the creation account. It is from this account that even *mma* of human beings is deduced, and the facticity of being a creature (an act of good) by the most ‘good being’ is drawn from. The concept *mma* which is central in Edeh’s philosophy is undoubtedly rooted in and from Christian religious beliefs and theological influences. From a perspective of general assessment, Christianity is a religion that its tenets centred around and encourage love, peace and sacrifice as elemental ethics which stipulates what is good and bad for adherents. Thus, drawing from the



consciousness of this religious belief, his conceptualization immediately took to religious 'good' ideology, and following that the Christian Creator epitomizes what it means and implies to be good, then his conceptualization of the human being takes suite to posit that human beings epitomize not just the goodness of this Creator-God of Christianity, but also stand as the gateway to the real knowledge of being. Identifying humanity (human beings) as the reality of what and all it means and implies and takes to be (to exist, implicating the idea of 'being'), then Edeh posits that being is 'good that is' hence drawing from the creation that anything that is/exists is a product of creation by the all-good Christian creator-God. This hazed perception of the Supreme Being here is reductionistic as to what really the nature, essence and substance of the Supreme Being are. The implication is that some beings, for instance evil, are above God and that God cannot stop, or account for them; and this has been extensively argued against (Ugwu & Ozoemena, 2019b; Agada, 2024). 'Being' implying and meaning 'good that is' draws from the Christian creation belief and the all good Christian God being the Creator – 'Good Himself'. Suffice it to say then that 'the good' or 'goodness' as a concept equals to the Christian all-good-creator-God from whom everything that is/exists takes the status of 'good' and which humanity stands not just the real entrance of its knowledge, but also its concretization. In humanity finds the reality of what it takes, means and implies to exist or being itself. Humanity expresses being.

(5) Edeh's Philosophy of *Mma-di* and Socio-human Existential Challenges

As has been noted earlier, human society cannot be thought of, without the concept of challenges existing along the emergence of the society and human beings themselves. By this, it should equally be posited, though arguably, that human existence is not thought of, without challenges some of which are nature-caused, and others, human-caused. Suffice it then to say that these existential challenges existing alongside human beings in the society are sometimes caused by either human beings themselves and nature itself in the expression of lower animals, trees and vegetations, in-animate beings, etc.; or the two factors (human beings and nature) standing as tools/media, workings or functionalities through which the Supreme Being causes them unto humankind and the society. Be that as it may, the question of social challenges has been deliberated timelessly especially with regards to the African society (Ukwuoma, *et al*, 2022). While some insist that human existential challenges are strictly human-caused, others subscribe to the nature-caused position, and many others, standing in between by maintaining that they are caused by both. But the question as to this discussion and how it relates to *mma-di* philosophy is how could this philosophy resolve, if not all of them, at least some of them? Has the '*mma*-ness' of and in the philosophy been existentially theoretically and practically felt by humanity? What is its influence *vis-à-vis* these social challenges to the welfarism of humanity?

The nature of human being is identically one, that is, both good and bad; and that explains why s/he has the inclinations to exhibit both good and bad attitudes. By this, the human being is not only 'good that is' but also 'bad that is'. Ugwu has quintuple conceptual implications of the human being: (1) as beauty that is, (2) as good that is, (3) as spirit that is, (4) as "Knife/Machete which symbolically stands for both peace and disaster/violence, s/he naturally stands as a symbol of both peace (good) and disaster



(bad/evil) as existentially lived” and finally (5) as the facticity and proclamation of existence (2022, p. 152). From this perspective, Edeh’s religio-theologico-aesthetic conception of man (human being) is not all-encompassing, but a show of how the fear of being tagged religious heretic, played out in him (Ugwu, 2022). Be that as it may, it is an existential fact as daily experienced that human beings quarrel, fight and engage in war, kill, think and do all sort of evil. Today humanity is faced with both good and evil from both human beings and nature. Inhumanity has become a dominant factor in people’s lives; and nature, some would argue, has released its own evil on humanity. Consequent upon this, fellow human beings have taken the advantage of the natural evil to unleash more evil to humanity. Human beings have exploited fellow human beings without any qualms of conscience. In politics, selfishness and greed have occupied the psyche of African politicians and have underlined their ‘whyness’ for vying for political offices. In religion, pastors see their faithful as commodities from whom their richness comes depending on their hustling strategy (convincing them to tithe-giving, offering, seed-sowing, celebrating festive periods for God and His servants, among many other numerous ways through which these faithful are exploited). Evil has become the major way to acquire wealth: human ritualism, yahoo-yahoo *cum* yahoo-plus, kidnapping, marginalization, exclusivity, hire killings, genocidal actions, injustice, mediocrity, religiosity without morality, human subjugation, economic crisis resulting from human insatiability, greed and selfishness, unjustifiable torture, actions portraying carelessness to the value, worth and sacredness of life, cultural and religious negative orientations leading to extremism and consequently violence and massacre of those whom they are disoriented against and tagged enemy, infidel and unbelievers. All these among other numerous instances are the existential challenges facing humanity, human posterity and the society which the philosophy of *mma-di* can go a long way to curtail. The ability of this philosophy to do all this is facilitated by three prime factors: (1) The first impression at the contact of Edeh’s philosophy of *mma-di* is its humanistic bent where the subject gets hit in his/her consciousness that the next being beside him/her is a ‘good that is’ just as s/he him/herself is a ‘good that is’. (2) From this bent, the consciousness of ontological consequences of hurting the ‘good’ in the other ‘good that is’ as invariably a provocation to the ‘Supreme Good’, the source of the ‘good’ which is the essence, nature and substance of every being. (3) At this, the obligation to behold the goodness of human being by concretizing it through prioritizing human welfarism and peaceful relationship among human beings. Thus, when one sees by feeling the humanity of the other and recognizes that s/he is another ‘good that is’, s/he is bound to respect the goodness in the existing ‘good that is’ and ensure a well living environment for him/her.

Edeh’s philosophy of *mma-di* through its religious *cum* theological, humanistic, anthropological and ontological perspectives could stand as a safe haven for human beings’ wellbeing. Through these qualities, it could stand as an antithesis to most human existential challenges thereby not only challenging but resolving them. The world with the philosophy of *mma-di* has a colossal outcome to acquire from observing the principles of the philosophy. In fact, as it stands in the 21st century world where negative thoughts and actions easily thrill the people and prevail, the need for the philosophy of *mma-di* becomes a priority and a panacea for positive changes. It is fit for philosophical



introduction into African discourse on being and existence following its huge influences from religion, African experience and environment.

(6) Evaluation and Conclusion of Edeh's Philosophy of *Mma-di*

Edeh's philosophy of *mma-di* (good that is) is a universally humanist call. By this, it brings down from abstractism, the consciousness for humanism, to the concrete reality of human existence. The sense of humanism thus revolves around human beings and within the human society. The human being, the human existential experience and the human society become major concerns and cradles for clear understanding of what humanism means. By this, abstractism embedded in idealism is no more all there is to engage philosophy, rather, philosophy becomes a discourse that combines the principles of both idealism (thoughts) and empiricism (actions). In fact, the real meaning and implication of the ideal or abstract which connote the invisible from which the principle of human beings' existence is drawn and grown towards, become clearer in human beings, their existential experiences and community. To understand the ideal takes its principle and cradle from the concrete existence of human beings — the picture of what it truly means and implies to exist. This is a revolutionary approach of philosophizing that could be summarized thus: 'from the known to the unknown, hence from human beings to other beings'.

The philosophy of *mma-di* has equally received its own portion of criticisms. First, the philosophy denies the naturalness of evil; that is, the denial that the cause of human beings is not the cause of evil hence all that could be said about 'being' is 'good'. Evil is therefore human privatization through deviation from the principle of *Ome-na-ala* (Edeh, 1999). Therefore, the logic there remains that the human being is 'good that is' and never 'bad/evil that is'. Importantly, it must be noted that this conception is deductible from the *iketa oke* (participating in the) goodness of his/her Maker from creationism. Religiously speaking, any opposing position to such stance is tantamount to heresy and every religious priest of Catholic faith would unhesitatingly exempt self from such. But the question is: 'what being is, at the final analysis, responsible for evil?' If it is God, then it is natural hence a dent to the 'good' essence of God; but if it is not God then evil is above God hence, God can neither explain nor stop it. But no matter how Edeh tried to exonerate God from evil causation, it remains impossible. Hear him: "We have enough reason to believe that God could be regarded as the remote cause of evils since he is the creator of both good and evil spirits, and the element gods are the extensions of his power" (1999, p. 109). The second leg of this discussion is that from the hermeneutical perspective, the human being in Igbo is interpreted by Edeh as 'good that is' hence his name *mmadu*, (*mma-di*). Thus, from etymological and hermeneutical interpretation the human being is still 'good that is'.

Further analysis reveals that the second meaning and implication of 'good that is' becomes identical with reality, hence everything that is is good that is. Two errors surface here: (1) every reality becomes 'good that is' only through the virtue of being created by the Supreme Good. But evil is real, yet it is not part of reality identified as 'good that is'. (2) how logically justifying is it that the etymological and hermeneutical interpretation of the human being in Igbo becomes the identifying term for being?



Realities like stone, dog, tree, water, etc., have their etymological meanings different from that of the human being that has come to be identical with being. (3) It is not fitting but rather reductionistic that being is identified with language, from an etymological meaning of a being– human being (*mmadu* – *mma-di* – ‘good that is’). That is a linguistic descriptive attempt of one being as named in one language– Igbo. The etymology of the human being in other languages could equally be applied to bastardize what appears to be the novelty in this philosophy. The etymological meaning of the human being is substantially insufficient enough to stand what the entirety of being could mean (Ugwu, 2022).

At the final analysis of the *mma-di* philosophy, it is observed that Edeh has just presented to the academic world extracts of influences from Western philosophers like Plato and the neo-Platonic principles, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas and neo-Thomist principles, Heidegger and most importantly biblical creationism (Ugwu, 2023). The *mma-di* philosophy, though articulated by an Igbo philosopher, hermeneutically created from Igbo language, remains a product of foreign influences. In other words, it is hermeneutically Igbo but ideologically foreign. In fact, most prominent source of these influences is religion, and religion here is Christianity as believed by the Catholic Faith, Christian Theology under the auspices of Catholic Doctrines and then general Christian Ethics as upheld in Catholic Creed. That was why creationism played largely in Edehism generally and then the Christian belief that the nature, substance and essence of the Creator are all that goodness could ever mean and imply.

In summary, the paper has been able to interrogate Edeh’s philosophy of *mma-di* whose its main-thrust is on what it means to be human. By this, it has upheld the positive contributions of the philosophy to humanity and value, worth and sacredness of humanity among the community of beings. It has equally highlighted factors of influences behind the initiative and articulation of the philosophy. In the same vein, it has analyzed how humanistic is the philosophy and has also pointed and enumerated the ways of its humanistic nature. It has equally made an expository attempt of the philosophy and how relevant it is to the human society even in the modern post-colonial and COVID era characterized by challenges threatening the posterity of humanity. Under the same ambient, it has rendered a section of evaluation in the form of critiques on the philosophy.

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