

Truth, Certitude, and Conviction in the Nso' World View: An African Epistemological Challenge

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ABSTRACT

The worldview of a people principally determines their daily approaches, perception, and reaction to reality and circumstances or situations. Confronted by complex African epistemological apprehensions, the peculiarity and uniqueness of the Nso' concepts of truth, certitude, and conviction strongly request and oblige a comprehensive research for enlightenment and exploration. Therefore, the current research revolves around African epistemological challenges, exploring the interconnectedness of Nso' concepts of truth and word, in relation to certitude and conviction. The fundamentals of African epistemological challenges as represented by the Nso' in this context, highlight inabilities of individuals to discern or access truth in its entirety. Consequently, an understanding of truth apropos "the spoken word," certitude, and conviction is paramount and inevitable. Epistemological ramifications of truth conception and requirements of belief and justification, challenges in African thought, prospects, and dimensions: ontological, ethical, medical, religious, politico-social, and economic are essential. Thus, truth in relation to certitude and conviction is indiscriminately binding to everyone; in the face of doubts, the individual must make recourse to communal prescriptions, institutions, and established societal norms, believed to emanate from the ultimate reality (supernatural being).

Keyterms: African Epistemology, Truth, Spoken Word, Certitude, Conviction, Worldview, Prospects, Beliefs/Justification!

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Interestingly and striking enough, facets of truth, certitude, and conviction occupy central stage of challenges in African epistemology. As a theory of knowledge, African epistemology incorporates conceptions of the nature of knowledge and diverse means of acquisition, criteria for assessing knowledge validity, purpose of its pursuit, and knowledge's role to human existential features. Africans entertain specific ways of understanding and explaining the world and complexity of human conditions incorporated to thoughts of indigenous knowledge. These do not only determine epistemological standings, but also constitute core belief patterns and religious convictions, approach to political, social, economic, and ethical arguments. Consequently, African epistemology naturally exhibits resemblances to and differences from other developed epistemologies of other worldviews. Despite unique characteristics Africans as elsewhere initiate philosophizing processes from epistemological quests; pursuing solid foundations of human knowledge. This reason justifies the theme of this paper: Truth, Certitude, and conviction in the Nso' (a tribe in Cameroon) World View: An African Epistemological Challenge.

Evidently, the Nso' concepts of truth, certitude, and conviction while appealing in character, oblige comprehensive research that enlightens and enhances epistemological patterns. Therefore, revolving around African epistemological challenges, exploring the interconnectedness of Nso' concepts of truth and word, in relation to certitude and conviction is quite relevant. Fundamentals of African epistemological challenges, represented by the Nso' in this context, highlight individuals' inability of strictly discerning the whole truth. Consequently, an understanding of truth apropos "the spoken word," certitude, and conviction connect to epistemological ramifications of the concept of truth and requirements of belief and justification. Further, this explores challenges of African thought, prospects, and dimensions (ontological, ethical, medical, religious, politico-social, and economic). Thus, truth in relation to certitude and conviction is binding to everyone; in

doubt, individuals must make recourse to communal prescriptions, institutions, and established societal norms, believed to emanate from the ultimate reality (supernatural being).

Subsequently, addressing dimensions of African epistemology by imploring the Nso' culture as prototype, prospects, beliefs, and justification, compel a division of the work into three major sections. This necessitates detail examination of the understanding of truth in relation to the "spoken word," epistemological ramifications of Nso' concept of truth, requirements of belief and justification, prospects of truth, and word in African philosophy. Equally, aspects of logical, ontological, moral truths and connections to being are essential in this study. The research rounds up with a conclusion and bibliography.

Understanding Truth in Relation to the "Word"

A grasp of truth concepts in Nso', in relation to the "spoken word," as is overwhelming in most African renditions, primarily highlight moral, rather than cognitive language conception. For instance, *Suiru* translates "truthfulness" rather than comprehension of truth in the cognitive sense. Further, elaborating truth's cognitive force, elementarily present *suiru* as an opposite to *kimboti* (falsity, falsehood); strongly bearing in mind implications of lies telling or reversal of facts. Another expression of truth (*shuu mo'on*), splitting into *shuu* (literally mouth), and *mo'on* (unity), ensue. Hence, *shuu mo'on* literarily connotes one mouth or voice; that is, general agreement in utterances and convictions without discrepancies. Similarly, Kwasi Wiredu asserts of truth concepts in Akan:

It is intelligible, though extremely implausible, to suggest that truth in the cognitive sense [constitutes] communal agreement, but it is not intelligible at all to make the same suggestion about truthfulness. Truthfulness, thus, deals with relationships between what persons think and say. To be truthful is to let your speech reflect your thoughts (WIREDU Kwasi, 1998: 176).

Likewise, the Nso' is resolute that others' thought or sayings (*kwa'ti wuna jii se wiri*), has no particular role to play. Thus, particular conceptions and thinking imply self-communication, void of behavioural attitudes. The rudiments of self-communication here constitute the same expressible; the core of truthfulness. This corresponds to the oneness of voice intimated in *shuumo'on* above; linking the "word" that incorporates two salient points: truth and word.

Truth and Word: Impact on the Speaker

Truth corresponds to agreement in Nso' worldview; implying that holding a view of something someone alleges as true, is agreement with him/her. Necessarily, this may not involve the entire community; even when truth (cognitive) consists of agreement among members of a community. In the traditional sense, it involves sharp awareness of disparity apropos cognitive potentials of sages (*angaa sem vifon*); reiterating the fact, that *Suiru* (truthfulness) is limited to truth as a truth. In correlation, Wiredu asserts:

The connection between truthfulness and truth makes the ambiguity of the English word 'truth' so confusing when it comes to translating into Akan. To say that an *asem* [statement] is *nokware* implies that it is true [cognitively]]. Moreover, so long as one is preoccupied with the affirmative, one might be tempted to think that this is all it means. As soon, however, as one considers the negative, that is, the case in which we say that something someone has said is not truth, it becomes clear that there is also an element of moral comment in the use of truth (WIREDU Kwasi, 1998: 177).

Significantly, the Nso' have many words connoting the truth or truthfulness; clarifying that truth and truthfulness have analogous excess meanings expressed in statements of unifying imports. For instance, *kisungnin kin kidze kejungi* (it is a good discourse). Remarkably, the rendition of truth varies; connoting truth is "What is, is the case" (*a mo kidzen beey*). The exactness of such utterances and their certainty (*rengreng*) is unalloyed truth or certitude. Similarly, Wiredu avers:

To say that something is true, the Akan simply say that it is so; truth rendered as what is so. Undue sophistication is [not] required to understand that although the Akan do not have a single word for truth, they do have the concept of truth. The concept they express by the phrase *nea ete saa*, 'a proposition which is so.' The word *nea* means 'that which,' *ete* which is a form of 'to,' which is the verb 'to be,' in Akan means 'is,' and *saa* means 'so.' (WIREDU Kwasi, 1998: 177-178)

Equally, the Nso' and several African cultures in Africa, cognitively and morally comprehend truth; an all-purpose word, meaning in the present, context, statements or even propositional wise. This applies also to adjectives; for instance, the Nso' emphatically state, *Dze beady* or *dze rengreng* to imply "that is it, or it is exactly the case."

In another dimension, bonding "truth" and "word" initiates elements of sturdy impact on the speaker as Christopher Seka declares:

When someone is addressing an audience, he hears and understands what he himself is saying. If the truth lacks [proper] communication to the audience, he immediately knows. By listening to himself speaking, he is in a position of [self] correction, if he errs in the communication of the truth or message. In this case, the words must have an impact on him; he must think of certain words and phrases that are effective (SEKA Christopher, 1985: 22).

By implication, speaking and listening to oneself (*fo yuri kitu ke*) leads to personal conviction evoking trust and belief (*bime*) from others; strong force of surrendering one's will to interlocutors. Therefore, truth and knowledge in the mind of the speaker are selfdom incoherent. Nonetheless, poor expression of facts resulting from language deficiency, invites caution to weigh words or speeches addressing any assembly (*kwa'ti kijung ba sungnin*).

Furthermore, the Nso' worldview lacks a corresponding "fact" attribute of truth; closest rendition being "it is exactly" (*dze rengreng/a mo kidze'en*). Thus, "fact" in Nso' thought expresses that which is so; simple motion barely corresponding to the English, rendering linguistic contrasts with overwhelming epistemological and moral consequences. Notwithstanding, speech and thought are inseparable; linking Aquinas' extension of Aristotelian truth definition as: "that in the mind corresponding to reality." Similarly, daily interactions in African thought, demonstrates inseparability of actions from thought; Nso' for instance exhibiting practical activities of knowledge apropos truth and entailing certitude, conviction, and directedness or purposefulness. Subsequently, individuals ought to utter words generating life (*jii dze'em*), rich in wisdom, and well-thought-out speech (*a jii si*); reconciliatory statements (*jii se kima'an*); blessing/curses pronouncements (*kinka-a'*); summons or communal announcements promoting societal welfare (*to'oy/kinsa'ah waay*); and the last counsel or will of a dying person (*ntir kpu*) are so fundamental. Epistemological and Ethico-religious connotations accompanying these truth features provoke correlation to hierarchy and institutions.

Truth and Word: Correlation to Hierarchy and Institutions

Truth's link to the "spoken word" in Nso' establishes on the correspondence theory. Hence, the "spoken word" and its value implicate persons, hierarchy, and institutions. The effects vary depending on speaker's status; the Fon's words, titled men's words, words of traditional organizations, distinguished female personalities' words, and of an ordinary person. Therefore, the Nso' regard epistemological and moral responsibility as imputed on persons following societal status. This conditions choices individuals' in relation to utterances and oath-takings. First, the Nso' judge one's societal status as determining choice of words; delineating possibilities of reward or blame. Hence, the Fon and titleholders carefully weigh their utterances and appropriateness; for their words must be diligently eschewed (*jii se kilimbiy si ker mo a ker vifi*) to evoke certitude and conviction. Roland Berngeh complements, intimating that the importance and embodiment of the Fon's power resides in his expressions and words (*Fon dze Wong, a Wong i dze Fon, Fon Nso' dze Nso' e wun ji si*). By implication, being an embodiment of the Nso' people, the Fon must weigh his deeds and speech; conscious of repercussions

on the populace (BERNGEH Roland, 1981: 18). Consequently, the Fon endeavours not to compromise the truth; describing him as “*Shuy Nso*’ (Nso’ sunlight) Seka corroborates:

By virtue of attributes accorded the Fon, there is no doubt that his words command greater respect in Nso’ society. For when he speaks, it is as it were, the tribe speaking to itself. Every word he utters especially when addressing the tribe carries with it a lot of power and authority; impacting the people than if the words were addressed to the same audience by another Nso’ man (SEKA Christopher, 1985: 15).

Therefore, no matter the bitterness with which the Fon addresses the tribe, his words (*jii se Fon*) are directives and regarded as the authentic truth; proportionately apportioning curses on defaulters of cultural norms.

Second, the “spoken word” of traditional institutions streamlines truth, after that of the Fon and titleholders. As the Fon’s auxiliary, traditional institutions ensure that communicators/communications avoid contradicting truth and agreed resolutions, due to personal gains. For instance, *Ngwerong*, the main custodian traditional institution defends the truth as society’s watchdogs; verifying lies or falsehood that could possibly ruin the clan. Even the Fon is constantly on check by this organization; ensuring that he continuously rule in honesty and defends the truth. Additionally, conformity to and respect of oaths (*ka’a*), pronouncements, interjections, declarations (*ntum*, *jii se dze’em*, *nupur*), respectively are emphasized.

Lastly, the “spoken word” also affects ordinary citizens; irrespective if they will authority or not, depending on the audience and purpose of individuals’ address or declaration. During birth, marriage, death celebrations, and several other ceremonies, pronouncements and judgement of truth-value is on basis of intensity and intention of utterances. Thus, evaluating degrees of truth, certitude, and conviction, connects to speeches’ relevance apropos particular occasions. Accordingly, statements’ validity is identifiable in remarks from orators as Seka postulates:

Remarks from the audience often show whether the message is properly transmitted; communicating the truth. Statements like *kin ki dze ji si* [this is well spoken] and *kimohki si kibaa I jweeven kitua* [is this fellow mad], emphasize and give more meaning to what is said or [that which] destroys a man’s word completely as the case may be (SEKA Christopher, 1985: 19).

Nevertheless, the vigour and circumstance of communicated words and individuals’ social standing is considered. In other words, ordinary citizen’s pronouncement if converted to the Fon’s declaration (verbatim) incorporates far-reaching consequences or impact on the people.

Consequences and Effects of “Spoken Word” and Truth

Universal contemporary realities exhibit constant battles asserting consequences and effects of spoken words and truth; influencing the speaker, listener, and entire society. Two divergent spheres, promise and oath undertakings, and blessings and curse are worth exploring.

Promise and Oath Undertakings

Just as expounded upon apropos truth, conviction, and belief in this paper (infra 2.2.), promises and oath undertakings (swearing) essentially forms part and kernel of initiation, marriage, enthronement, and death rites in African cultures. For instance, as an errand, individuals in Nso’ culture are bound by promises/oaths; the interlocutor spits on a hard surface (*Chu mintiy*), expected to return before the spittle dries off (*Bo’ mintiy mi yuum*). This obligatorily causes one on errand, to avoid distractions and delay on mission. Thus, truth encompasses proper communication, avoiding concealment of facts. According to Seka, listening to oneself (*Fo yuri kitu ke*), the raconteur is in a rightful position of correcting or retracting prior communication errors (SEKA Christopher, 1985: 22). In relation to conviction, possibilities of poor articulation of the truth and knowledge of speakers are common; attributed to terminology or vocabulary deficiency. However, there is often room for amendment (*naari jii ye jayin*) of mis-pronouncements. Schell Werner similarly avers that:

The word [or words/message] manifests only the content of the thought it expresses; but also the intentions and motives of the authors, the circumstances, and conditions of the reality itself (WERNER Schell, 1965: 104).

Implicitly, a town crier (gweiy) in the Nso' culture and the Fon's messengers are expected to transmit messages with exactitude; avoiding contradictions or contravening the Fon's word. Implicitly, for embodying the clan, the Fon becomes possessor of truth in its entirety (Suiru dze e Fon, wuna kavaa).

Furthermore, effects of a promise (nka'me) are revealing in future circumstances/events; speeches as promises regarded as always positive. Concretely in the long past, any good or benefit to society, especially during inter-tribal wars, depended on pledges prior to departure for battles. These promises range from rewards such as red feather (fir ye baar), traditional titles, land, wives, upon victory. Notwithstanding, the extent of truth and promises exceeds current circumstances; limited now mostly at family levels. Finally, what counts is truth established in utterances; without which promises are void of meaning.

Blessing and Curse

During varied Nso' cultural celebrations, truth's degrees measured in uttered words from promises/oaths attract either blessings or curses. Parents' blessings prior to issuing last wills (ntir kpu), and belief of direct curse from the land (nsaiy Koo wir) incurred by unfaithful individuals are believed as flowing from unfulfilled promises or oaths. Therefore, words of promise yield fruits of blessings or curses, depending on fidelity to pronouncements. First, blessings accompany words (jii kisevi) in kept promise; causing blessings or curses to depend on fidelity or infidelity to promises, oaths, and steadfastness to utterances. Equally, blessings are constructive use of words (jii se kisevi) or rewards from fidelity to pledges (Fo Keri kisevi). The bestowal of blessings is more efficacious if conferrers evoke God's assistance (kisevi ke Nyuymbom). That is, the matter and form (spoken word and agent action) are simultaneously applied; but attention firm on the "spoken word". Thus, blessings as much as curses, has required effects only if concerned parties are faithful to expressed truth by means of the spoken word (jii se suiru).

Second, the "spoken word" in unfulfilled promises/oaths, mostly if what is in the mind does not correspond to reality, attracts untold curses (ro-oh). Equally, infidelity and disobedience to the land's laws or failure to honour pledges incurs curses and wrath (Nsaiy koo wir) from the gods. Custodians of precepts and traditional priests or particular individuals can heap curses on untrustworthy persons, not matching words with deeds (fo tin ka' wir). A curse (Lon/ka' wo tinin) exhibit elements of thought and word (kwa'ti/ jii). As J. Hastings reiterates: "it is a wish expressed in words that evil may befall a certain person." (HASTINGS J., 1971: 367) In correlation, Seka highlights the efficacy of curses:

The Nso' in wishing that evil [curses] befell persons, depends very much on the truth or reason for rendering such curses. Both thought and words [right intention/conviction] account for the powerfulness; usually the best known to concerned persons (SEKA Christopher, 1985: 26).

Practically, the Fon's curse or that of his councillors is considered to be by far the worse type of curse in Nso' thought. Justification of this is consequent of common belief that he enjoys divine choice, representing the ultimate being in the cosmos.

Third, fathers rarely curse their children in Nso'; reasons why parents weigh their words in addressing children, conscious of future repercussions (the force of the spoken word). Any unfortunate utterances of curses attract future disgrace to the entire family; warranting restoration cleansing rites. Conversely, curses on groundless basis, inversely affects the one making utterances or pronouncements. An example of a myth highlighting this fact runs thus:

There was a man who had ten children and he cursed one of his brethren, who had done him no injury. However, the curse did not harm the man, and he did not die. Instead,

the curse affected the man who pronounced and uttered the words and all his ten children died (ANONYMOUS).

By implication, curses in Nso' worldview have repercussions if expressed in words, insofar as they bear just reasons. The crime, for which intended curses are rendered, must be deserved; implying pronouncement of curses without justification is reversed on the pronouncer.

Furthermore, negative use of words is very dangerous; uttered words viewed by the Nso' to be what they are, and words are largely regarded as non-static. I. C. Onyewuenyi similarly states that: "In African languages, words cannot become stereotype, a priori in their meaning but are constantly being reinterpreted and charged with meaning" (ONYEWUENYI, I. C., 1982: 157). Evidently, words used in curses, imply contextual examination according to circumstances; speaker's intention deserving due deliberation in every dimension and respect. Once more Seka details implications of unfulfilled oaths:

The Fon of Nso' renders curses on himself, by failing to act in accordance with the oath taken upon enthronement. Failure to remain true to oaths attracts consequences of such a recalcitrant course of action. The oath taken is a promise made to God and the entire tribe, upon assuming duty as embodiment of traditions (SEKA Christopher, 1985: 27).

Truthfulness and trustworthiness to oaths, essentially act as conditional self-imprecation; implying persons incur a curse or evil in the event of not being truthful. Words in Nso' are therefore pregnant with truth-values, depending on correspondence to reality. As an expression of thought and external sounds communicating ideas, internal thought and words constitute concepts in themselves; stimulating conditions for agreement in verbal reactions to "spoken words" and their convictions and truth or certitude. Generally, truth in African worldviews challenges speakers; but particularly in Nso' enhancing consciousness of the role of spoken words in language. Cyprian Ramesh accentuates this reality:

If the thought -structure from language is [eradicated], what is left of it? Nothing of course, as language and thought are not only co-extensive but also identical in structure and it is the thought structure, which is the key to the structure of language (RAMESH Cyprian, 1973: 300).

This frenzy suggests that meaning or truth is the internal presence and future of language; seen to be a priori and innate. Subsequently, the autonomy of meaning is essential to language; largely explaining why linguistic meaning is indefinable or analyzable based on extra-linguistic intentions and beliefs. Precisely, it is the above understanding of truth in relation to the spoken word in Nso' worldview that facilitates exploration of truth and the requirements of belief and justification.

Epistemological Ramifications of the Nso' Concept of Truth and Requirements of Belief and Justification

Essentially, epistemological ramifications ensue from discourses about the Nso' concept of truth in relation to the word; engulfing requirements of belief and justification. This involves careful exploration of the following: truth and dimensions of knowledge, truth, conviction, and belief, and features of truth and certitude: justification.

Truth and Dimensions of Knowledge

Truth and dimensions of knowledge consists of three categories: ultimate truth, communal truth, and individual truth. In Nso' worldview, ultimate reality embodies truth known only by God (*Suiru Nyuy*); engrossing unknown realities concealed from other beings, God alone who is omniscient. Often, tribal names display this truth feature: *Nyuymengka* (nothing is concealed from God), *Nyuyki Suiru* (God knows the truth), and *Monyuy kiyin* (the exact truth as known by God), and several others. These demonstrate the fact that even individuals' attempt to conceal truths in speech or failure to fulfil promises/oaths, God's voice of conscience pricks. In

another aspect, communal truth (*Suiru wiri*) and individual truth (*Suiru wom/Suiru wir*) complement truth in relation to knowledge. Therefore, individuals/group of persons is conscious whenever they conceal the truth. That is, conditioners for steadfastness to pronouncements have a binding force or imperative (*kilih*). Inevitably, this becomes verbal and positive human laws; basis for weighing one's choice of words and undertakings.

Equally, differentiating knowledge and belief (*biime*) in Nso' worldview, is a second order knowledge which individuals may or may not accept as truth; depending on degrees of syllogisms' reasonableness. For instance, *biime* (belief) after verification or testing by society's sages could become binding to the entire community. Generally, this includes probability if there is controversial information claim. D. M. Armstrong similarly contends that often, statements of "belief" mean that the speaker predicts something that eventually proves useful or successful in some sense (ARMSTRONG D. M., 1993: 178). Believing contextually (*fo biime*) in Nso' implies "to believe something" (*fo biime kinyo*); entailing cognitive contents held as true. Thus, relating knowledge to truth in Nso' worldview entails belief; so, the statement: "I know the sky is blue, but I do not believe it" (*m'ki jii mbaa se'eni, yii bey a m'yo biime*), is self-contradictory. Conclusively, knowledge about particular beliefs in Nso' worldview does not necessitate endorsement of truth. Therefore, it is possible for someone to believe in a particular reality without virtually knowing anything about its truth-value.

Consequently, applying aforementioned views to divination, myths, magic, witchcraft, folktales, and ancestral dependence in epistemological explorations, demonstrate contradictions apropos the term "I believe." As an example, Nso' folktales are narratives of community's experiences of time and change, leading to aspirations. In Nso', prototype of African thought, general "believe" is always thought-supportive; analogous to astrology in Western science and technology. Hence, "knowing" and "believing" as sources of communal knowledge, and their effectiveness are independent; believing regarded as subjective, while truth is objective, independent of individuals.

Truth, Conviction, and Belief

The practice of divination (*ngam woo shwengin*) particularly in Nso' and as a common African trend, is founded upon belief in supernatural influences. Diviners possess perceiving powers from God's inspiration; endowed with necessary solutions to problems. Thus, inspired diviners perceive, know, and implore objects during divination processes to obtain vital information; acquiring positive results in several occasions and in possession of truths from supernatural agents. This is precisely the point at which reconciling truth, conviction, and belief is so challenging; with emergence of the epistemological challenge, distinguishing "truth known and the knower." D. M. Armstrong's relevant interjection attempts clarifying puzzles pertaining to truth, conviction, and belief in African thought. For him, whether someone's belief is true or not, does not constitute prerequisite for believing. (ARMSTRONG D. M., 1993: 179)

Further commenting on and linking Armstrong's view to aforementioned Nso' divination views, implies actual knowledge; not simultaneously doubtful. For example, a person could believe a particular bridge's safety for crossing, and unfortunately, it collapses under their weight. Conversely, their initial belief in the bridge's safety was somehow mistaken. It would not be accurate concluding they knew the bridge's safety, but that this belief was a priori mistaken. Accurate prior knowledge of ascertaining the bridge's safety was lacking; because from every indication it was not. Contrarily, if the bridge actually supported their weight, there is justification in subsequently holding that they knew the bridge was safe enough for their passage; at least at that particular time. This distinction is applicable to process divination processes in African epistemology, exemplified by the Nso'. In connection, consulting a diviner prior to a client's journey, could witness alteration of certain features; leading to production of different undesired results. Upon return, the client would not justifiably seize the diviner by throat for inaccurate predictions, or being faulty in forecast and assertions. This creates chances for truth as commanding belief; rightly highlighting the problem truth, certitude and conviction.

Retaining parallel sentiments, Alfred Julius Ayer from Western cultural perspectives, affirms aforementioned epistemological views in consonant with the Aristotelian definition of truth as "To say of something which is, that it is not, or to say of something which is not that it is, is false." However, stating something is, which is the case, or which is not that it is not, is true (AYER J. Alfred, 1936: 31). Obligatorily, accommodating this position apropos epistemological features of divination, mythology, witchcraft, and intuition is pertinent. Thus, validity

of truth in African epistemology reassures certitude; incidentally exploring variability of one's grasp of truth. In addition, elements of relativity (variability according to knowers) are characteristic of knowledge. In connection, R. F. O'Neill considers age, education, environment, and intellectual acumen are involved in individual's greater/lesser grasp of truths. He avers, that one may know aspirin relieves headache; later, becoming a physician, he may know the same truth, but now knows more what "aspirin" is, its impact, and so forth (O'NEILL R. F., 1959: 20). The individual's education in context, has greater understanding of the situation; individuals' view of knowable things in varied ways not exhaustive.

Consequently, dimensions of truth and conviction in African thought, variability of grasped truths, hold same for various concepts of reason in the process of knowing. This invariably connects to Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus*, citing Socrates' theory of knowledge as "true belief" given account of (PLATO, *Theaetetus*: 368d-376); implying things known are explainable or defined. Hence, knowledge of a given proposition's truth includes believe in relevant true propositions; entertaining good reasons for doing so. In like manner, claims about myths in African epistemology, justifying beliefs or truths are hardly feasible. Yet, myths act as evocative devices for rousing people to purposive action; lacking apt justification for believing in them. However, this does not eradicate their strong effects and significance in epistemology; vindicating knowledge's definition as "justified true belief," but not entirely acceptable. Therefore, social aspects and progress in truth possession guarantees testimony and witnessing.

Aforementioned positions acknowledge that not all-cognitive truth consists in agreement among community members; a fair enough charge, though traditional thoughts sanction a razor-sharp consciousness of disparity in cognitive potentialities of wise men in society (*a nga'sem vifoni*) and common folk (*wir misong*). Thus, as strictly communally oriented, the Nso' reach consensus-reconciling cases of doubt in relation to truth, belief, and conviction. Wiredu similarly highlights realities of communal agreement essential for truth:

Truth [deals] with agreement; evident in the fact that saying of something someone has said as true implies agreeing with him. This is agreement between two points of view; not necessarily [involving] the whole community. Nevertheless, whether community wise or not, agreement is not the essence of truth in the primary sense; agreement in cognition is about something being the case. It is this notion of something being so that connects agreement with truth (WIREDU Kwasi, 1998: 177).

As previously mentioned, discussions about truth concepts in African thought, automatically connects dimensions of personal conviction (*kwa'ti yem/mo vifi vem vi suiyi*) and communal conviction (*ke wiri tiirin/kwa'ti kintati*). By holding to truth, conviction, and belief in Nso' worldview, individuals ought not to compromise their stance; being resolute in utterances (*kuvsin e yo' dze mo jii/m'tiy shoo*). Hence, efficacy of "spoken words" as community's soul is the vital force (*jii se dze-em*).

Interestingly, relating concepts of "truth" and "fact" is highly a Western philosophical issue than African epistemology; exemplified by the Nso' case. For instance, it is impracticable clarifying foundational English concepts, without relating them to each other; as opposed to those directly expressed in African languages as exhibited by Nso'. Implicitly, not all philosophical problems, particularly epistemological ones are universal; despite discrepancies, focal African theories of truth linking pragmatic and coherence theories exceed trivialities; affluent in their own rich epistemological package.

Truth and Certitude: Justification

Contextually, in queue with this research, Africans views expressed by the Nso', approach justification questions in relation to truth and certitude, imploring interconnected concepts of belief, truth, and justification. In this connection, distinguishing "knowing that from knowing how" is pivotal; a key question arising: "Is knowledge a subset of that which is both "true" and "believed"? In this light, the kind of knowledge frequently discussed is propositional knowledge; "knowledge-that" in contradistinction to "knowledge-how." "Knowing that" is significantly applicable to African epistemological views; examining foundations of knowledge, being and knowing, and the process of knowing for clarity. For instance, in individual and communal knowledge, an individual (a child) from experience knows that placing the hand on fire burns (*kimomri fo ton e*). Again,

through myths, symbols, folktales, and proverbs, community instructions underscore origination of inventions in divine sources. However, features of “knowing how” are difficult, seemingly unconvincing and confusing in the manner of presentation. Therefore, it is difficult proving with certainty that the main source of human knowledge is superhuman, especially ensuing from diviners.

Recently, both African and other epistemologies think variety of knowledge arguments are not in personal or generalized terms; entailing, epistemology should evaluate people’s properties, that is, intellectual virtues instead of properties of propositions. This is because higher forms of cognitive success (understanding) involve features not evaluated from “justified true belief.” Epistemologically, claims in African thought are not to over-expect justification of every belief and their truth-value. Practically, in differentiating knowledge and belief apropos truth, the Nso’ example of belief (*biime*), second order knowledge of individuals, may or may not be accommodating, depending on degrees of syllogisms’ reasonableness implored. For instance, belief (*biime*) easily becomes knowledge (*kiy*), and truth (*suiru*) after verification or testing. Subsequently, the knowing process precedes belief; viewing belief statements as forming theoretical components (elements); avoiding isolated testing.

Accordingly, “belief” in African thought hold speakers as predicting something that later proves successful in some sense; by implication, intimating that “to believe something” involves cognitive contents held as true. Thus, knowledge entails belief; on the other hand, knowledge of particular beliefs does not endorse all truths. For example, “I know about astrology, but I do not believe in it” is perfectly acceptable; insinuating belief in astrology without full knowledge of it. The pertinence of this to divination, myths, magic, witchcraft, folktales, and ancestral dependence in African epistemology (particularly with the Nso’), conflicts application of the term “I believe.” For example, folktales representing community experience narrations of time and change, lead to aspirations; but myths on their part narrate the divine origin of agriculture or smelting of iron and blacksmithing, linking individuals to ultimate reality.

Prospects of Truth, Certitude, and Conviction in African Philosophy

After examining truth in relation to the “spoken word” and epistemological ramifications in Nso’, linking to requirements of belief and justification, projecting some prospects for further consideration is mandatory. In the Nso’ worldview, likewise other Bantu and semi-Bantu cultures, the ontological, ethical, religio-medical, politico-social, and economic dimensions constitute the core of prospects.

Ontological Dimension

Africans as illustrated by the Nso’ worldview highlights the significance of truth, alongside other transcendental properties (good, beauty, and unity/one). The manner of perceiving reality influences aspects of truth, certitude, and conviction. Thus, although with overriding relativism and absoluteness, ontologically, every entity (truth included), has interdependence. Therefore, it is essential to examine ontological truth alongside epistemological truth. Their difference is obvious, but telos is the same; with ontological truth examining what exists (*mo kidzen*), and epistemological truth tracing how individuals know (*mo a ghanin bo kiiy*) apropos existence. Herewith, the ideological frenzy establishes the essence of speech as “to be truthful.” That is, since man is who he is because of others (*wirdze wir bih wir*), his very nature as a “social creature,” demands truthfulness in dealings at every case in point. Aquinas similarly avows that:

Since man by nature is a social being, there is natural indebtedness of one person to another; without which life together in society is not sustainable. People could not live with one another were there no natural trust that they were being truthful to one another (AQUINAS Thomas, IIa IIae, 109).

The above prescription equals the Nso’ worldview, emphasizing proper expression of truth can only in “spoken words,” corresponding to being. Yet, other signs exist for truth articulation; but spoken words, speech or languages are prior in guaranteeing certitude and conviction.

Consequently, developing ontological dimensions of truth alongside above-mentioned views demands the non-abuse of language functions for egocentric reasons. Accordingly, truth expression in Nso' thought is mainly in speech and character; persons of this calibre well thought-out as truthful (*Ngaa Suiuru*). Ontologically, truth conveying certitude and conviction must be undiluted. Finally, common belief esteems that concealing truths by speakers is short-lived; easily tracked and contradictions are punishable.

Additionally, the Nso' habitually rely on the correspondence theory; regarding belief (*biime*), thought or fact (*kwa'ti*) as components of truth (*Suiuru*), corresponding appropriate realities. Hence, entity's deficiency qualifies belief as false (*kimboti*), or incorrectness of facts (*kinteng ke kinyu*). This Nso' worldview of ontological truth incorporates uncompromising ingredients of commitment (*fo fo' kitu /dze'em e kinyu*). Therefore, commitment contextually encompasses truth certification; stating that something is or was true, also leads to asserting acceptance/accommodation, and robustly one's obligation. Similarly, Brown M. Lee highlights the relation of truth and language:

Tense then makes a difference; 'Was warranted' does not imply 'is warranted,' but 'was true' implies 'is true [provided, of course, that we are dealing with complete statements]. This excess of meaning that truth has over warrant consists in nothing more mysterious than commitment (LEE M. Brown, 2004: 43-44).

Therefore, the praxis of ontological truth in Nso' and above, entail truth's unchanging character, but progressive with its grasp (*Suiuru yo' kuvsin ni*); grasping it may not be immediate, yet progressive in nature. Ontological truth in Nso' expressing African thought, eclipses human consciousness and non-contradictory daily living.

Ethical Dimension

The ontological dimension of truth apropos certitude and conviction draws an assessment of the ethical dimension; for the fact that truth is ontological, logical, or moral, with its quest implicit in knowledge, language, and communication. In the ethical context, truth connects imperfection of words (*jii se kinteng/jii se jayin/kinteng ke jii*). Frequently, words variously have witness deceptive imploration. However, the Nso' clearly highlight truth in speech and moral truth; understood as agreement between knowledge and the speakers' speech. Thus, non-correspondence of an individual's speech to knowledge is qualified as moral falsehood (*ngaa' kimboti*). Consequently, the Nso' hold truth as the essence of language; particularly central to all aspects of life, despite awareness of mendacious utterances (wherein the essence of language is abused).

Furthermore, in upholding truth as language's essence and related to moral truth, the Nso' underscore awareness of the symbolic use of language. This does not exclude fallibility and liability to error (*Fo jai/kwa'ti, Kun yii kinteng*); extending to plethora circumstances of skilful manipulation of speech's power selfishly or hypocritical (*binbin teh tsem*). Moral truth contextually conveys respect and reward (*wveem wuna vilaami*); yet, those with duplicity of character (*kinteng ke dze-em*) are dreaded and hardly trusted. In another dimension, spoken words and activities connect to the ethical dimension; truth of speech incorporates moral truth, decrying abuses (*Suiuru wuna lii*). By implication, communicated truth spurs persons to action; persons are vested with right to know, to live, and to truth. Hence, speaking the truth is obligatory; yet concealing secrets is also pertinent. Christian Mofor isolates such cases:

Because man has reason, he therefore seeks [or should seek] to know. His quest for knowledge is an attempt to reach the truth; and hence to possess a true understanding of himself and of his life. He seeks to know the truth and ought to lead others to it (MOFOR Christian, 1982: 1).

In this way, Mofor thinks the Nso' express views of constantly searching for truth (moral truth), that which leads to concrete actions. Here, presumption is that immediately known truth automatically leads to action. Thus, accentuation to moral truth must find expression in individual's daily lives; living- up to expected standards regarding the truth known.

Although moral truth expounded above is recommendable, African thought sporadically entertains inherent confusion between truth as fact and as opinion, needing great attention. In several instances, the Nso' suggest there is nothing called truth as distinct from an opinion (*kwa'ti yem/mo m'yeñi*). This indirectly introduces features of relativism; eventually determining personal action, a guiding principal overriding personal opinion. Kwasi Wiredu stresses this:

It is an incontestable fact of common experience that we sometimes know some propositions to be true and sometimes make mistakes as to the truth. From this fact, common sense is apt to infer that, since our opinions may fall short of the truth, we must draw an absolute distinction between truth and opinion. In philosophical developments, this conception becomes an objectivist theory of truth. Truth then is independent of and categorically different from opinion (WIREDU Kwasi, 1980: 111).

By implication, individuals occasionally slip into confusing personal opinions with objective truth; the determinant of human conducts seen as objective moral truth. Therefore, since African thought generally acknowledges truth's unchanging character (*Suiru yo kuvsiñi*) and eternal (*Suiru dze ghan si dzem*); the most certain guiding principle. This vindicates the assertion that "Africans are notoriously religious;" foundational to religio-medical truths.

Religio-Medical Dimension

The plethora of ideas connected to truth, certitude, and conviction, in the religious and medical dimension find establishment on African Traditional Religion; overridingly enclosed in mysteries, belief, oath taking (*kilih*), reconciliation rites (*kidiv*), and last will (*ntir kpu*). This inadvertently links to divine and human laws; challenging God for permitting liars delude. Chukwudi paints a similar picture:

God has indeed given reason to everyone, to know truth from falsehood, freedom to choose between the two. Hence, [desiring] truth is sought with human reason, which God has given us so that with it we may seek what is needed among nature's necessities. We cannot reach-out to truth through man's doctrine, for all men are liars. If on the contrary falsehood is preferred, the creator's order and imposed natural law do not perish thereby, but we ourselves perish by our own error (CHUKWUDI Emmanuel, 1998: 459-460).

Chukwudi's idea connects to ethico-epistemological truth, previously mentioned of the Nso', weighing on character. Therefore, deceitful living classified as an irregularity in human beings (*kinteng ke dze-em*), is denounced. Concomitantly, African views expressed in Nso' suggest that liars are exposed in the short-run by God as creator sustainer of the world; humans by his order are incapable of destroying through falsehood.

Furthermore, truth is inevitable in reconciliation processes; its compromise believed to attract wrath in the religio-medical sphere. Consequently, David Taylor enumerates four basic facets of truth in African societies: "factual or forensic truth, personal or narrative truth, social or dialogue truth, and healing or restorative truth" (TAYLOR David, 2007: 215). First, factual or forensic truth involves convincing truth; complicated to explain. Generally, conditions of factualness or rightness, envelopes close relationship with fact as true or right. In Nso' worldview, this includes the state of being true: visualizing as it is (*mayenin*); hearing as it is (*mayuun*); declaring as in thought (*mo kidze-en kwa'ti*); believing as one feels or is convinced (*biime mo' mkoo*). Second, personal or narrative truth applies to the veracity of an individual's story; mostly conveying historical examples or experiences for clarity. This is often contained in myths, arts, music and various cultural forms; chiefly applied in a direct manner for classifying factual claims. Third, social or dialogue truth deals with experienced truth; established via interactions (*shwir wuna wiri*), discussions (*ghanin wuna wiri/sov kitu*), and productive debates (*mbiih yee yi ker vifi*). Subsequent of such exchanges is examination of violations (*ajaiy*), reparations (*kishov ke songin*), and rehabilitation (*kiman*). Lastly, restorative truth is largely concerned with restitution and community service; reinstating and reintegrating victims and offenders alike.

James Gibson in corroborating above features of truth, certitude, and conviction, isolates the role of truth and reconciliation. He thinks truth and reconciliation are rebuilding processes, citing South African case; capable of effectively establishing and consolidating democratic transition. This position, for him, registered success because its ultimate objective demonstrated that the process of truth is itself endogenous; and that truth and reconciliation processes improve upon the livelihood of citizens (GIBSON James, 2006: 409).

Politico- Social Dimensio

Exploring political and social dimensions of truth, certitude, and conviction encloses African communitarianism liberty versus individualism, language engagements, historical facts, and the correspondence theory. Concretely, language gymnastics suggest exceeds mere daily communication; extended as tool for analysing complex African concepts and expressions, and bridging past and present gaps. This inevitably assists in comprehending contemporary attitudes toward truth; beyond mere theoretical considerations or lips-bound utterances to embrace factual truth. In connection, the Nso' stick to the importance of non- compromise of truth for personal gains; exhibited in the proverb "I am not carrying water or corn flour in my jaws" (*mikfing/mindzev mi yo dze mo vije-eh*).

African traditional politics, liberty, property and related rights, justice, law enforcement by authorities, enjoy truth's guidance and protection, certitude, and conviction apropos their subjects. Evidently, epistemological challenges of truth are common in socio- political realms; commencing with analysing speeches, ensuring their correspondence to reality. Africans engage in philosophical activities of politics and social life in public spheres; entreating expressions in taboos, proverbs, idioms, riddles, and metaphors. Analytically, proverbs' investigation utilizes ordinary language approach and speech-act theory. Notwithstanding, taboos implore counterfactual logic; their studies and meaning of expressions involve departure from configurations and use. Thus, African figurative expressions offer meticulous comprehension of philosophical and belief systems; investigating meaning and rationality, that explore conceptual metaphors implored in conceptualizing political notions.

Accordingly, Grivas Kayange thinks meaning and truth in African thought guides socio-political dealings; highlighting *Ubuntu's* (communitarianism) fundamental values of respect, dignity, interdependency, collaboration, equity, compassion, inclusion, acceptance and mutually beneficial relationships. For him, "the originality of *Ubuntu's* ontological thesis, traced back to Desmond Tutu, postulating essences of being human and togetherness," challenges dealing truthfully with others in socio-political life (KAYANGE Grivas, 2018: 4). Similarly, the Nso' proverb *wir dze wir bi wir* (I am what I am thanks to others), pervades all parts of Africa; an ideology integrating truth, certitude, and conviction in socio-political life, diffusing facets of day-to-day life.

In another dimension, the socio-politico dimension of truth, certitude, and conviction in African thought isolate social aspects of life; a convention that underscores shared truth experiences. Consequently, two common social aspects of life: body language and civility determine interpersonal dealings; commanding indiscriminate bonding community members and strangers alike in truth. Therefore, the socio-political dimension of truth, certitude, and conviction, analyses individuals' ways of expression; investigating assumptions, and regarding belief as traditionally built on hidden expressions in ordinary language. Thus, politicians' public speeches and social dealings undergo scrutiny, ensuring fulfilment of promises/utterances.

Finally, socio-political dimensions of truth also encompass the centrality of "spoken words," particularly with tradi-political leadership. For instance, the Fon in Nso' worldview, incurs curses by failing to act in accordance with the oath (*kilih*), taken during enthronement. Hence, oaths or declarations become binding and truth guarantor. A. E. Crawley affirms:

An oath may be regarded as essentially a conditional self-imprecation, a curse by which a person calls down upon himself [herself] some evil in the event of what he says not being true [or later diverting from the norm] (HASTINGS J. et al. (eds.), 1971: 373).

By implication, epistemological challenges in the socio-political domain, vividly portrays the importance of steadfastness to truth/oaths engaged in various circumstances.

Economic Dimension

The socio-political dimension sets fertile grounds for exploring the economic dimension; African economic humanism being a way of life highlighting human needs, interests, and dignity. In connecting social relations and practices, features of truth, certitude, and conviction, exploration of epistemological values are met-with. A critical assessment of such values and inimical ones ensures society's holistic development. Thus, the economic dimension of truth, certitude, and conviction defines the worth of things, objects, humans, and beliefs. Africans perceive reality in the ethical or moral sphere by determining a thing's praiseworthiness or blame; declaring actions as right or wrong, combining with truth to establish parameters for economic interactions.

In African worldview, cultural values consciousness combines with truth features to determine economically good, right, and acceptable factors. Daily conformity to acceptable ways or patterns of behaviour and conduct is essential; non-conformity to immediate societal values attracts punishment. For instance, dishonest individuals (*ngaa kinschhwiv*) through personal dealings with others levied heavy sanctions and fines (*kishov*); particularly vying that truth telling and honest economic dealings are non-negotiable virtues. Chukwudi vindicates the centrality of truth-value in dealings stating:

The Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria, for instance, has zero tolerance for theft. If caught or convicted for theft, you are stripped naked, the body rubbed with charcoal from head to toe and the stolen object given to be carried around the village in broad day light. The sense of personal shame and disgrace thieves bring on self, family, relations, and friends are enough to discourage even the most daring thief (CHUKWUDI E. Emmanuel, 2005: 17).

In conjunction, the Nso' equally compel thieves/criminals to swear by the Fon's throne (*dzev kavaa Fon*) to vindicate innocence. Equally, individual cases of guilt/dishonesty and falsehood, incur negative and spontaneous effects.

Furthermore, there is cognisance of the fact that economic values in traditional African societies are marked by cooperation; mainly concerning farming and fishing, artefacts, and animal husbandry. For instance, friends and relatives in Nso' contexts promote farm work (*kiwo ke fo'on*), not desiring instantaneous reward. Other areas of economic cooperation include tacit trade by barter (*kuvsin vifa*), rentals of palm bushes (*tir ruh*), and leasing of farmland (*tir suum*); constituting economic transactions conditioned by truth dealings. This explains why land encroachment, designating wrong heirs/successors, usurping common goods, and bridging agreements even without documentation, convene drastic repercussions.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The exploration of concepts of truth, certitude, and conviction of Nso' in African thought exhibit several epistemological challenges due consideration. First, beyond reasonable doubt, comprehending truth in relation to the "spoken word" incorporates three aspects determining judgement: truth-implicating speakers, correlation to hierarchy and institutions, and consequences on speakers and society. Consequently, African truth perspectives entertain certainty; with conviction that it is a guiding principle in every spectrum of life. Equally, two ramifications diverting from truth's path: promise, oath undertakings and their binding force, and blessings/curse depend on ensuing practical situations.

Second, epistemological ramifications of the truth concept connect to requirements of belief and justification. Thus, demonstratively, truth is inseparable from dimensions of knowledge; determining features of conviction and belief and in link to certitude, conditions individual's degree of conviction. This perspective of truth and its prospects in African philosophy are further assessed; exploring ontological, ethical, religio-medical, socio-political, and economic dimensions of truth. Consequently, justification in African epistemology, vis-à-vis

belief, truth apropos testimony and authority becomes an indispensable complementary research to the synthesis arrived at in this article.

Succinctly, challenges of African epistemology articulated in the Nso' worldview intercepting truth, certitude, and conviction, remain appropriate for varied rationale. An appraisal of aforementioned factors and current circumventions vindicate truth (suiru) "spoken word/truth" (ji se suiru) not just as verbal expressions, but testimonial accentuations validating witnessing. Therefore, correspondence of status in relation to oath taking corroborates scopes of unflinching certitude (rengreng). This strictly explores dimensions of exactitude/exactness (no wavering); extending to conceptions of conviction (mo' kidze-en/mo' ki yii dze/mo' ki ker fo' a dze/mo' ki wiy a dze: as it is/as always/as it is supposed to be/as it shall remain unchanging). Essentially, it is deduced herewith that truth, certitude, and conviction envelope authoritative back up; highlighting "no compromise" in the face of truth. This reiterates Aristoteco-Aquinas' truth understanding as "that in the mind corresponding to reality." Hence, African thought established by the Nso' worldview emphasizes the need for steadfastness in the face of ensuing consequences or repercussions, than compromising the truth.

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