

## HERMENEUTICS OF SUICIDE IN ETHICS OF THE IGBO TRADITIONAL PHILOSOPHY

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### **Abstract**

*Suicide is one of the ethical problems of Philosophy perturbing mankind. Philosophy, however, is complex and has many branches including ethics. Ethics as a branch of philosophy studies the morality of the human conduct in the society. Ethics, in this context, questions the morality of suicidal act which has been wide spreading in the world generally. Suicide however is one of the methods whereby man accomplishes his desire for death. This has provoked the questions such as, is it morally good for man to end his life? The quest to answer this has posed arguments in favour or against a suicide amongst philosophers especially in the Euro-Western Societies, where such act seems to be more prevalent due to their individualistic lifestyle. Though, it is not only in the Western societies that suicidal acts occur. People other societies of the world do commit suicide. This paper therefore, is interested on the Igbo people's stand, pointing to suicidal behaviour. This provokes more questions such as, how do the Igbo people interpret suicide? Do they deem it ethically right for man to take his life deliberately? Applying the hermeneutical and evaluation methods of philosophical inquiry here, the writer submits that the Igbo interprets suicide as, "Mmadu ikpacha anya gbuo onwe ya (i.e deliberate killing of oneself)". There is no much ado about killing of oneself in the traditional and contemporary Igbo philosophy respectively. Igbo people vehemently frown at such act and perceive it as abominable wicked and shamefully vile. Thus, such act attracts transcendental punishment to the culprit.*

**Keywords;** Philosophy, Igbo Philosophy, Ethics, Suicide

### **Introduction**

Philosophy is like a gigantic tree with numerous branches. The branches stand to tackle one problem or another confronting mankind. The core branches of philosophy include; metaphysics, epistemology, logic and axiology. These essential offspring's in furtherance produce other branches and thus apply their natural endowments of problem-solving enterprise to elucidate the puzzling issues infix in them, for example, metaphysics, which Aristotle (1953) defined as the first philosophy, rivet its interest in solving the ontological problems of being,

substance and accident, essence and existence, causality, universals, to mention but a few. To ascertain, however, the justifiability or certitude of the human knowledge, it is quite pertinent that one must consult epistemology which is chiefly concerned with such function in philosophy. Epistemology asks questions such as; what do human beings know? Can human beings know anything for certitude? How do we know that which we claim to know etc. Logic is philosophy, and philosophy is logic, logic as a philosophical enterprise probes the criticality of human reasoning. Logic according Umeogu (2014:4), “is the science of right reasoning in so far as it relates to the question of the validity and soundness of the human arguments. Axiology as an offspring of philosophy is the science of value, this comprises of ethics and aesthetics. These two species of axiology variedly point to either moral philosophy (ethics) or aesthetical philosophy.

Our area of concentration here is on ethics. Ethics as the science of morality, questions the moral conducts of human beings in the society. Ethics for example, probes the morality of the human practices like suicide, abortion, euthanasia, in-vitro fertilization (IVF), Cloning, capital punishment and the rest. Thus, ethics ask; is it morally worthy for human being to commit suicide? Is there any circumstance that could prompt human being to consciously take his life? These, therefore, are the areas of the interest of this work. The quest to elucidate the problem of suicide however, has aggravated conceptual argument in favour and against amongst the traditional and contemporary philosophers. The arguments per se, seem to be predominant amongst the Euro-Western philosophers where suicidal behaviour seems to be prevalent, due to their individualistic pattern of life. The problem of suicide is universal, as people commit suicide in the Euro-Western Societies, so do people commit suicide in Asia and Africa respectively. Our focal point of commitment in this work, is to know how the Igbo people conceives and systematically expounds the problem of suicide as it clustered on the ethics of their traditional Philosophy.

### **Conceptual Analysis Of The Keywords In This Work Philosophy**

It has been for ages, quite a difficult task to proffer a definitive interpretation of concepts. Philosophy however, is not exempted from this. Defining philosophy has raised controversies and counter controversies amongst philosophers; hence, its signification is narrowed down to the confines of the etymological, individuals and social conceptualizations and beliefs. Philosophy or philosophia meaning - “Love” and “Sophia” – meaning “wisdom”. The amalgamation of these two words

produced the term philosophy which is translated literally as, “the love of wisdom. The love of wisdom, however, is the love of knowledge or truth. Thus, Plato, describes a philosopher as, “a seeker of truth”, a seeker of truth is a lover of knowledge, and a lover of knowledge is a wise man. The concept philosophy was the term which Pythagoras of Samos used to describe himself instead of being called a wise man. Philosophers, however, wallow in wonders emanating from the human experiences, and thus reflect and offer solutions to the problems underlying reality. Philosophy according to Plato (1952), “is the first science”. Descartes (2011) defined it as the queen of all sciences, and Ogunyiriofor Okoro (2001) complements this by defining philosophy as, “the father to all knowledge”. The writer (Emedo), thus, faulted the definitions given by Descartes and Okoro. Pointing to the complementarities of mother and father in the order of creation, she defines philosophy as, “the parent that established the nuclear family, which originally comprises of metaphysics, logic, epistemology and axiology. Each of these original off-springs, she further states procreates, hence the extended family system whereby philosophy exhibits its parental function of problem solving enterprise to other sub branches”.

### **Traditional Igbo Philosophy**

To have a clinch of what Igbo traditional philosophy is, it is necessary to lay hold on the various usages of the concept Igbo. The concept Igbo could be used to describe a person born with the Igbo blood and fluid, it could be viewed as a language spoken by the Igbo people, it could be invariably taking gripe of as a society, nation, tribe, community or land. Igbo is one of the three major tribes in Nigeria alongside with the Yoruba and Hausa tribes. It is also amongst the 250 ethnic groups and the 500 languages that are speaking in Nigeria. The concept Igbo or Ibo as normally pronounce, connotes the group of inhabitants chiefly found in the Southeastern part of Nigeria. They speak Igbo language, a language belonging to the Benue – Congo branch of the Niger- Congo language family. Igbo holistically is grouped into the following main cultural divisions namely, the northern and southern Igbo, and the western and eastern Igbo as well as the northeastern Igbo. Prior to colonialization by the European masters in Africa and Nigeria in particular, the Igbo were not united as a single people, but lived autonomously in their various communities. It is however, in the middle of this 20<sup>th</sup> century that the Igbo people developed a strong sense of ethnic identity and thus dominated the Eastern region of Nigeria. Igbo people traditionally are subsistence farmers, their staple food include Ji (yam), the chief of all crops, cassava (akpu), taro (ede), pumpkins (ugu, ugboguru m'obu anyu), melon (egusi),

maize (oka) and the rest. In the traditional Igbo society, men are chiefly responsible for cultivation of yam (iko ji) while women cultivate other crops. Because of the Igbo-African communalistic life style, lands are owned by kinship groups, and are made always available for every individual for farming and other relational purposes. Their principal exports include palm oil and palm kernels. Other means of livelihood and revenue generating schemes involve trading, local crafts and wage labour, all of these, however, are embed in their economic system. Thus, peace and security keeping in traditional Igbo culture are achieved based on political practices whereby leadership authorities are entrusted on the council of reasonable and wise elders and heads of various villages (Ndi ichie, ndi nze na ndi ozo), who automatically forms the cabinets of the various clans' monarchs (i.e Ndi Eze obodo di iche ichie).

Having analyzed the Igbo as a complex whole into its minute component parts, the question, therefore, asks, do the Igbo as a people have philosophy? Or is there philosophy in Igbo-African society? There has been a ferocious denial of philosophy in the traditional-African society generally by the likes of levy Bruhl, Kant and Hegel. Contradicting these philosophers' conceptions, Nwala (1985) opines, "If philosophy means only the ability to think and to investigate the nature of things and to investigate the nature of things without prejudices and without sectarianism as defined by the authorities of Konigsberg University in Prussia in 1770, then it did not exist as such in traditional Igbo society, and for most of humanity, it does not exist. But if it means having certain basic beliefs and conceptions about the universe, life and existence generally, such that constitute a world view which is related to the social and natural environment in which persons are historically situated, then, the Igbo-Africans like other human races, have a philosophy." Nwala's argument explicitly portrays philosophy as reflective nature of the human beings inhabiting all and sundry. This in essence defines philosophy as a universal activity, hence no world, no society whether traditional or contemporary should be said to lack philosophy.

Traditional Igbo people possess a philosophy that has its root in custom and tradition, and it's transmitted from generation to generation. This type of philosophy is undocumented and unsystematized, it is also personalistic, highly ritualized and full of myths and unanalyzed imagery. It is authoritarian. Being an instrument of social control, it is pragmatic and meant to solve the practical problems of food, security, peace and the general welfare of the community. Igbo traditional philosophy is thus unsystematic, less abstract in content, a bit

conservative and led to narrow mindedness. Besides, this people's philosophy is religiously oriented with economic base as stated before in this paper. Its ontology stressed their belief in the spiritual nature of things and a type of cosmic harmony in which human being and his actions are central, with supernatural powers and forces superintending. Igbo traditional philosophy according to Nwala (1985) connotes the following words; "amamihe ndi Igbo" (Igbo wisdom or philosophy), "ako ndi Igbo" (Lore of the Igbo), "omenala Igbo" (custom and tradition of the Igbo), and "uche ndi Igbo" (Igbo thought). All these however, have roots in the concept of Omenala. Thus, Arinze (1970) says, Igbo traditional philosophy or wisdom is conveniently called "omenala". This philosophy or ideology refers to Igbo attitudes to life, that is their basic beliefs about the nature, society and life, it embraces the whole system of civilization of the Igbo both in theory and practice, it contains within itself, the principles for propagating and protecting Igbo traditional civilization and way of life, myths, rituals traditional system of initiating, educating and socializing the young into the traditional way of life, and sanctions." Emedo (2015) says, "Igbo philosophy is simply interpreted and translated as Omenala Igbo in Igbo language, this however, is the Igbo community enterprise which includes their ideology which emanates from their natural and social environment, especially from their mode of production, the basis on which Igbo traditional philosophy was organized." Igbo traditional philosophy or omenala Igbo therefore is the foundation of the contemporary Igbo philosophy just similar to traditional philosophies of other societies of the world.

### **Ethics**

Ethics belongs to the family of axiology, which is one of the core branches of philosophy. Axiology is the science of value; it has ethics and aesthetics as its off-springs. Each of these off-springs carries out its valuing function on its own domain. Our main area of interest in this paper is on ethics. Ethics or moral philosophy interrogates the morality of human conducts in the society. It is the science of morality which serves as a guide to human living. In a more scientific, philosophic and elaborate sense, ethics is the systematic and normative study of the fundamental norms or principles regarding the rectitude and turpitude of the human behaviour. It is classified into two main parts namely; the general ethics and the special or Applied ethics.

## **1. General Ethics**

This, as the name implies contains all that is studied in ethics as a branch of philosophy. General ethics is further splitted into three parts namely; (1) Normative ethics, (2) Descriptive ethics, and (3) Meta ethics.

### **ii. Normative Ethics**

This according to Ekwutosi (2008), “is a philosophical study of morality that concerns itself with the nature and the general conditions of morality. It formulates and defines the basic principles and virtues that govern the moral life of the human beings, that is to say that ethics strives to find an common ground for which human choices and actions will be good and worthwhile for the public well-being. Normative ethics, in the words of Spinello (2004), “seeks the truth not only for its own sake but also as a basis for choosing proper actions that are consistent with the moral point of view.” This he further stressed, explains action guides by determining which actions are right and which actions are wrong. It provides us with fundamental moral principles. To it falls the task of examining the nature of the good, of obligation, of law, of sanction, freedom, virtues etc.

### **(iii) Descriptive Ethics**

This studies morality based on scientific-empirical evidence. It studies in empirical terms, the nature of moral beliefs, judgments and actions of individuals or societies and the reasons behind such. It studies the way of life of a particular people just the way it is. It is mainly undertaken by anthropologists, sociologists and historians. Philosophers do not concern themselves much with this. As normative ethics wants to ascertain the morality of the conducts of the human being in the society, using the concepts, why, ought or ought not, descriptive ethics applies the concepts of what and how. Normative ethics is prescriptive by nature, in the sense that is evaluate the rights and wrongs of the human action and prescribes what ought to be done and what ought not to be done etc.

### **(iv)Meta Ethics**

This deals with the study of moral discourse, the meaning of ethical judgments. Meta ethics involves analysis of ethical terms, languages and concepts such as right, wrong, obligation, virtues, vice etc, in order to determine their meanings and significance. The aim of meta ethics is to discover not what is good or right, but what we mean when we say of something, “that it is good or right (Ekwutosi 2008), it does this for the purpose of getting rid of ambiguities thereby making ethical terms more understandable.

(2) Special Ethics

This is the philosophical study of morality which applies the general principles of ethics to various branches of human endeavours. Special ethics could be called applied or practical ethics since the primary objective of ethics is practical rather than theoretical. It concerns itself with different professions like politics, medicine, business, teaching, and journalism to mention but a few. This holistically is called professional ethics.

**Ethics in the Igbo Traditional Philosophy**

The ethics in Igbo traditional philosophy is transcendental. It is transcendental in the sense that it is ultimately discovered, and established on a transcendental moral order, an objective moral order that is not human invention, nor is it within the human strength to alter it. This means that in Igbo traditional philosophy, morality is not something invented or established by the society, much less by the individuals or human beings. Moral values are not created by the society, rather, they are the expressions of a moral order, which transcends both the society and the individual and which obliges both. It is not a cosmic moral order emanating from an impersonal, blind cosmic force but rather, a transcendental moral order set up by God (Chukwu or Chineke). It is however, the human obligation to conform to this moral order, and conformity to it, demands good character and conduct. Goodness of character implies the refection on certain ways of conducts as vices, and the adoption of certain ways of conducts as virtues. Hence, virtues and vices are central to the ethics of Igbo traditional philosophy. The vices include all kinds of killing like suicide, homicide, genocide, abortion etc. These also include stealing, telling lies, ridiculing the deformed or unfortunate people, causing harm in any way to other people, indulging in sexual immorality such as incest, adultery, rape, gay practices etc. Goodness of character demanded by the transcendental moral order implies the avoidance of vices of this nature. But goodness of character does not consist in the avoidance of vices alone, it also consists in the positive cultivation of virtues like, kindness, generosity, hospitality, justice, respect for elders, honesty, fidelity etc.

In ethics of Igbo traditional thought, man cannot flout the transcendental moral order and go free, for this includes within it an immanent justice which ensures that goodness of character is rewarded and wickedness is punished. No violation of the transcendental moral order (even in secret), can escape the divine justice, for sooner or later (after the offence), justice will take its turn. To flout ethical moral

order is to incur punishment for oneself. Speaking about Igbo philosophy, Nwala (1985) observes that, “in their ethics, objective morality is ontological, immanent and intrinsic morality.” Though it is ontological and transcendental, the ethics of Igbo traditional philosophy like that of the traditional Africa generally is also characteristically social and conventionalized because human being in African philosophical context is a social being. Human being in the Igbo traditional world is characteristically a socio-relational being. This implies that the individual existence is meaningful only in the community in which they inhabit, thus, communalistic life style is the order of existence in the Igbo world. This Igbo community life style is also found on their custom/religion. Any grave violation of the moral order like suicide and incest in Igbo society customarily attract serious consequences. The consequences, however do not only negatively affect the offenders, but also pollute the entire community. The rectification of the transcendental moral order as upset, involves the purification of the entire community polluted by the evil act. (Ikwu ala or Ikwu aru). All evils in the ethics of Igbo tradition are anti-social and have adverse effects on the whole society. Thus, the idea of cooperate responsibility is therefore very strong in Igbo traditional ethics. This however is linked up to the contemporary Igbo-Africa. This life style is contrary to the Western individualism which is capitalistic in nature. The Igbo-African society is traditionally their brother’s keeper. This is portrayed today in their extended family system featured by interdependence and mutual help. It is on this reason that Nyerere made it known that the Africans make no sharp distinction between brother; “half-brother, nephew”, cousin”, nice etc. Every member of a particular extended family is thus a brother or sister to one another. Thus, they share both in joy and sorrows of each other. This, however, complements, the Igbo ideology of bunu, bunu, ibu, anyi danda as discussed by Asuzu (2004). Nyerere in his book “Ujama Villagization” rightly pointed out that, “In the modern world, this “family hood” of traditional African society will have to be extended beyond the confines of the whole society, the whole African, and even the whole human race”. Another serious violation of the transcendental moral order in Igbo world is the employment of the mystical forces to do harm to one’s neighbor. This is a typical example of evil as it is conceived in traditional Igbo African ethics. It is on this back drop that witchcraft which is understood as the employment of the mystical forces to do harm to other people is uncompromisingly condemned amongst the Igbo and Africa in general. F.M. Downess (1971), however, is not exaggerating when speaking about the ethics of the Tiv people of Nigeria, according to him, “witchcraft is considered by the Tiv people of Benue State as an unpardonable blameworthy act or sin.” Witch-crafting

(iri amasu) in Igbo traditional ethics, is conceived as a serious incarnation of evil because their activities are believed to be diabolic and barbaric.

Having grabbed a detailed meaning of the ethics of Igbo traditional philosophy, the next point of discourse in this paper is on suicide. The search for the meaning of suicide here, poses the question like, what is suicide? And, how do the Igbo as a people with distinct culture interpret suicide? Suicide is amongst the ethical cum social issues confronting mankind. The problem is not only social-moral but also emotional and psychological. The quest, however, to reach a consensus understanding of suicide is failed; thus, it causes controversies amongst scholars. Hormby (1994) defined suicide as, “self-murder.” Stressing further, he said, suicide is not an act that does involve a second or third person’s initiatives and advice but rather only the actor decides and unlawfully take this life. Suicide according to Peschke (1996) is, “an unlawful killing of oneself” Peschke's definition by implication means that killing could be lawful and unlawful. Lawful killings involve those initiated and contained in the constitution of a country, this however, is termed Legal killings, especially those approved by the court. Unlawful killings include those that are contrary to the constitution and court's orders and approvals. Suicide nonetheless is a typical instance to such killings; it is therefore, illegal and a crime. According to Menninger (1938), the considerations on varied conceptual treatments on suicide made it reasonably clear that there are several fundamentally independent but related dimensions as included in diverse combinations and varying degrees in most, if not of the definitions.” This implies that many authors are equally aware of the difficulty in the struggle to obtain a consensus definition of suicide. Thus, Menninger gave some approaches that could help to comprehend the meaning of suicide as follows: (i) The initiation of an act that leads to death of the initiator, (2) The will that leads to the death of the willer. (3) The loss of the will power to live (4) The motivation to die which leads to death of the motivator. Most of these Menninger’s approaches over-lap. The inclusion of the terms like initiation and initiator, willing and willer in the first and second approach, motivation and motivator in the third approach made the attempt to define suicide difficult. Nos 1 and 2, of the approaches for example over-lapped, they suggest that the suicide actor took the steps towards the cause of his death. A critical reflection on Menninger’s concept of suicide has a lot lapses. If we conceive it in this manner, it means for example that a woman who died while giving birth committed suicide, because she initiated and willed to become pregnant, and to have child. Emile Durkheim (1976), defined suicide as, “all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act which such

person himself knows will produce this result. Durkheim's idea of suicide contradicts that of Menninger. For Durkheim, suicide differs from accident or sacrifice. Suicide, according to him involves intentionality whereby the intender is fully aware that his action will lead to his death. But the case of accident is quite different because, it is something that happened by sudden. It is unplanned and unintentional. Durkheim gave instances with a soldier who died in struggle to defend his country, a martyr who lost his life in defense to his religious faith, even the death of Christ and the circumstances surrounding it, all types of death, Durkheim maintained are not suicidal act. Suicide according to Helen Hemingway (1984), "is an action that is not carried out under compulsion, the victim is not forced to do so, rather he did it intentionally. Whether suicide is carried directly or indirectly, it involves the actor's intention and voluntariness." She further stretched that suicide involves one's tendency or attempt to end his life, or the idea that may lead to his self-destruction, following suit, the writer opines, that "Suicidal acts are not done by the command from higher order, they rather involve the actors' discretions and reasonings. Thus, suicide is an act that is reasoned, planned and carried out deliberately."

Suicide to be precise is a means to death. It is of three main categories namely; altruistic, egoistic and anomic suicide, suicidal act could be fatalistic and non-fatalistic. The former would be termed proper suicide, because it involves all it takes to commit suicide. While the latter includes all attempted actions which are injurious and dangerous to one's life and health examples include, drug, alcohol, and cigarette addictions. Reckless driving and answering phone call while driving are also non-fatal but, could lead to fatalistic suicide.

### **Altruistic Suicide**

This is when a person sacrificed his life to save or to benefit others, or to preserve the tradition and honor a society, clan or religion. This is always intentional and voluntary; hence it is tagged benevolent suicide. This implies a self-sacrifice of one's life for the sake of greater good. Altruistic suicide is not done under compulsion, the actor carries it out to show his concern and commitment to keep the custom of his land or religious sect. Examples includes the Japan seppuku as practiced by the samurai, the soldiers that died in defence of their countries, the religious martyrdoms etc.

### **Egoistic Suicide**

Suicidal act is termed egoistic when a person deliberately killed himself probably out frustration based on emotional cum psychological situation affecting his interest. Examples of the factors surrounding such act include isolation from public/societal relationship, illness, maltreatment and disappoint from the loved one, failure etc.

### **Anomic Suicide**

This type of suicide occurs when a society fails to regulate and control the welfares of her citizens, some people in this condition, find it the best option to take their lives. Example is the case of the lecturer from the Federal university of education Ekedolor, Edo State, who took his life by drinking a poisonous substance due to the government of Nigeria's refusal to pay salaries to ASUU members during the horrific torment of Covid-19 pandemic and strike as well.

### **Methods of Suicide**

There are numerous ways by which people could take their lives. They include; hanging, drowning, drinking poisonous substance, over dosage of drugs, starvation, dehydration etc.

### **The Igbo Concept of Suicide**

Suicide as it is, is one of the methods of accomplishing the desire for death. Death (Onwu) as the Igbo believed is of two main types namely; natural and unnatural deaths. Natural death (ezigbo onwu m'obu onwu chi) includes death at old age or, the death that comes after little ill health, that is the death which occurs when the dying person must have been given proper attention as a sign of love by their relatives and at the same time must have trashed out certain unknown but pressing issues with the relatives (ike-ekpe). Unnatural death as the name implies, is contrary to natural death. This includes death by accident, euthanasia and 'suicide' which is the focal point of our discourse here. Death in Igbo culture is not perceived as evil, rather it is conceived simply as "a transition", a change of existence from the visible to invisible realm. Thus, death according to the Igbo is, "a change of life from the physical life to the life beyond." The Igbo believed that human being is a being unto death. The categories of death as established by the Igbo have consequences which could be either existence within the ancestral bliss or, perpetual suffering in what the Igbo called "ama-nri mmuo na mmadu", this, however, is similar to the Christian Purgatory.

Suicide as literally translated in Igbo language means “*mmadu ikpacha anya gbuo onwe ya* (i.e deliberate killing of the self)”. This however, is one of the unnatural ways to death. It could be carried out using diverse methods just as discussed within the text. Although, amongst the diverse methods of committing suicide, the most prevalent in the tradition of the Igbo is death by hanging (*onwu ikwu udo*). Others methods, however, are contemporary (*oloro ohuru* or *agba-ohuru*). The questions posed are; do the Igbo welcome the idea of suicide? Is there any problem that could prompt human being to terminate his/her life? Igbo people hold human life to high esteem, thus, the saying, “*ndu kariri ihe eji azu ya* (Life worth more than what it takes to preserve it).” Life is worth preserving; therefore, preservation of life is the primary need of every human being across the globe, and of course the natural right of all human beings irrespective of age, gender, affiliation and race. Based on this, the Igbo abhor and perceive suicide behavior as disgusting. Suicide to the Igbo is a sin and crime; it is an abomination in Igbo/ African society for a person to deliberately and voluntarily take his life. On no occasion and whatever circumstance in Igbo tradition, should human being commit suicide else, the actor will face the consequences.

### **The Ethical Implications of Suicide in Igbo Tradition**

Human being in Igbo tradition is a transcendental being. He is a being-with and a being unto death. This implies that Igbo/African person assumes double existence. He is a composite of the body and spirit. The spirit which assumes omnipresence feature and also vivifies the body is bound to separate itself from the body as determined during creation by the apex being. Once the spirit separates itself from the body, death occurs, human body by nature is corrupt, it dies and rots away while the spirit which is immortal departs to join the ancestors in the spiritual realm. Ancestral existence, however, is the desire of every Igbo/African man. Death in Igbo tradition has positive and negative implications. Ancestral existence and reincarnation are the positive rewards to the people that lived good life and died natural death, while contrarily, the Igbo believed that any person that committed suicide, died unnatural death, and has sinned against God and, thus, has desecrated the land. The body of a suicide actor is conceived to be evil, and thus will not be touched and buried by his kinsman, but rather buried by strangers. Elaborating more on this, Achebe (1985) writes succinctly:

Then they came to the tree from which Okonwo’s body was dangling and they stopped dearth. Perhaps, your men can help us bring him down and bury him said Obierika. We have sent for strangers from

another village to do it for us, but they may be a long time coming. The district commissioner instantaneously changed the resolute administration in him, gave way to the students of primitive customs. Why can't you bring him down yourself he asked? It is against our custom said one of the men. It is an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offence against the earth and the man who commits it will not be buried by his clan's men, his body is evil, and only strangers shall touch it, that is why we asked your people to bring him down. Will you bury him like any other man asked the commissioner? We cannot bury him, only strangers can. We shall pay your men to do it, when he has been buried then, we do our duty by him. We shall do sacrifices to cleanse the desecrated land Obierika who has been gauzing steadily at his friend's dangling body, turned to the commissioner and said ferociously, that man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia, you drove him to kill himself now he will be buried like a dog.

Reflecting from Achebe's narration, we perceived it clearly that the Igbo/ Africans strictly frown at suicidal act. It is normally wrong for a person to take his own life. The following are the punishments for suicidal actors: (1) such person will not be buried by his kinsmen, but by strangers. (2) The person will be buried in evil forest. (3) No funeral rite will be giving to him. (4) Ontologically, suicidal actors are not welcomed in the ancestral existence, hence, the spirit of such person will be wandering about and will not communicate with his people here in the visible realm. (5) The person's spirit cannot reincarnate.

### **Conclusion**

People across the globe, are known by their cultures, customs and traditions, thus, people's beliefs, interpret their identities. Culture is relative, what a people condones, other people contrarily can frown at it. Thus, one famous, contemporary Igbo musician says, "ife ndi n'eri, ka ndi na aso, enwe n'awa anya bu na ono na Awka, enwe jere bata na Enugu, egbuo ya egbuo, esie ya esie, esie ya esie, ataa ya ataa etc. This interprets a people and their totemism.

Suicidal act thrives more in the Western society due to their individualistic life style. But in Africa generally and Igbo in particular, suicide is a grievous offence and it attracts punishments which transcend the physical level of existence. Igbo/ Africans live communistic life, they relate to one another. They share things

in common both in joy and in pain. What one cannot provide for himself, another person can provide it for him. This interprets the human trait of relationship cum solidarity which the Igbo inculcate in their ideologies like, "bunu, bunu, Ibu anyi danda", "igwebuike", "umunna bu ike" and "onye aghala nwanne ya". Suicide as a problem, is not all that a problem in Igbo/African society, thus, it does not call for arguments amongst Igbo scholars. It is ethically wrong for one to kill himself both in the traditional and contemporary Igbo-Africa. Suicide simply is morally vice, it's an abomination - 'aru' na'nso ala".

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