

Abubakar Gimba's Letter to the Unborn Child and the Ontological Masquerading of the Nigerian 'Being': An Existential Intervention

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Abstract: The idea of innatism projects the fact that humans have certain intrinsic characteristics, either good or bad; hence, some social behavior can be attributed to acquired traits. While the religious adherents (Christians and Muslims) will advance the argument that the 'being' has been corrupted before birth based on biological intercourse and the inherited nature of sin, the existentialist holds a contrary opinion to this. They are of the view that our choices transform who we are. Abubakar Gimba's letter to the unborn child projects an ontological deficiency in the Nigerian 'being', hence his epistle to the unborn child to prepare him not to be baptized into what is called the 'Nigerian character'. This work examines the description of what Gimba portrays to be an ontological deficiency and advances that Gimba's position is only a masquerading of existential choices resting upon key existential concepts. The work advances that existential conditions built over the years have suddenly seemed to appear as human nature. The work asserts that existential choice resting on responsibility remains the only path out of Nigeria's conditioning, which Gimba refers to as nature. The work concludes that, if Gimba's position of an ontological deficiency of the Nigerian 'being' is true, then not even his epistle to the unborn child could change the Nigerian fate, but since it is mere existential conditioning, then people's choices could birth the needed change.

Keywords: Thrownness, fallenness, facticity, ontology, existentialism

Introduction

The Nigerian state post-independence has witnessed several challenges despite her rich human resources and deposits of wealth in terms of mineral resources. The dreams and aspirations of many Nigerians who witnessed the independence seem to have faded away, with the younger generation laying hold of historical memories of a better yesterday. While the blame trail has become the watchword of successive democratic administrations, the younger generation has not taken their teeth from the very older generation, nailing them for the woes that have customized the country and made a mirage of the past historical heritage. The older generation has also blamed the younger generation for their naivety and lack of right judgement. The pictorial effect of this played out during the 2020 EndSars Protest in Nigeria. "When the most paramount slogan of the EndSars protesters was 'Soro Soke', meaning 'speak out loud', a figurative expression used in nailing the older generation as a generation that keeps silence while they watch social ills and injustice unfold, with the majority of them looking to the 'Supreme Being' for a solution"¹. Despite this trail of blame across several parties, the government and the Nigerian leadership have always been at the center of the backlash. Both the young and the old have constantly upheld the belief that the Nigerian prob-

lem is a leadership problem. The leadership circle in Nigeria that holds political offices represents less than 5% of the over 200 million population, and it is believed that they are responsible for the woes that are affecting the entire nation. To put things in proper perspective, the Nigerian problem is a problem of leadership. "This very view has been championed by many scholars, and it was explicitly emphasized by the late literary giant Chinua Achebe."² It is upon these premises and responding to the position of Achebe that Abubakar Gimba writes to express his view on the quagmire of the Nigerian state. This response is epistolary. He writes to an unborn child, x-raying the child's phases of existence, pre-and post-birth. In his letter, Gimba outlines various challenges facing the Nigerian state, which he hopes this unborn child will be able to navigate properly based on his epistolary notes. Gimba's letter began by painting the Nigerian problem to be ontological by emphasizing the Nigerian character. The implication is that, so long as you have been born a Nigerian, you carry this malady nature, hence, his only hope was to turn to the child who is yet to be born. The latter part of his letter projects more of an existential path to the problem of the Nigerian state by taking the responsibility of the Nigerian state from a group of collective individuals, also referred to as the Nigerian leaders, to the individual citizens, regarded as the followers. For Gimba, "a tree cannot produce a fruit different from its kind; hence, the Nigerian leaders are only a reflection of the average Nigerian."³ Although Gimba gave exceptions to a few individuals to avoid hasty generalizations, Gimba believes that if each citizen is responsibly playing their role for the betterment of the Nigerian state, little will be focused on the leadership.

It is upon this bedrock that this research work is set to analyze the ontological painting of the Nigerian nature in the epistle of Gimba to the unborn child and see how existential themes such as thrownness, facticity, fallenness, choice, and responsibility have contributed to what is being called the 'Nigerian character by Gimba' and how these themes are also instrumental to re-inventing a new Nigerian character.

Existentialism in Retrospect

Existentialism is nothing more than a philosophy of responsibility.

The word 'Existentialism' was first used by Soren Kierkegaard, but it was explored more by Jean-Paul Sartre in his work, *Existentialism is Humanism*. The center point of existentialism is the fact that "existence precedes essence"⁴, meaning individuals exist first before they decide their essence. To be clearer, when a potter is about to make an object, he first thinks of the function and purpose before designing and bringing the object into existence. This explains predestination or the fact that essence precedes existence, but for the existentialist, it is the belief that the object must first exist before its use and function are determined. How does it play out? Although the potter decides to make a pot, one can either decide to use the pot to cook, store grain or water, or leave the pot abandoned. The decision about what the pot will become comes after its existence. This is the trust of existentialists. "Either there is a supreme being or not, all existentialists believe that existence precedes essence."⁵ We have atheists like Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Fredrick Nietzsche, and theists like Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Jasper, and Martin Buber. If the position of the existentialist is anything to go by, then a premium is placed on choice, freedom, and responsibility. Although all existentialists have different perspectives about existence, the uniformity of choice, freedom, and responsibility cuts across all existentialists. In the words of Soren Kierkegaard, "Man is constantly in anguish. This anguish is not caused by an external person but rather by being responsible for the choices one make."⁶ For the existentialist, man is always making a choice; even not making a choice is already a choice in itself. This choice that every individual makes has a way of affecting others. In the words of Sartre, he opines that "When I make a choice, I also make choices for others."⁷ This means that one's immediate choice at every point has a way of affecting others. It is upon this Sartrean position that Gimba's position becomes very justified when he claims that the woes of the nation of Nigeria are caused basically by individual failure. If one in his immediate workplace fails in his own respon-

sibility, it has a way of affecting everyone—a teacher who fails to pay attention to his pupils and neglects them will not produce properly baked students; by extension, this half-baked student will graduate and pass his or her own deficiencies to the other members of the society and, most unfortunately, to the unborn. Hence, it becomes necessary to begin an assessment of Gimba's epistle and see the existential arrow in it.

Throwness as Humans' First Metaphysical Conditioning

We do not have the power to choose whether to be born or not; we are simply thrown into the world. The word throwness was first used in the works of Martin Heidegger. He writes:

It is not the case that man 'is' and then has, by way of an extra, a relationship of being towards the world, a world with which he provides himself occasionally. *Dasein* is never 'proximally' an entity that is, so to speak, free from Being-in but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a 'relationship' with the world. Taking up relationships toward the world is possible only because *Dasein*, as Being-in-the-world, is as it is.⁸

What this means is that man simply finds himself existing in this world at a point without having any recollection of whether he existed before in a world or what his mission in this world should be. The life of man looks like when someone is simply thrown into a place and left to find meaning for himself without any map or direction.

Gimba also writes:

Whence comes my propitious dream? You are yet to bestride our physical world in this part of your life outside the womb. Yet you already belong to this world, though you are still outside it. You are yet to make your entry, which I am told before long you would, with a cry, as almost all of us that had made the same inevitable trip had done: a cry of joy or lamentation of a foreboding of a new life, full of tumbles and fumbles⁹.

Gimba began by explaining the existential predicament of every existing being: the fact that we are all thrown into this world without a choice of either being born or not. Gimba began thus: "In a few days, you will be making your personal entry into our country. You would be luckier than I was. You would have an entry port that would be more sanitized and more special than mine, with ladies in ceremonial dresses all over you... You would be born in a hospital unless you decide to give your mother a surprise and take your exit out without notice"¹⁰. Gimba was referring to the imminent arrival of the unborn child, who has no choice but to either come to this world or not come to this world. This is the existential fate of all. Individuals have no power to choose which country to be born in or the kind of parent they desire. Gimba went on to explain the first challenge facing this child, which is the predicament of his or her parents. Gimba writes,

Your father's only car broke down a few days ago as a result of engine trouble... You are his priority ahead of the car; hence, your father's savings are tailored more towards preparing for your arrival than the car. Your mother cannot help him financially. She depends on him. She does not engage herself in any gainful work that brings her any income. Sometimes she laments her decision to be a full-time wife. But she often takes solace in her mother's final parting words to her when she was getting married. You should be a supporter and an ever-constant comforter to your husband¹¹.

This becomes the immediate existential condition for this unborn child. These existential conditions have a way of shaping who the child will eventually become. Hence, one would still get to find out that, what Gimba painted to be an ontological condition of a child is most times a product of existential conditioning that has since looked like the nature of the 'being'. But no human exists without some sort of existential conditions that can affect their 'being'. Although some of these conditions are made worse by the choices of the parents, this can be justified when Gimba speaks about his own mother. When one compares the choice of the mother of the unborn child with that of Gimba's mother:

My mother, it may interest you to know, was a full-time housewife too; she was an adviser to my father. But she worked. She worked very hard on the farm, carrying out mopping-up operations in periods of harvest of Guinea corn, millet, rice, beans, and melon. She never sold them, though. She used almost all of it to feed the family and supplement what my father had. And out of the little she had, she gave to her mother, my maternal grandmother, and her neighbors¹².

If this child were asked to choose a parent, perhaps he would have wished for a working mother and probably chose to be born to Gimba's parents. This predicament of the to-be-born child was not just socially influenced nor was it an ordained destiny; rather, the choice of the parent contributed to it. Particularly the mother, who to me appears lazy. The child's parents seem poorer because only one hand is carrying the burden of the entire family. So many children are also born into the wrong hands today in Nigeria. Perhaps their lives would have been better, and maybe they could have made better decisions about life if they had been given birth to better parents who had the capacity to either guide or counsel them properly. Although this conditioning has little concern for existential decisions. Some were born with the same conditions and yet made good out of it. However, this does and should not cast aspersion on the credibility of these conditions and their effects on the makeup of a being. Again, so many problems affecting the Nigerian state today could be inherited traits of irresponsibility passed down from the parents to the children or from the older generation to the younger generation. By inheritance, one might want to allude to the ontological problem of 'the being' of an average Nigerian. One is most likely to become who begets him.

Again, this child has no power to make the choice of who becomes his/her parents and family members. In the words of Sartre and Heidegger, the child is still in the state of 'being-in-itself'. Kierkegaard "calls the stage in which this child is a wanton."¹³ This is a stage when one cannot make a choice. Hence, there is a need for one to move from the stage of being a wanton to the stage of becoming a person. Although one might wonder how Gimba was referring to a wanton or an 'in-itself' as described by other existentialist philosophers. In existentialism, a person called 'being-for-itself' has the capacity to relate to an 'in-itself'. In Buber's own words, the 'I-thou' can relate to the 'I-it'¹⁴. In existentialism, a person, also called 'being-for-itself', has the capacity to relate to an 'in-itself'. Aside from this, in Africa, there is a connection between the living, the dead, and the unborn. There is the belief that they have the capacity to interact effectively and communicate. Hence, it is normal for Africans to speak and pray for the unborn child in the womb while also offering sacrifices to the ancestors for their safety and preservation. In all, every child in Nigeria has this existential condition called thrownness, but what each child is thrown into is either made better or worse based on the choices of the parents and the society. Thrownness is an ontological condition of every human. As to who decides where a child is thrown, the theist existentialists might allude to the fact that God is behind an individual's thrownness, while the atheist sees it as basically an existential condition based on circumstances or luck. However, within this thrownness is the point that man must make choices as soon as he is born and has adequate mental and cognitive processes to make decisions. Meaning as soon as a child grows past the stage of being a 'wanton' or 'in-itself' to being a person or 'for-itself', the child becomes responsible for his choices. Even when a child is yet to be an adult, the choices they make have a way of shaping their immediate future. In the words of Sartre, he affirms that "Before I was born, I knew nothing about my existence, but as soon as I was born, I became responsible for all my actions."¹⁵ This implies that irrespective of the situation and what Heidegger refers to as man's facticity, man must still make choices. This will lead us to the facticity that has characterized Gimba's 'Nigerian Being.'

Facticity and the Challenge of a Nigerian Citizen

There is no human nature; what exists are human conditions; Facticity.
– Fredrick Nietzsche

While twins will have different human natures, they are most likely to have the same facts or human conditions. Nigerians are different in nature according to psychological classification, but one can say that Nigerians experience some conditions that are common to all. For instance, the economic situation of the Nigerian state, insecurity, poor power generation and supply, bad roads, poor educational standards, and bad social amenities and infrastructure could be seen as common conditions for all Nigerians. These conditions are most often caused by the choices of people, and they have a way of affecting others. This is highlighted in his work. Gimba said, noting the bad state of the medical facility in which the child will be born, which has constituted a sort of fact.

The nurses often ask women in labor to come with all manner of materials, from cotton wool to soap and razor blades. Do not ask me what they do with them. In most cases, they do not use them; the nurses resell them. The hospital pharmacist and doctors, perhaps, thought their support staff had this commercial smarts. Privately owned pharmacies are thriving in town, while the ones in public health institutions are abandoned drug stores. And the doctors? Well, the law allows them to eat their cake and have it¹⁶.

From the above, one could pinpoint that so many conditionings within the Nigerian State are an offshoot of people's bad decisions that have come to constantly hurt the entire public. Again, while we look at this facticity, the bailout might seem that we were all thrown into this world without our consent and we have to do everything to survive. Hence, this could be a valid justification for those who make choices that affect others negatively. Survival of the fittest replaces human facticity to become an ontological nature of existence; being justified in the descriptive state of nature by Thomas Hobbes. At some point, he highlighted the corruption that has engulfed government services and the school. In fact, he noted that his father's poor state was never a result of him not wanting to be rich, because the father has so much opportunity to be, but then he decided to make a choice that would protect his name and integrity. The bottom line of so many conditions in Nigeria that have become existential facts is that they are basically the choices of some people. So many people have witnessed 'death' being the end of all existential possibilities, not because it was meant to be but rather based on the failure of some people. Some people died due to bad jobs done by contractors or bad medical personnel services, among others. This fact becomes a chain and perhaps a rollercoaster for the Nigerian State. For Gimba, the existential facticity of the Nigerian state is such that it has remained at all levels; hence, the nature of the Nigerian man. However, in the actual sense of it, they are not the nature of the Nigerian 'being' but rather human-invented facticity. Gimba, expressing the depth of this thought, said, "Today's leadership was yesterday's followership."¹⁷ Meaning that these conditions have transcended the leadership problem. In alluding to this claim, he expresses the view of John Stuart Mill, who said, "Men are men before they are lawyers or physicians or merchants or manufacturers; if you make them capable and sensible men, they will make themselves capable lawyers and physicians."¹⁸ This implies that even if the mind of an average Nigerian is a tabular rasa at birth, existential facts that exist within the Nigerian state are capable of making them turn evil if they are not conscious of their actions. For Gimba, only a very few people have been able to rise above this fact; many have joined the crowd in a bid for survival. This falling with the crowd, which has become a problem in the Nigerian state, is what the existentialists refer to as fallenness, with the slogan, if you cannot beat them, you join them.

Fallenness and Pitfalls of Development

Man is at every point faced with an either-or situation: either to join the crowd and remain inauthentic or to take existential decisions, be responsible and authentic.
- Soren Kierkegaard

Heidegger began by using the word 'fallenness' after the 'they', which implies that when one decides to follow the crowd.¹⁹ For most existentialists, fallibility is seen as an act of inauthentic

existence. It is not as if existentialism rejects the idea of collective work. In fact, intersubjectivity is one core existential theme that supports collectivism; however, the point the existentialists stood against was losing one's self, uniqueness, and sense of individual responsibility by following the crowd. For the existentialist, it is believed that man must be responsible for his actions at all times. However, how they discuss fallibility differs. For Sartre, "fallenness means bad faith when one acts in self-deception"²⁰, while for Kierkegaard, "fallenness means not being responsible, like a mere spectator on the field of play"²¹. This research shall adopt the Kierkegaardian position because it resonates more with the position of Gimba. He writes on one aspect of what he conceives as fallenness:

displeasure at public phoniness makes some people withdraw from everyday social life, or what he calls 'actuality'. A few do so by moving to isolated areas, creating physical distances between themselves and society. Others, perhaps taking the more common route, withdraw inwardly. They continue to adhere to popular conventions, but they do so with an ironic attitude. In the privacy of their own minds, they do not take the conventions seriously or regard them as meaningful. They refuse to identify with the roles, projects, and values they have inherited from society. They tell themselves that such things do not really define who they are²².

This is what is regarded as fallenness; when one either decides to join the crowd, in the open or in secret, or when they decide to stay indifferent even when they could make a decision that could turn things around. This is the situation for many Nigerians. Pressure for survival has pushed many into joining those 'they cannot beat' instead of standing their ground to see that evil is not upheld. In the wake of this, very many Nigerians, though aware of the evil they are causing, are scared of what the crowd will say. Gimba, putting it forward as a great predicament that the unborn child will face, noted that:

There are many families like yours in Nigeria. There are many more parents like yours: simple, hardworking, honest, and humble. There are many fathers like yours who are principled enough to hold on to and hoist, whenever the situation demands, the flag of family and other cherished values. However, they all do not seem to make the desired level of impact in steering the nation in the direction of our dreams. They seem trapped, like the undergrowth in the mangrove forests, held down by the dominating thicket of the defiant deviants. A few determined parents like yours do, however, break through the suffocating canopy of the forest, like the Iroko trees in the rain forests, tall and strong, but the latter's determined defiance for the fresh air of the sky leaves little impression on the forest's skyline²³.

Here and in many other places, Gimba expresses the existential fallenness that has sunk the nation. Today, the clamor of the corruption that exists in the Nigerian states seems like something that is simply domiciled in the leadership, but in the actual sense, corruption is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the root of the nation. Gimba expresses this all through his work. From the youngest to the eldest, corruption is the order of the day. It then even makes those who are not corrupt the bad ones in society. In the way Socrates was perceived as evil in the ancient Greek city during his time. So many people have fallen into a bad way of life or were raised in this bad way of life. The very few who are making the right decisions are doing so in a very serious, tense, and suffocating atmosphere, as Gimba puts it, and the light of their good deeds is not evident since it was done in a suffocating atmosphere. Existential fallenness is a plague that has become the Nigerian skin. Gimba, being aware of this, also tries to warn the unborn child against 'fallenness'. Gimba writes:

We are all leaders and followers alike, exposed to these hazards. You, too, would be. How then can we escape the fate of being drowned in the despised waters of our social values? No one, except those adequately prepared for it and given the right lifeboat, life buoy, and life jackets, expects impeachable leadership to emerge from an environment of pervasively decaying social values. No one except those properly brought up in homes with conscientious parents like your mom and dad... Your mother was not exposed to the defiling values of cultural modernization and imported civilizations. Your father, to his glory, has withstood their trials. He has refused to be false to himself and remains in quiet defiance of the bewitching influence and pressures of both modernity and civilization²⁴.

From the foregoing, one could see Gimba trying to encourage the unborn child to make sure he or she does not fall with the crowd. The very reason why he is being equipped early enough is so that he will be able to stand his ground. One noticeable thing about the above quote was when Gimba was describing his father. He said, "Your father has refused to be false to himself." Being false to oneself is what Sartre calls 'bad faith', while some other existential thinkers call it 'inauthentic existence'. As Gimba has highlighted in his work, very many Nigerians are living a false life of who they are, hence the Nigerian problem. An average Nigerian can talk about the solution to the problem facing the country; in fact, the Nigerian constitution looks perfect on paper, but the Nigerian state has failed at the implementation of policy because they have taken a different turn themselves by falling with the crowd. This is predicted to be the undoing of the Nigerian state. 'If you cannot beat them, join them'.

Having taken a critical look at the problem of the Nigerian state, it is necessary to look at the possible solution to the Nigerian predicament rooted in existential decisions, as highlighted by Gimba. Existentialism is not known to be a philosophy that leaves a problem as it is without addressing it. Inaction is an anti-existential philosophy. Hence, the path to a more progressive Nigeria needed to be sought out.

Choice and Responsibility as Ontological Paths to Development

If existence really does precede essence, "humanity" is responsible for who it is.
– Jean-Paul Sartre

Gimba made the Nigerian crisis ontological when he made some facticity become ontological nature. He writes:

You, in your present abode, the world of your mother's womb, have a rare purity and innocence that almost all of us on this side of our country have long lost. We are all, leaders and followers, contaminated to varying degrees, with the chemical mixture of the contamination acquiring a repulsive, putrid state when dropped in the milieu of actual or potential elevating opportunities. We are all in this pit of black dye together, and you cannot produce a yellow-dyed cloth from a pit full of black dye.²⁵

The above assertion from him implies that the predicament with the Nigerian state has become ontological, in the sense that being alive presently as a Nigerian implies for him that your ontology as a being has been contaminated; hence, Gimba's only hope is the unborn child still in the mother's womb. Just as the Biblical Jesus was made to come through a virgin to deliver the world by not contaminating his nature with the infusion of a man's sperm. Gimba noted that the Nigeria problem is not one-dimensional, but in his analysis, he explains how the entire evil has been mixed and seems inseparable from its being. Gimba writes:

our great writer's success (referring to Achebe) lies in his giving us a thesis for an ignoble scapegoatism. We have turned it into a dwarfing past time, nay, a character trait in us. We love to make someone a scapegoat for misadventures. The real problem is followership. All of us, simple. We are, individually, the real trouble with Nigeria. The character that Achebe cleared of any culpability is all that is wrong with us.²⁶

He further underscores the problem as ontological by saying, "Could the fault of the bitter, distasteful fruits that every season cycle brings from a tree be laid at the doorsteps of the fruits or at those of the tree that produces the fruits?"²⁷

However, Gimba's hope for the unborn child implies that this nature can be changed or re-invented. This hope represents an existential yet metaphysical path. First, Gimba came to terms with the fact that, although he feels Nigerians have an ontological problem, the problem is caused by the choices people make and those who refuse to take responsibility and not that the formation of the 'being' at birth was bad. If it were the latter, Gimba would not have had hope for the unborn child. It then implies that the Nigerian problem is not a general human ontological problem, because if it were,

even the unborn child would be irredeemable. What Gimba describes as an ontological problem for Nigerians could be perceived as habits that now seem innate. The Yoruba's would say, *ti ewe ba pe lara ose, a di ose*, meaning that if a leaf stays too long on a soap, such leaf will also become soap. Evil and malady have dwelled too long with Nigerians that it has made it seem that is a nature by birth. Hence, Gimba believes that if this unborn child is careful to make decisions that are different from what has masked itself as the Nigerian nature, this child might perhaps become the Jesus of the country and lead the country on a developmental path.

Gimba rightly noted that there have been supplications to the Supreme Being, and hence the imminent arrival of the child appears to be the answer to their prayer. He writes, "God may help us inspire ourselves. And I feel a sense of elation that your expected arrival is an answer by the Merciful Almighty to our prayers. But we must pray ceaselessly."²⁸

From the foregoing, man's ontological nature is characterized by making choices and being responsible for them. If there is one thing that is peculiar to all existing beings, it is not the uniformity of our facticity but rather the fact that we all have the power to make choices as soon as we are born. Even if there is a predestination, our choices still play a great role in the fulfillment of that destiny. Hence, Gimba spoke at length to the unborn child, but the change needed in Nigeria will not rest on the number of words that the child listens to from Gimba or from anybody else, but rather on the choices he makes.

The nation of Nigeria is where it is today because of choices made by people, and if it is to develop further, then it has to be based on the conscious choices and decisions that people will make. The Nigerian problem is not just bad leadership but also wrong choices made without taking responsibility for those choices. This is exactly the problem of the Nigerian state.

Nigerians must make choices that will positively influence and affect others. When these becomes the daily practice of Nigerians, then one could say that the nature of Nigerians has changed and Nigeria could be on the path to development. Sartre takes freedom as an ontological absolute, and it is only through our choices that we can make ourselves²⁹. Sartre opines that one's life is the sum of all decisions taken based on free will. The quagmire of Nigerian society is simply the result of the choices of Nigerians over time, and hence, no one is exonerated from the Nigerian crises. Until Nigerians see choices as the only tool they have and the only thing they share in common with other humans and learn to be responsible for the choices they make, nothing will change.

Conclusion

Man is no other than series of undertakings that he is the sum, the organization, the set of relations that constitute these undertakings. Man is a totality of his activities done in life.

He made many choices throughout the life...

- Jean Paul Sartre

This research has been able to underscore the position of Gimba about the Nigerian state as an ontological problem enveloped in what he tagged the Nigerian character. This work has brought out salient existential traits that Gimba has attributed to his work. The work hence sought to advance choice as the only human nature, the only setback of the Nigerian state, and the only path to the development of the same. Sartre said, "We first exist—find ourselves born into a world not of our own choosing—and it is up to each of us to define our identity or essential characteristics in the course of what we do in living our lives. Our essence (our set of defining traits) is chosen, not given."³⁰ Hence, Gimba's hope for the child is still based on the child's choice. Choice becomes an ontological attribute of humans that either makes them or destroys them. A country is not greater than the choices of its people—the tale of the Nigerian state.

Notes

- ¹ See punch newspaper of 15th June 2021, where sorosoke was discussed as a slang used by the Nigerian youths during the endsars protest.
- ² Achebe Chinua. (1985). *The Trouble with Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers. 32.
- ³ Abubakar Gimba. (2008). *Letter to the Unborn Child*. Ibadan. Kraft Books Limited. 39.
- ⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul. (2007). *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Translated. Carol Macomber. Yale UP. 6.
- ⁵ "Existentialism," (1973). *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*. Ed. Phillip P. Wiener. Vol. 2. 364.
- ⁶ Kierkegaard, S. (1971) *Either/or* vol. 1, Trans. Davis F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 281.
- ⁷ Sartre, Jean-Paul. (2007). *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Translated. Carol Macomber. Yale UP. 4.
- ⁸ Heidegger, Martin. (1956). 'The Way back into the Ground of Metaphysics', in Walter Kaufmann (ed.), *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. New York: World Publishing Co. 32.
- ⁹ Abubakar Gimba. (2008) *Letter to the Unborn Child*. Ibadan. Kraft Books Limited. 13.
- ¹⁰ Abubakar Gimba. (2008) *Letter to the Unborn Child*. Ibadan. Kraft Books Limited. 14.
- ¹¹ Abubakar Gimba. (2008) *Letter to the Unborn Child*. Ibadan. Kraft Books Limited. 24.
- ¹² Abubakar Gimba. (2008) *Letter to the Unborn Child*. Ibadan. Kraft Books Limited. 25.
- ¹³ Watts, M. (2007) *Kierkegaard*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications. 189.
- ¹⁴ Buber, Martin. (1970) *I and Thou*. Translated by Kaufmann, W. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's. 27.
- ¹⁵ Sartre, Jean-Paul. (1956) *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Translated. Hazel E. Barnes. Philosophical Library. 429.
- ¹⁶ Abubakar Gimba. (2008) *Letter to the Unborn Child*. Ibadan. Kraft Books Limited. 28.
- ¹⁷ Abubakar Gimba. (2008) *Letter to the Unborn Child*. Ibadan. Kraft Books Limited. 25.
- ¹⁸ Abubakar Gimba. (2008) *Letter to the Unborn Child*. Ibadan. Kraft Books Limited. 40.
- ¹⁹ Kockelmans, Joseph. (1965) *Martin Heidegger: A First Introduction to his Philosophy*. Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press. 54.
- ²⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul. (1956) *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Translated. Hazel E. Barnes. Philosophical Library. 321.
- ²¹ Gardiner, Patrick L. (1988) *Kierkegaard*. New York: Oxford University Press. 78.
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