

Moderate skepticism: A panacea for the political and socio – economic problems in Nigeria

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Abstract

Every developing nation strives to attain political stability, economic progress and meaningful development. Those aspirations of nations can only materialize when the traits of gullibility, unsuspecting attitude and unintelligence are avoided or put to check. Nigeria as a country is faced with some disturbing and protracting issues such as low political consciousness, gullibility, economic stagnation, religious immaturity and sheer ignorance which are inimical to the path of the national development. These disturbing issues are not without a cause. They are broadly caused by lack of skeptical adoption on the part of our national leaders and the people themselves. When the political leaders and the people themselves are not careful, cautious and wary in carrying out their national assignments, such negative consequences are imminent. The study employed critical, speculative and Analytic methods of philosophy in discovering that moderate skepticism can be a panacea to low political consciousness, gullibility and other social problems in Nigeria. Thus, skeptical disposition as an attitude is sacrosanct to any leader and the people themselves to achieve success in national development.

Keywords: skepticism, gullibility, economic stagnation, religious immaturity and sheer ignorance.

Introduction

Conventionally, skepticism is supposed to mean the doubt for the possibility of certain knowledge. This means that skepticism is a philosophical belief that knowledge is not possible. In this sense, somebody who may not think twice may even doubt the applicability of skepticism in solving Nigerian problems. However, the understanding of the concept here is the attitude of the skeptics. The focal point of the work is to use the attitude of skeptics in solving Nigerian problems particularly the moderate form of skepticism. In this understanding, moderate skepticism can be a panacea to Nigeria's political, economic, social and religious problems.

If one argues that Nigeria as a nation is not faced with the problems of political gullibility, low political consciousness, economic stagnation, religious immaturity and other social problems, then, the person is economical about the truth. Those issues are glaring and clear to even the deaf and the blind. The question that arises to any rational thinker is: how do we find ourselves to this pitiable national misfortune? The simple answer is: lack of skeptical disposition



in handling our matters. The leaders, the economic team and the people lack criticality, caution and investigative attitude in handling national assignments. In this connection, Nigeria as a nation has a serious need of skeptical attitude in its affairs to achieve political and economic prosperity. Moderate skepticism would bring about political, economic, social and religious maturity in the country. Such attitude would also promote careful and reciprocal living among members in the society. Therefore, moderate skepticism as an attitude can be a panacea to low political consciousness, economic stagnation, religious immaturity and other associated problems.

The concept of skepticism

The term skepticism etymologically is derived from the Greek verb “skeptomai” which means “to look carefully or to reflect”. It is also associated with another Greek word “skeptikos” which means “given to asking questions or an inquirer”. In either of the etymological understanding of the word depicts an attitude of looking at issues carefully with the intention not to make mistakes or accept views carelessly. It is an attitude of not been satisfied with a claim and still looking for truth.

However, skepticism is conventionally seen as the doubt for knowledge. It is attitude of doubt or incredulity either in general or towards a particular object or to any doubting or questioning attitude or state of mind. In other words, skepticism refers to an attitude of doubting the knowledge claims set forth in various areas of human endeavors. It is the refusal to grant that there is any knowledge. It involves asking questions about the premise upon which knowledge claims are made and trying to establish their veracity.¹ Meticulously, it is the opposite of dogmatism which stresses the fact that established beliefs are not to be doubted or disputed. From the foregoing, either understanding of the word (skepticism) connotes an attitude of doubt which tries to establish truth or pinpoint an error in a statement. Skepticism is an attitude that challenges the adequacy or reliability of knowledge claims by asking what they are based upon or what they actually establish.

Thus, Balogun argues that “skepticism” is a critical attitude². It is a philosophical attitude that doubts existing views, opinions and beliefs with a view of ascertaining the validity of such claims. Skepticism is the process of applying reason and critical thinking to determine validity. It is the process of finding a supported conclusion, not the justification of a preconceived conclusion. It connotes the critical spirit: the tendency of not being easily satisfied with simple, superficial evidence and striving to accept only

¹Efe, E, Joseph, Z and Joseph, O (2015). Philosophical skepticism: the future of faith based Higher Institutions in Nigeria. 3rd school of Education and Humanities. International Conference on the future of Higher Education in Africa: Babcock University, August 2015, p 3.

²Balogun, B. (2013). Political skepticism: A panacea for the Nigeria political leadership quagmire. International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities review, p 50.

incorrigible beliefs that are absolutely certain.³ It is a deliberate refusal to be gullible and deceived.

In summary, skepticism points to the following understanding:

- i. A mode of inquiry that stresses critical scrutiny, caution and intellectual rigor
- ii. A method of acquiring knowledge through systematic doubt and continual testing
- iii. A set of claims about the limitations of knowledge and the proper responses to such limitations

Basic tenets of skepticism

There are some basic assumptions and beliefs every skeptic shares or has in common. Modern skepticism is anchored on the following tenets:

- 1) **Take nothing for granted:** - Generally, skeptics have the orientation that no unexamined piece of knowledge claim can be taken for granted. Every knowledge claim has to be carefully investigated and taken to philosophical theater for rational and logical diagnosis to ascertain its veracity, validity and if discovered erroneous be dismissed. The epistemological skeptic would as a matter of procedure verify the epistemological credibility, veracity and reliability of every claim even if the claim has a long history. In the process of investigation, either a claim is certified true or not. If such claim is considered erroneous it cannot constitute knowledge and be discarded. This kind of verifying and investigative attitude can be a panacea to Nigerian complicated political and other socio-economic problems.
- 2) **Intellectual caution:** The philosophical attitude of skeptics are such that they are epistemologically cautious. It remains a fact that every knowledge claim is potentially suspicious as deficient until prove otherwise. Knowing that they are equally not immune to error as humans, skeptic make no claims that the process of examining knowledge is infallible. Since knowledge surrounding a particular claim is not sure, they would consider it safe to suspend judgment until after thorough investigation. This kind of cautious approach to information or knowledge claim is very necessary in every society particularly in Nigeria.
- 3) **Equal opportunity for doubt:** Skeptics are not selective in their rational, logical and epistemological activities. They cast proportional doubt to every assertion or claim. In other words, one knowledge claim should not merit more or less doubt than the other.
- 4) **Unbiased and continuous search for truth:** One major aspect of philosophical skepticism is the value ascribed to doubt and its prolonged inquiry. The essence of the doubt is to arrive at the truth of every claim. Succinctly, every doubter is a truth seeker; it is the demand for evidence that people call doubt. In doing this assignment of doubt, skeptics are unbiased, relentless, consistent and persistent in search for truth.

³Owolabi, K. (2000). The Nature and Problems of Epistemology, p 55. In: K. Owolabi (Ed). Issues and Problems in philosophy. Ibadan: Grovac network.

- 5) **Methodological search for truth:** The epistemological route to knowledge is unarguably rough. Therefore, skeptics are methodological in approach especially Cartesian skeptics. They investigate the basis for knowledge claims step by step following some set of rules. They are careful, orderly and goal oriented.

Types of skepticism

A. Absolute or Global Skepticism

Absolute or global skepticism is an attitude of doubt that knowledge of any sort is possible. This doubt about the possibility of knowledge does not spare any form of knowledge. Such skeptics virtually doubt knowledge claim of any sort. They contend that both *a priori*, and *a posteriori* knowledge are not possible. In other words, neither reason nor the senses can provide any secure source of certainty. The basic thesis of this position is that no one ever knows anything for certain including this position. This was exactly Gorgias' position who maintained that nothing exists: Even if anything exist, it cannot be known, even if can be known, we cannot communicate it to others. This kind of skepticism does not spare any domain of intellectual and practical pursuit. It is holistic attack on the possibility of certain knowledge from all sources of knowledge (the senses, reason, revelation, intuition and mystery). These skeptics took seriously the fact that conflicting views are possible in all assertions.

The early thinkers exerted themselves seriously to know the basic or primordial stuff of the universe but differ in their postulations. All the three Ionians agreed that there must be some entity from which all other things come into existence. They also believed this entity is some kind of material but each of them differed on the very nature of the material.⁴ It was these divergences that warranted this kind of skepticism in the ancient period. Renaissance skeptics from Erasmus to Montaigne stressed the human intrinsic inability to know absolute truth because of human intrinsic finitude in the cognitive quest.

They argued that human faculties were not sufficiently equipped with the requisite reliability to produce knowledge about the real nature of things. Even in the modern period, Descartes doubted all he had known previously based on this suspicion on the senses. Peter Unger extended this line of thought using contemporary scientific diction of an evil scientific or super neurosurgeon, who in her quest to nullify all over cognitive claims, uses the latest technological advancements to effect a deception about the simplest of things we may claim knowledge of.⁵ However, the problem this kind of skepticism faces is that, how valid is their claim when it is applied to itself? The reason is that the position of absolute skepticism suggests that they have at least known one thing for sure which is self-refuting or denying. Any attempt to formulate the position is self-refuting since it will involve at least some knowledge claims about what is supposed to be dubious. But the strength of skepticism lies not in whether it can

⁴ Idang, G. (2013). Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes as Pathfinders of Modern science. *International Journal of Philosophy*, p 57

⁵ Bewaji, J. (2007). *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge. A Pluricultural approach*. Ibadan: Hope publications p 257.

be stated consistently but in its effects on the arguments of dogmatic philosophers. Skepticism may be self-refuting but in the process of refuting itself it undermines dogmatism. It is like a purge that eliminates itself as well as everything else. Skepticism throughout history has played a dynamic role in forcing dogmatic philosophers to find better or stronger basis for their views. Indeed, the history of philosophy can be seen in part as a struggle with skepticism.

B. Moderate or Mitigated Skepticism

Moderate skepticism is an attitude of doubt that questions whether we have knowledge about a particular domain of claims. This form of skepticism does not doubt the entire body of knowledge but is restricted to particular domains or areas. David Hume was an advocate of moderate skepticism. To him, moderate skepticism is concerned with the truthfulness of human perceptions and ideas. Hume's major doubt was on the dangerous implications of representative theory of perception which he inherited from his epistemological predecessors. In his view, let us assume that we perceive an elephant, what we actually mean is that we have in our mind a mental idea of such animal. The claimed knowledge is purely an internal, mental and subjective representation of an entity that we assume to be outside, physical, and objective. In Hume's argument, there are difficulties in ascribing truthfulness to such perception because there is no correlation between the images in the mind and objects outside. If truth is construed as the correlation between images and the objects, then we cannot establish the fact that there are true world of objects since the only valid proof of the external world is merely internal ideas. Also, there are no proofs to show that mental ideas faithfully represent physical objects. Hume argues that because humans are unable to observe the connections made between ideas, those ideas are irrational and cannot be completely trusted. An example is the belief that the sun will rise tomorrow based upon the fact that in the past the sun rose. However, Hume argues that it is impossible to predict a future event based on past experience. The individual may expect the sun to rise tomorrow, however he is incapable of knowing this without a doubt. It draws the conclusion that there are certain subjects that we cannot coherently enquire about. Reasoning can legitimately inform us about mathematics and particular matters of fact, existence and causation that can be established by experience. However, metaphysical enquires including the attempt to show the external world are impossible while matters of religion are best founded on faith and Revelation, not reason.

Moderate skepticism is more conservative in its denial of the possibility of knowledge. In this form of skepticism knowledge is possible in the weak sense and its denial is mild. Moderate skepticism is a philosophical approach that attempt to provide a level of caution in human reason. This implies that it does not entirely deny the possibility of human knowledge. It is at the level of intellectual carefulness about human knowledge. This implies that it does not entirely deny the possibility of human knowledge. It is at the level of intellectual carefulness about human cognition. Its doubt on the possibility of knowledge is area specific. This kind of doubt on a particular domain of claim is what is referred to as moderate skepticism.

C. Academic skepticism

Academic skepticism is a philosophical attitude of doubt that flourished in the Plato's academy after his death which argues that knowledge is not possible and any attempt to know anything for certain is doomed to failure. The argument of the academic skeptics is that we do not know anything for certain because we lack justification for knowledge. This skepticism was named after the Plato's academy since its origin was traceable to the school. Major proponents of academic skepticism were Arcesilaus, Carneades, Clitomachus and Philo. The basic thesis of the academic skeptics consists in showing the futility of applying knowledge to empirical assertions following the contrast between how things appear and how they really are.⁶ These skeptics who do not entirely deny the possibility of human knowledge rather renounce the ideal of certainty and concentrate on how our beliefs and assertions can be justified. They argue that since absolute certainty is not possible, one should rather consider how our assent, our acceptance of some others as true and non-acceptance of others as false can have justification with evidence. In other words, this position of the skeptics implies that all knowledge is doubtful and there is need to probe every knowledge claim.

D. Pyrrhonian Skepticism

Pyrrhonian skepticism is of the view that the question of the possibility of knowledge is not known at the moment and calls for suspension of judgment on knowledge issues. The Pyrrhonian skeptics do not affirm any knowledge claim at all about the possibility of knowledge or its negation. As far as they know, all attempts at claiming knowledge either in favour or against has failed and what they have to do is to suspend judgment on knowledge issues to attain mental tranquility. This kind of skepticism was named after the founder, Pyrrho of Elis. Pyrrhonian skeptics do not affirm or deny anything and take no part in the controversy regarding the possibility of certain knowledge. They suspend judgment until beyond reasonable doubt. In this sense, while the academic skeptics claim to have discovered the truth that the search for knowledge is futile, for the Pyrrhonian skeptics, the search is never over. It is a continuous search for knowledge that constantly slips from grasp.⁷

Thus Beierling attempts to present Pyrrhonism not as a radical school whose adherents advocated doubt for everything but as a judicious method of approaching philosophical question.⁸ Pyrrhonian was a rhetorical strategy used to conquer the unfounded claims of dogmatic philosophers who went too far in their assertions. It provided a method for invalidating dogmatic positions. The attitude of Pyrrhonian is such that the question of possibility of knowledge is unknown at the moment while the search continues. Therefore, the difference between academic and Pyrrhonian skepticism is that while the academic

⁶Bewaji, J. (2007). An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge. A Pluricultural approach. Ibadan: Hope publications p 261.

⁷Uduigwomen, A and Udofia, C (2014). A Critical History of Philosophy (Ancient and Medieval). Calabar: Ultimate Index Book Publishers p 357.

⁸Matytsin, A. (2014). Pyrrhonism or Academic Skepticism? Friedrich Wilhelm Bierlings Reasonable Doubt in the Commentatio De Pyrrhonismo Historico. Skepsis, ano, p 131.

skeptics have discovered the truth that knowledge is not possible, the pyrrhonians refused to assert any position on the knowledge question because the truth of its affirmation or negation is unknown at the moment while the search is ongoing. It aims at suspending judgment on knowledge to attain mental peace and tranquility. The reason for the suspension of judgment is that there is no sufficient evidence to affirm any knowledge claim or to play neutrality on epistemological assertions and postulations.

E. Cartesian or Methodological Skepticism

Cartesian or methodological skepticism is a form of skepticism associated with the writings and methodology of Descartes. Cartesian skepticism is a systematic and orderly method of doubting existing views to remove the least doubt in them and arrive at indubitable truth. As it is well known, Cartesian doubt is the argument for the Cartesian soul as *Rex cogitans*, i.e. as exclusively mind or consciousness⁹. It is an approach of subjecting all knowledge claims to critical scrutiny with the aim of sorting out true propositions from false claims. This form of skepticism emphasizes the systematic process of being skeptical about the truth of one's beliefs which has become a characteristic method of philosophy. The primary purpose of this skepticism is to use doubt as a route to sure and certain knowledge thereby removing the least doubt in any knowledge claim. The fallibility of the human senses is the attack of the Cartesian doubt. It is anchored in foundationalism which aims to eliminate all beliefs and claims which are prone to doubt, thus, leaving Descartes with only basic beliefs that do not rest on any other belief. Such beliefs are foundational in nature and immune to the least doubt which form the basic structure of knowledge. Rene Descartes who is the originator and father of Cartesian doubt put all assertions, ideas and beliefs to this methodic doubt to ascertain their origin and validity. However, Descartes in the process of doubting every previous knowledge claim discovered that he was thinking because to doubt is a proof that one is thinking. And to think is a confirmation of existence because one must exist to think which lead to his Famous *Cogito Ergo Sum* (I think therefore am). This conclusion served as the foundation upon which every knowledge is based in modern philosophy.

History of skepticism

The origin of skepticism is traceable to the postulations of the Ionian thinkers. The attention of thinkers was to find the primordial stuff out of which all things are made in the universe. However, in an attempt to give their individual postulations to the basic principle that accounts for everything in the universe led to divergent views. It is this divergent and conflicting speculations of the early thinkers that introduced skepticism. All the postulations from Thales to Democritus were all indicators of skepticism because they doubted the positions of each other.

Skepticism actually came to limelight by the arguments of the sophists especially Gorgias and Protagoras. Gorgias in his skepticism argues that nothing

⁹Walter S. (1978). The Methodological Achievement of Cartesian Doubt. The Southern Journal of Philosophy 16(1) p 661.

exist in the universe. He argues further that even if anything exists, man cannot know it. He finally concludes that even if man knows any of such thing, he cannot communicate it to other people. Gorgias position implied that knowledge was not possible at all. The second sophist, Protagoras reacted to the view of Gorgias by arguing that man can know but what each individual know, is relative to him or her. He argues that "man is the measure of all things: of those that are, that they are and of those that are not, that they are not". In other words, man is the decider of his reality. Hence, he introduced relativism in philosophy. This negative positions of the sophists stimulated the reaction of other thinkers on the certainty of knowledge. Hence, the problem of certainty of knowledge (skepticism) was created in philosophy. Therefore, the epistemic stage was set for the rescue and search for certain knowledge. Several efforts were made by thinkers in the ancient period to achieve objectivity but to no avail as thinkers disagree on positions.

The search for solution for the problem created by skepticism was interrupted by the issues of faith and reason in the medieval period. Hence, skepticism in the medieval period did not attract much attention. The issue was that the very argument of skepticism was against the belief system of the period. It was a period dominated by revelation, faith and truth. Dogmatism was the attitude of every thinker and therefore, the position of the skeptics did not arise since they believed that God was the source of every knowledge and was absolutely certain.

Skepticism resurfaced in the modern period which was taken seriously by Rene Descartes. Descartes made a conscientious and radical effort to use skepticism as an epistemic tool to overcome the problem of knowledge and its advancement. Descartes observed that philosophy was plaque with errors and falsities. He looked back and saw a lot of incorrect claims he had accepted as true over the years. Therefore, he made up his mind to remove every error in the process of acquiring knowledge claim using his methodic doubt to discover the first truth as the Cogito Ergo Sum (I think, therefore, I am). From this foundational knowledge, he was able to know many other truths in philosophy. Another trace of skepticism was found in the philosophy of David Hume. David Hume was a well-known skeptic in the modern period. According to him, there is no certainty in our knowledge of "matter of fact" or of existing things. He said that we cannot prove what we claim to know. Also, our life is based on assumptions, beliefs, emotions and feelings. Hume arrived at this conclusion based on inherent contradictions in existing philosophical theories. Thus, he explains that "there is nothing which is not the subject of debate, and in which men of learning are not of contrary opinions Disputes are multiplied, as If everything was uncertain. The problem is that human nature, the sources of all our cognitive powers is inadequately understood.¹⁰ He concluded that even our best theories about both physical and mental phenomena are plaque with contradictions.

Skepticism made it way to the contemporary period in the philosophy of Bertrand Russell. Russell avers that we cannot attain absolute certainty in

¹⁰Lawhead, W. (2002). *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*. 2nd edition. Belmont: University of Mississippi.

philosophy and that the study of philosophy is largely associated with uncertainties. According to him, there is hardly any knowledge that cannot be subjected to doubt. In fact, he questions the possibility of certain knowledge as he probes "is there any knowledge in the world which is so certain that no reasonable man could doubt?"¹¹. It is Russell's opinion that there is no knowledge which is so certain that it cannot be put to reasonable doubt. In fact, it is an obvious point that skepticism has played a dynamic role in the advancement of human knowledge.

Skepticism and Nigerian problems

Following the moderate and attitudinal perspective of skepticism, it can be construed as a critical, evaluative and investigative attitude. This implies that skepticism is an attitude of looking at issues carefully with the intention not to make careless mistakes or accept views without probe. It is a position that demands the application of critical thinking and reason to every issues of life without minding what they pretend to portray or stands for. Hence, skepticism is the deliberate attempt to be sure and careful in handling every matter. This implies that moderate skepticism can be a panacea to Nigerian political and socio-economic problems.

In this connection, Nigeria as a nation needs the epistemic role of skepticism in all its affairs in solving our multifaceted and complicating political and social problems. One thing that is sure is that the role of moderate skepticism is immeasurable and highly unquantifiable if we need solutions to our problems in the country. Therefore, an excursion of remedies and solutions by the application of moderate skepticism to Nigerian problems are in view. Areas of consideration are political consciousness, economic growth, social consciousness and change, religious maturity, social media deceptions and academic advancement.

a. Skepticism and Political Consciousness in Nigeria:

It is a truism that Nigeria as a country is faced with the problem of low political consciousness which has resulted to political gullibility with its dire consequences. Political consciousness simply means the people in the polity being awake to their political roles as stakeholders. Such roles include making wise decisions in elections by voting the best candidate, giving constructive criticisms to the government, engage in useful protests and demonstration and supporting government policies if they are rational. However, all these political roles are being neglected emanating from low political consciousness which has resulted to political gullibility. Credulous and unquestioning attitude is disastrous to any nation. Such attitude makes people to take anything for granted, hence become prone to falling prey to human contrivances. Gullibility is a disease of the unlearned and unsuspecting mind. In a country where ignorance and the lack of intelligence reign, it is doomed for complete failure in governance. The point is that a good number of Nigerians lack political consciousness because they do not adopt the attitude of skepticism in their political life thereby allowing politicians to take undue advantage of the people.

¹¹Russell, B (1960). Problems of Philosophy. Oxford: Oxford University Press p1.

When President Muhammadu Buhari for instance promised “Change” in his 2015 presidential campaign, the majority of Nigerians were not skeptical enough to ask the kind of change he was promising before voting for him. Similarly, he came up with “next level Agenda” in 2019 general election and political players were still gullible. Probing the promised change and the next level agenda with an iota of skepticism would have made some difference. In other words, skepticism is a panacea to low political consciousness with its dire consequences. If people are careful and critical to political players, they would not fall for their cheap deceptions. This would help both the rulers and the ruled to operate optimally in performing their respective civic responsibilities in the politics of the nation. The truth is that the political life of the country is not growing. Our democracy is retarded, fumbling, wobbling and always in a mess. The politics of a nation cannot grow or develop without the aid of skepticism. Leaders in the country need skepticism in order to be truly rational in all their dealings. Political skepticism strives to consolidate the government by repositioning it for a more effective service to the people. Therefore, the adoption of skeptical attitude on the side of both the rulers and the ruled in Nigerian politics must be a welcome idea because it promotes political consciousness and the positive effects of good governance.

b. Skepticism and Economic Growth in Nigeria:

Economic growth of a country has to do with the increase in aggregate production in an economy. In other words, it is the progress of production and equitable distribution of goods and services for the good of any society. The factors that can bring about such growth include human resources, physical capital, natural resources and technology. This means that the economic prosperity of any nation can only come to fruition when the managers of the economy adopt a reflective and prudent mind because it only takes the reflective mind to manage the factors of economic growth in any country. In fact, it is a truism that when the mind is developed, it will certainly affect the economic progress of the country. Hence, it is necessary to assert that Nigeria's economic problem is partly caused by the lack of carefulness, prudence, management and critical thinking on the side of the economic team of the country which is the function of skepticism. Skepticism if it is moderately applied, contains what it takes to reactivate a collapsing economy because the advancement of the human mind is a determinant to the growth of the economy. In this connection,

Ejikemeuwa corroborates that “a developed mind translates to developed economy”¹². It takes a developed mind to generate economic ideas and actualize such ideas. Nigeria as a country needs to adopt skeptical attitude to sharpen the creative mind of the people especially the economic team to bring about economic prosperity. Thus, there is no doubt that skepticism is necessary in the actualization of economic growth in the country.

¹²Ejikemeuwa, N (2014). Nature and function of logic in African Epistemology. Journal of Human and Social Sciences p 45.

c. Skepticism and Social Change:

Social change simply refers to changes in human interactions and relationships that transform cultural and social institutions. It is a kind of paradigm shift that result in the alteration in the social order of the society. The basis of social change is the transformation of the mind of the human person. The basic tenets of skepticism can bring about social change in Nigeria. This is possible because skepticism prepares our minds and liberates us from the shackles of prejudice of our age. With this skeptical mentality, Nigerians can now question certain practices and traditions that contradict human rationality. Such practices that do not correlate with reason are to be discarded or modified. Skepticism provides us with epistemological temerity to jettison varied superstitious beliefs in our society. Thus, Omoregbe Joseph argues that Philosophical ideas are dynamites which can explode, shatter things and bring about a transformation of structures.¹³ The clear point is that skeptical attitude is foundational to social change. Skepticism as a critical and observational attitude can provide Nigerians with mental disposition to reason correctly and reject negative and irrational practices in the cover of culture and tradition. Societal problems such as gender and racial discrimination, child marriage, autocracy and man's inhumanity to man are all solvable through skeptical disposition.

D. Skepticism and Religious Immaturity in Nigeria:

A religion is the belief in and worship of a Supernatural Being that controls the affairs of such a believer that is unseen; especially a personal God or gods. Then, the attitude of skepticism would warrant a careful and disciplined disposition of adherents in various religions. If such a supernatural Being and His existence is yet to be proven, there is no point killing one another for the sake of such a Being. Also, the findings from various religions indicate that there is only one Supreme Being (God) approached differently. Then the attitude of skepticism would help Nigerians appreciate the fact that each of us is unique and as such every religion is unique. Since the attitude of skepticism accommodates criticism and contrary opinions, various religions should condone contrary beliefs and doctrines. Adherents of various religions should respect the views of others, be it religious views or otherwise. Skeptical adoption would make Christians, Muslims and traditional worshippers in Nigeria tolerate one another without any form of violence or hatred. Hence, skepticism can reduce the incessant religious violence that is often experienced in the country. Also, the attitude of skepticism would provide Nigerian youths with the acumen to question certain commands or instructions from religious leaders that are detrimental to peaceful co-existence. Skepticism would find out reason for accepting any thing in the name of God. In this sense it has a very important role to play in the contemporary society that is bedeviled by religious pranks and deceit in the name of God. Today many families are scattered because of fake and untrue prophecies from false prophets. They fall into such cheap deceptions because they lack the skeptical attitude. All that glitters is not gold. Therefore, skepticism is a necessary attitude in our religious lives.

¹³Iwuagwu, E. (2016). The Need for a Contemporary Nigerian Philosophy to be taught at every level of Nigeria's educational programme. *European Scientific Journal*, 9(2) p 251-252

E. Skepticism and Social Media Deceptions

Some of the ways people can be deceived in the social media are discussed below:

Catfishing

Catfishing is an internet scam in which a cybercriminal creates a fake outline profile to seduce a victim into a fictitious online relationship to get money or other benefits from the victim. This kind of scam happens in Facebook, WhatsApp and other sites in the internet. Once the catfishing criminals lure their victims, they begin establishing trust and building relationship. Eventually this culminates in an agreement to meet that will warrant requesting money. Unfortunately, this is all a ploy to manipulate the victim. However, if internet users are skeptical, such deception can be noticed and avoided. What prepares the fertile ground for such scams are carelessness, gullibility and the lack of critical attitude.

Profile Hijacking

Profile hijacking is another nefarious act perpetrated by some users in the Facebook. In this case, cybercriminals often use the attributes and details of real people as their photos, hometowns and occupation to set up profiles pretending to be those people. Other variants of this scam involve breaking into an existing profile, changing the password to scam users in the person's network. Once in, the scammer might use the profile to ask the victim for money. Sometimes a cybercriminal messages the user's connections claiming that they have lost their wallet while on vacation and need a wire transfer of cash to get home. All these can be detected with skeptical prowess on the internet users. Internet users need to be critical and logical in reasoning.

Money – Flipping

Money flipping is the act of internet fraudsters to extort money from their victims by convincing them to make a lucrative investment. Cybercriminals make it seem like their victims are investing their money in a business that can double their money. In other words, social media is being used to lure new victims into an old get rich quick scam. In the end, people are defrauded in such fake business. One of such cases was MMM that operated in 2017 – 2018. People lost a fabulous amount of money on MMM. Now, since 2020 till this 2021, a similar business called Baraza is reigning in Bayelsa state and some few other states doubling money for gullible customers and I know at the end, customers will be defrauded. Skeptical reasoning could avert such deceptions. The question that is supposed to arise from a rational human being is how can a person pay to Baraza cooperative two hundred thousand naira (200,000) and Baraza pay 30% interest profit to that person in a month's time? How can someone invest with two hundred thousand naira (200,000) in a month time and pay thirty thousand naira (30,000) to another person and will still make profit? The simple answer is that they are only taking Mr. A money to pay Mr. B and take C's money to pay B. After they may have collected enough money from

gullible customers over the time, they would have no option than to run with all the money. Skeptical attitude can be a panacea to such scenarios.

D. Skepticism and Academic Advancement

There is no way knowledge can grow within the academic circles without skepticism because knowledge is cumulative. The moment academic researchers stop investigating and studying, knowledge would be stagnated. Continuous revalidation of knowledge claims is the basis of academic advancement. In other words, educational advancement in Nigeria would be greatly influenced by the level of researches carried out in our universities and other institutions in the country. What actually informs research is the dissatisfaction with the existing knowledge. What keep knowledge growing is the contributions people make on existing knowledge claims in form of criticism and assessments. Any researcher who does not accept contrary views is not ready for knowledge advancement. It is the act of criticizing, probing and investigating existing views that brings about the advancement of knowledge. This attitude of probing, evaluating and investigating existing knowledge is foundational to skepticism. Therefore, academic scholars should cultivate the attitude of skepticism (criticality, criticism, evaluative and investigative disposition) to bring about academic advancement.

Conclusion

The basic understanding of this work is that moderate skepticism can be a panacea to Nigerian political, economic, and social problems emanating from gullibility, carelessness and sheer ignorance. The philosophical implication is that such problems are bound to persist if skeptical attitude is not adopted or imbibed. In other words, political players especially our leaders in the legislative, executive and the judiciary should adopt the attitude of skepticism to solve the highlighted problems. Also, the common man is not exempted from the recommendation. Nigerian thinkers as well as the people in the nation should adopt the attitude of skepticism to avert societal problems resulting from cheap deceptions and their consequences. More so, skepticism enhances cordial and reciprocal living. The reason why we offend each other in the society today is the fact that we are not respectful of the attitudes, behavior and dispositions of others. If we are reserved in our utterances and dealings, society tends to achieve peaceful co-existence. Even the economic growth and success of every individual, state or country especially a developing nation like Nigeria is greatly influenced by the level of rational skepticism displayed in handling economic issues. Economic matters are not matters handled with carelessness and frivolity. They are handled with Prudence, caution and skeptical prowess. The bottom line is that Nigerian leaders and the people should embrace skeptical thinking to avert political, economic, religious and other social problems in Nigeria.

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