

A PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION OF NEO-PAGNISM IN THE PRESENT IGBO SOCIETY IN THE LIGHT OF MARTIN HEIDEGGER'S FALLENNESS

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Abstract

The major preoccupation of this research will be on Martin Heidegger's analysis of Fallenness especially on the view that it is one of the ontological structures of Dasein, essential to it as a Being-in and a Being-with and again, on the view that it constitutes Dasein's lost of itself and absorption into the world of its concern. This will be followed with a philosophical investigation of how this analysis, particularly Heidegger's characteristics of Fallenness, addresses the issue of neo-paganism among the youths owing to the fact that neo-paganism (as a form of religion) constitutes the world of Dasein/human person. By 'world', Heidegger means those structures of life where Dasein's being is actualized and authenticated. Besides religion, others include art, language, politics, et cetera. Applying this light of vision in the researchers' investigation into the high rate of departure into neo-Paganism by our youths with the Contemporary Igbo Society as a case study, this study is faced with the problems of handling the seeming contradiction in Heidegger's analysis of Fallenness as not expressing any negative evaluation and at the same time, possessing mostly, the character of Being-lost; addressing the issue of neo-paganism among the younger generation of today with Heidegger's analysis of Fallenness; and identifying the causes of this development. For this reason, in exposing Heidegger's claims and investigating into the belief-system of neo-Paganism, this work adopts the analytic method and then, the critical approach of philosophy. In its unbiased findings, this work submits that a cursory look at the recent exodus into neo-Paganism reveals a fact that is far removed from the ontological purpose of realizing one's being. Thus, as against this, it recommends our-evaluation of the choices we make – even the choice of religion – in our quest for self-actualization and authenticity.

Keywords: Philosophical Investigation, Neo-Paganism, Fallenness , Martin Heidegger, Igbo Society.

Introduction

The Roman poet and philosopher, Lucretius once espoused that "nothing at all is ever born from nothing"(Lucretius; 1968). In the light of this, this research is informed by a reasoned

inquiry into religion, specifically on the prevalent cases of neo-paganism among our youths and unwarranted religious identity crisis that have, more often than not, rendered man a groundless floating being unable to define his existence. Hence, this research focuses on an unbiased investigation into neo-paganism, through the perspective of Martin Heidegger's '*Fallenness*', among the young generation of Igbo Society owing to some observed facts that raise eyebrows of doubt on the said religion. 'Doubt' because, being one of the world recognized religions, as N. Ndiokwere points out (Ndiokwere1994), 'Neo-paganism', as it is practiced in Igbo Society today, appears to have drifted from what Heidegger calls the 'There' of Dasein. Understanding that *Dasein* in Martin Heidegger is a coinage of two German words that literally mean "being there" (Lawhead; 2002), the 'there' thus becomes the "place for the unconcealment of being" (Schalow & Denker; 2010). Religion – specifically Neo-paganism – rather than being a structure for the self actualization of man has, as it is being practiced in the recent time, rendered man a lost (fallen) being, a groundless being not in full possession of 'Self.'

Heidegger's analysis of *Fallenness* has a two-fold interpretation, namely, positive and negative, better still, what I term the upside and downside interpretations of '*Fallenness*.' In its positive dimension, '*Fallenness*' as an essential ontological feature of Dasein constitutes the ontological quest for knowing one's being or realizing one's being, which essentially belongs to Dasein as Being-in-the-world. It is an anonymous force that dominates the everyday existence of the individual to become that which is its concern or that which is along-the-world-of-its-concern. Dasein falls to that which is along-the-world-of-its-concern, only for the ontological reason of actualization and realization of the self. On the other side, it connotes negativity when mirrored from the perspective dimensions of 'conformity' and 'absorption' into the 'they.' Holding on to this interpretation, Dasein not only falls from itself, it loses itself in that which could have contributed in actualizing its Being. Therefore, a cursory look at the recent massive exodus into neo-paganism, through the focal lens of Heidegger's *Fallenness*, reveals a fact that is far removed from the ontological purpose of realizing one's being.

In the present Igbo community, it is observed that the youths, in their considerable numbers, go into neo-pagan worship. Looking at this on the periphery, one would relegate this issue to religious field and would not only condemn the act and explain it away with lack of faith, but would also question its philosophical import here. However, philosophically speaking, this act of migration from one religious belief to another constitutes no danger at all so long as it is motivated by the ontological quest to actualize one's being. Human person engages in religious affairs because of the lack in its being. Thus, whichever form of religion that satisfies this lack represents the 'there' – where Dasein realizes itself – of Dasein which it achieves through *falling*. Because Dasein is its own issue, – the only being that questions its existence and its world – what is paramount, philosophically, is that Dasein identifies and realizes its being and not casting doubt on the authenticity of the structure that has guaranteed this. This goes to support the fact that there is no established hierarchy of status among various religions of the world.

But, worthy to mention is the fact that this research is not only informed by the observed fact of massive movement into neo-paganism among our youths. It is also informed by the fact that this act of migration from one religion to another, precisely from Christian Religion to

Traditional Religion, or (by extension) from one Christian denomination to another reveals a fact that is far from the ontological purpose of realizing one's Being. Instead of emerging a better individual conscious that he exists, (which of course, is assumed to have prompted the change), a considerable number appears to be absorbed in what they have been made to believe by the 'anonymous crowd' or the 'Other' as Jean-Paul Sartre claims (Sartre; 1984), and thus, have lost (fallen from) the 'self.' Many change to Traditional Religion and even from one Christian denomination to the other not for the sake of realizing the self (authenticity) but out of the lack of sufficient and grounded knowledge in what they believe in or for the sake of seeking novelty – leaping from it to another novelty – which Heidegger represents as idle talk and curiosity, respectively. This dovetails into the unwarranted religious identity crisis that is prevalent today among our youths. As a result of this religious drama, many have become incapable of defining themselves through their religious affiliation. They are into neo-paganism without adequate knowledge of the belief system. Some are both neo-pagans and Christians at the same time while others limp from one Christian denomination to the other. What do we get then? Of course, nothing but the loss of "self" and religious syncretism, by extension.

For Heidegger, "*Fallenness*" reveals an ontological structure of Dasein itself and so, does not express any negative evaluation. This is because; '*falling*' signifies that Dasein is for the most part immersed in the world (Blattner; 2006). However, this '*Fallenness*' that is an essential ontological feature of Dasein as both a 'Being-in' and a 'Being-with', also, has mostly a character of Being-lost in the world, in the publicness of the "they". This therefore, elicits certain problems. Does Heidegger not defy the 'law of excluded middle' by holding that *Fallenness* expresses no negative evaluation and at the same time, possesses mostly, the character of Being-lost? Can we not say that its interpretation is rather two-fold in the sense that '*falling*' also includes the way Dasein allows its occasions of fall to cause it to turn-away from a primordial relation to itself? Moreover, how does Heidegger's analysis of *Fallenness* address the issue of neo-paganism among the younger generation of today? Can we, philosophically, address neo-paganism (which is one of the forms of religion) through the focal lens of Heidegger's "*Fallenness*"? More still, why investigating Neo-paganism? Is it not among the world recognized religions, or are there traces of inauthenticity inherent in it? Can we therefore discover the 'why', and certain causes of this observed religious migration and the resultant religious identity crisis that tear man away from a primordial relation to itself? All these problems, therefore, constitute the major hub of this research, which it attempts to address.

Neo-Paganism

Analysis is at the heart of any philosophical exposition. Thus, analyzing the term neo-paganism is pertinent because of the ambiguity of the term. Neo-paganism as a word comprises of two words: *neo-* and *pagan*. While the former means 'new', the latter – a derivative of the Latin word *paganus* – means, "a person who lives in a rural area" (Merriam-Webster; 2019). Literally, this does not satisfy the definition of neo-paganism. "The prefix *neo-*, meaning "new", implies that an ancient belief, practice or custom has been discovered and adapted to the modern era. The word *pagan*, on the other hand, "generally refers to any ancient, pre-Christian set religious beliefs, gods, symbols, rituals, and practices" (Eller; 2019). Neo-paganism therefore, is applied to "any of several spiritual movements that attempt to

revive the ancient polytheistic religions" (Stefon; 2010). In other words, neo-paganism is a descriptive term and not the name of a specific religion. By descriptive the research implies that it is a term applied to any modern religious movement that tries to reconstruct religious practices adapted from traditional and modern religions. Cambridge English Dictionary also defines neo-paganism as "a modern religion that includes beliefs and activities that are not from any of the main religions of the world" (Cambridge English Dictionary; 2019). Neo-paganism can also be referred to as *new paganism*, *revived paganism*, *contemporary religion*, et cetera.

General Exposition of Neo-Paganism

Discussing neo-Paganism may be problematic because there are no tradition and dogma common to, and strictly followed by all neo-Pagans. Nevertheless, the approach here would focus on providing researched explanations and features of neo-Paganism (on some occasions expressed as Paganism or Contemporary Paganism) for a better understanding of it as a world's recognized religion. J. Blain et al. as quoted by J. Butler in his article "Irish Neo-Paganism: World-view and Identity" prefers "Paganism" to "neo-Paganism" since, according to him, "Paganism exists both as a mode of religious expression concealed within other religious traditions and as a self-conscious set of religious traditions themselves"(Butler; 2011). This implies that "Paganism" provides a wider perspective for treating indigenous religions and syncretic adaptations of religious practices (Butler; 2011). The prefix "neo-" indicates the contemporary outlook as distinct from the pre-Christian outlook of Paganism. This informs also the use of the concept, 'Contemporary Paganism.'

A clear undeniable fact about our view of Paganism/neo-Paganism is that it is negatively construed as Satanic, barbaric and evil. This is even quite evident from its Latin origin, *paganus*— country dwellers. C. Uzimba remarks that 'country dwellers' was used to refer to the Roman citizens who refused to accept the Christian faith during the Christianization of the Roman Empire. There is no doubt that this negative appellation has continued even up to this day. This conventional belief is not in any way as a result of its secret practices because every other religious group is not without its own secrets and what it refers to as sacred. Most scholars are of the view that this is facilitated by the absence of any text on traditions and doctrines and inadequate explanation of the belief systems and rituals on the part of the adherents. J. Butler, a neo-pagan, laments on this false assumption when he writes:

There is the damaging and false association made by popular media between neo-Paganism and animal sacrifice, 'black magic' and ritual orgies. There is the added misapprehension of neo-Paganism as anti-Christian which stems from the use of the word 'pagan' and 'heathen' by Christian clerics to mean either something evil and Satanic or something non-religious or atheist(Butler; 2011).

Beclouded by these false assumptions about Paganism, many feel it is less important researching about it. Paganism/neo-Paganism could be simply described as a nature-based religion. According to M. A. Gault, "neo-Paganism is a broad, and somewhat general term, used to categorize a diverse group of nature based religions"(Gault; 2015). Similar to this, J. Butler opines that "neo-Paganism is a broad term for a range of modern-day 'earth-based' spiritual paths"(Butler; 2009). For him therefore, a single neo-Pagan path can vary widely from

another in terms of belief and practices. More direct and simplified than all these definitions from the “indigenous religious point of view” is that by the Encyclopedia Britannica. It defines neo-Pagans as typically people with romantic feeling toward nature and deep ecological concerns, and who centre their dramatic and colourful rituals on the changes of the seasons and the personification of nature as full of divine life (Stefon; 2010).

On the other arm, some scholars define neo-paganism as a sort of spiritual reaction to the contemporary world. Among such scholars is D. Sorea who defines neo-Paganism as “a reaction to the challenges raised by postmodernism, secularization, as well as by the rigidity of the official discourse of the Christian churches to religiosity”(Sorea; 2013). Defined from this view-point, neo-Paganism is seen as a product of the reaction against the authoritarian and dogmatic nature of established religions, like Christianity, and a quest for a law-free religion that “privileges the experience of personal ritual over belief”(Grieve; 1995). This definition verily reflects Heidegger’s ontological re-interpretation of Fallenness as “Being-present-at-hand in the manner of an entity within the world”(Heidegger; 1962). By “present-at-hand” (*Vorhanddenheit*), Heidegger brings out an ontological character of being as that immersed in activity. Through this characteristic, a person/being exists in constant reaction to situations of its being, or in constant action and reaction to the ‘world of its concern’ where it actualizes its being. Hence, according to Heidegger, “being-fallen into the ‘world’ does not now somehow come to rest”(Heidegger; 1962). Being his own issue, man determines that which is most suited to him. This choice is not left out in the religious sphere where the individual chooses his religious group depending on his affiliation to nature, dogma and tradition, free-belief system or enlightenment. With this, we can then understand while someone can choose to be a pagan/neo-pagan because he/she cannot deal with the challenges of rigid faith system of Christianity or those from other established religions. At this level, there is not yet any harm because the human person is only reacting to his concern (which Fallenness depicts), trying to establish and actualize his being.

Being an umbrella term for a broad range of revivalist religious groups and traditions, neo-Paganism includes Wicca, neo-Druidry, Heathenry, neo-Shamanism, Norse neo-Paganism and various other traditions that attempt to reconstruct ancient Greek, Celtic, or African tribal religions (Hedenborg; 2014). Going into the details of these various groups isn’t necessary for what this essay tends to achieve. Thus, the researcher will limit the research on the African neo-Paganism and quickly go into the principles governing this belief system.

Basic Principles of Neo-Paganism

Although Afro-Pagan belief system varies from one African society to the other, there are certain principles upon which it is based. These principles can as well form the characteristic features of Afro-Paganism that mark it different from other religions. Generally, Pagans have reverence for the natural order of life. Thus, “they celebrate nature and spirituality and encourage an eco-friendly lifestyle” (Brown; 2019). The other basic principles include shared meaning of symbols, responsibility of belief and freedom. However, as a characteristic element of existence and its importance in building authentic believers, it is pertinent to discuss “freedom” as it applies to this belief system.

Freedom

Paganism is a free religion with no form of rigid doctrines and a semi-formal spiritual path to the divinity. The practitioners follow their own design in their communion with the divine. In most cases, just as Heidegger's concept of '*Dasein* being its own issue', "it is up to the individual to determine what Deity means to them, who or what Deity is right for them and how they ultimately develop their relationship with their chosen Deity" (Brown; 2019). This implies that both what the individual ascribes value to and the pattern of worship are left at the whims and caprices of the individual concerned. Because of this principle or characteristic feature, some individuals who cannot deal with the demands of other formalized religions see Paganism as an option that accommodates their personal affiliation. Their argument for this hinges on J. Dewey's remark that "beliefs look both ways, towards persons and towards things" (Dewey; 1965). For them, formalized beliefs like Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and so on, pay much attention to the latter while neglecting the former. They look towards things/objects of their belief whose immediate meanings form their content while neglecting the individuals who ascribe such meanings and value to them. Freedom inherent in Paganism therefore, allows them the role of determinants of their faith system.

Brief History of Neo-Paganism in Igbo Society

Because Paganism lacks proper documentation, there is not yet any published historical work on its emergence in most of Igbo communities. However, the discussion here would rely on the observations and interviews from the few individuals encountered in the course of this research. To question the origin of Paganism in Igbo Society, leaving aside the new form (neo-Paganism), is to question the origin of the Igbo Society itself. As a religious being, man sees himself as insufficient being to be made complete by that which he believes orders every existent (himself inclusive) in nature and is greater than all these existents; thus, the name "*Chi-ukwu*." Nature, which is so visible and evident to him, became the object of his belief through which he indirectly relates to this Supreme Being. To this Being they recline for succor in moments of difficulties. Therefore, it is from its contact with Nature that it received the name "Nature-based/earth-based" religion. J. S. Mbiti traces this initial attitude of man's longing for a Transcendent Being, which has given rise to religion, saying that:

African traditional religion with its ideas and practices took shape in the process of man's search for answer to the question of disease, suffering, pains, natural hazards, life and death, and entire mysteries surrounding the universe. The search culminated in having a religion as a way of making human life safer and better (Mbiti; 1982).

Similarly, Paganism as a religion, evolved slowly through rational responses of Igbo indigenes (like other African communities) to whatever situation of their life they have to fight through to survive (Adibe; 2009). Invariably, paganism was the first religion of that was practiced by the Igbo forebears. Let's take Uga town in Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra state for instance. The evidence that this town started with no other religion but Paganism is the *Obuofor* festival that is still celebrated today. A. N. Ezeakuji remarks that *Obuofor* festival began as a commemoration festival of sixty Uga indigenes that were carted away and never returned, by the Europeans (Ezeakuji; 2019). In 1916, the Europeans came with their religion, aiming to Christianize Uga indigenes, but were at first resisted. By playing hostility to

Christianity, they were simply trying to protect their traditional/indigenous religion – Paganism. Infuriated by this disposition and as deterrence to others, the Europeans carried away to an unknown land sixty men of substance in Uga. The festival is therefore celebrated on every December 26, to commemorate the brevity of those men in defending their religion. This goes to say that even up until 1916; Paganism was the dominant religion of the people and so much upheld to the extent of putting up such resistance. Hence, it is such as this event that today reminds us that Igbo progenitors began with no other religion but Paganism. Although this religion has undergone a lot of changes in recent times, which of course has given rise to the term, neo-Paganism, the inspiration it draws from its ancient history remains. J. Obi-Oguejiofor attests to this fact when he says:

Any work on Igbo traditional religion in this present time should take into account the truth that this religion is no longer in its pristine state. Much has changed, especially the ideas or meanings attached to certain acts, objects, or symbols. Still it is important to see the surviving signs...(Obi-oguejiofor; 1996).

There is therefore the proof that despite the changes that have taken place in Paganism, there are surviving elements in the new form in which it is being practiced today. These surviving elements are present in its beliefs and practices as we are to see immediately.

The Beliefs and Ritual Practices of Neo-Paganism in the Present Igbo Society

Belief and practices/ritual are coterminous with religion that they presuppose each other. According to a renowned scholar of religion and sociology, E. Durkheim, "religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things" (Durkheim; 1915). The surviving elements or signs that endured all through the changes in Paganism are found present in the beliefs and practices/rituals of the new form.

Belief

According to the Pagan Library, "the central beliefs of modern Pagans differ in specifics yet share many fundamentals" (Pagan Library; 2019). A cursory look at neo-Paganism in Igbo communities would reveal that there are certain beliefs on which it relies upon and are upheld by its adherents. First and foremost, neo-Pagans believe that the Supreme Being is not transcendent (as upheld by other religions) but immanent in nature. Because of this believe, they have reverence for nature. They always make reference to the four cardinal points of the earth as an embodiment of Divinity. The ancestor worship is also dependent on this believe in the immanent nature of Divinity. C. Uzimba opines that at the moment of difficulty, his immediate recourse is to his ancestors whom he believes are messengers of God, nearest to him than God is (Uzimba; 2019). For them, God is not a being that is unapproachable but a being who dwells everywhere.

Similar to the above is the respect and love for the Mother Earth essentially as a living being. They are of the belief that the Mother Earth (*Ala*) inhabits the divine. Thus, one of their major concerns is the avoidance of any act that would defy and profane the Earth. These acts range from telling lies (especially that which results to a great injustice being meted out to the innocent) to the case of murder of a fellow kinsman. They believe that the Earth does not spare anyone who is found guilty of these crimes. Sacredness of human life is so highly uphold that

no one dares to take another's life, the circumstances notwithstanding. It is equally a taboo to steal yam tubers in the farm or to uproot planted crops in the farm for whatever reason. As C. Uzimba rightly affirms that murder of any kind, either through physical encounter or through manipulations of charms is not heard among those who practice unadulterated African traditional religion. For him, "whoever goes into Paganism only to execute evil is missing the mark for our ancestors practiced the same faith in uprightness of action" (Uzimba; 2019). He sincerely notes that most of the rituals that are performed these days by our young ones are far removed from their primary aim, and this constitutes a major challenge to Paganism and people's conception about the religion.

Ritual Practices

Ritual practices are vehicles of association with the sacred. By this I mean that neo-Pagan ritual practices in Igbo society are sorts of *life-affirming performances* that create a sense of connectedness with the sacred. According to S. Magliocco, "neo-Pagan rituals are forms of communally created artistic expression that strives to give participants direct, transcendent experiences of the sacred" (Magliocco; 2019). Neo-Pagan ritual practices in Igbo society include seasonal rituals like confirmatory rituals, initiatory rituals and rites of passage like child-blessing rites, puberty rites, marriages and funerals.

The renowned *obuofo* festival in Uga town as mentioned above for instance, is held annually on every 26th day of December. This festival began as a Pagan ritual during which the people commemorate their prominent leaders –numbering sixty – who were carried off to an unknown land by the colonial masters in 1916 and thus, were assumed to be dead. It was specifically for the commemoration of these dead indigenes. This *obuofo* festival is a replica of the neo-Pagan celebrations of "Samhain" in Ireland, during which they honour their dead heroes "calling out the names of those who have passed on, remembering what they did in life, asking the gods to grant them a worthy rebirth" (Butler; 2009). The major ritual ceremony that marks this festival usually takes place at the *Udo* shrine located at the main market (*oye*) square of the town. Initially, it begins from the eve of December 26 but in recent time, it either begins from the eve or from the early hours of the festival date. In that ceremonial gathering meant only for the men and elders of the practitioners, *inter alia*, *kolanut* ritual, pouring of libation and incantations, and the calling to memory of their deeds are performed. The masquerades that entertain the people later during the day is just one of the outward signs of the festival.

Another ritual practice that brings out, in a way, the authenticity of this religion is the confirmatory ritual. This ritual is universally observed among the Igbo of old, though with little differences in different communities of the Igbo society. According to A. N Ezeakuji, *ili-ebi* is a confirmatory ritual carried out on anyone who would present himself as the spiritual leader of the people – what is referred to as *ezemuo* or *dibia* (Ezeakuji; 2019). The individual is brought before the elders who would invoke the spirits of the land on him and finally consecrate him for the office he is about to assume. But this is not all about the ritual. Before the invocation and consecration, a sacred object – either *nzu* or whatever, but must be unanimously chosen by the elders – is hidden away in any of the four villages of the town to be found by the individual unaided. This search may last for weeks and months but the consecrated individual is to be accompanied by appointed individuals as witnesses. If he

succeeds in finding the hidden sacred object, then it is a proof that the gods of the land are with him and have chosen him. The reverse is the case when he records failure. The venue for this ritual is usually the *Nkwo* market square, believed to be located at the heart of the town. From the analysis of the beliefs and ritual practices of Paganism, we have pierced through the negative connotation of Paganism in a Christian fundamentalist context to arrive at the fact that Paganism with its new form is one of the world recognized religions "with distinct belief based on pre-Christian religion" (Gault; 2015). By being one of the recognized religions of the world, it then implies that "Paganism is a global phenomenon that provides meaning and existential guidance to humans all over the world and has done so since the dawn of time" (York; 2014). We can therefore say that being a Pagan/neo-Pagan or an adherent of any of the other religions, philosophically, constitutes no problem. The question lies in how the individual is able to stand out as authentic individual conscious of himself in his newly discovered religion. At this juncture, one may ask: how does neo-Paganism/Paganism fit into the focal lens of Heidegger's Fallenness. The facts of neo-Paganism being proved as 'providing meaning for life' and as 'existential guidance to humans' reflect Heidegger's Fallenness as we are to see from the succeeding passages.

How Does Heidegger's Analysis of Fallenness Address Neo-Paganism among Our Youth Today

This section will focus on both the upside and downside arms of Heidegger's Fallenness as they apply to neo-Pagan religion in Igbo society.

Neo-Paganism: A Fall of Being towards Self-Actualization

Analyzing the concept of Fallenness, Heidegger points out that the term "Fallenness" is "used to signify that *Dasein* is proximally and for the most part alongside the 'world' of its concern" (Heidegger; 1962). It is pertinent to note the fact that 'concern' here denotes man's relation with the world – in terms of engaging in something, undertaking something, carrying out something, and so on – through which his being is actualized. In this case then, man is alongside the world of its concern and not yet itself, a consequence of the fact that it has not ontologically attained the full state characteristic of *Dasein* as the Being of an entity. This becomes clearer when we understand Heidegger's 'world' as those structures of life where *Dasein's* being is actualized and authenticated. Such structures may include religion, art, language, politics, et cetera. Therefore, neo-Paganism as a form of religion constitutes the world of man where he realizes the essence of his being through his relation and connection with the Supreme Being. Making a choice of following Pagan tradition as a way of life, a young man acknowledges the inner longing in him – for a nature/earth based religion, non-authoritarian religion, free choice religion, or any other reliable feature that characterizes Paganism as a religion – which can only be filled or perfected by such choice. Making a choice of this nature is dialectical in a sense whereby a person's pursuit, exercise and use of his abilities in his newly discovered religion – Paganism – are in motion in a peculiar way that is constantly exercised for the purpose of self-realization or establishing 'mineness' (Shaw; 2012). Among the younger generation, it is not a speculation that there are many who moved over to Paganism from a background of "dogmatic religion". Rejecting the organized religion (Christianity), they embrace a more liberal spirituality (Paganism). Justifying this move, C. Uzimba opines that many of the young ones appear to be fed up with what Christianity presents to them and for him, many of the Christian leaders misinterpret this choice as lack of

faith but in actual fact, it is something else (Uzimba; 2019). This underlies the existential fact that man is never a complete being and in the language of E. Iwuagwu, "he is always 'on the way' ...constantly forging his nature by means of the existential choices he makes" (Iwuagwu; 2017). At this stage, philosophically speaking, it is still something positive (which the researcher term "the upside interpretation of Fallenness") so long as it is geared towards self-actualization of the individual concerned, but just as Heidegger later opines, this choice, so to say, "has mostly the character of Being-lost in the publicness of the 'they'" (Heidegger; 1962). This implies that there is a greater chance of the individual losing the self than he/she actualizes the self, but as for the latter, there is such possibility. For this onerous reason, the movement into neo-Paganism today reflects the upside interpretation of Fallenness towards self-actualization.

Neo-Paganism as an Absorption that Characterizes Inauthenticity

Notwithstanding the proof that this movement into neo-Paganism noticed among the youth is a pointer to the ontological quest of man to actualize his being through that which is his concern – in this case, neo-Paganism – there is also the downside of this when man tends to lose himself in that which could have contributed in actualizing its Being. It is this that Heidegger calls Fallenness/absorption of being into the 'world', for "Dasein has in the first instance, fallen away [*abgefallen*] from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its Self, and has fallen into the 'world'" (Heidegger; 1962).

The difficulty here would be to solve the problem of a seeming contradiction that the structure (Paganism) in which man realizes his being constitutes also the character in which he loses his being. The latter becomes the case when our youths can no longer discover themselves in the supposed unadulterated Pagan belief. Their existence becomes totally disintegrated and alienated both from themselves as authentic individuals and from the society. The causes of this downside character of neo-Paganism that leads to absorption, conformity and ultimately to loss of self could be seen in Heidegger's characteristics of Fallenness.

Evident Causes

Idle Talk

Heidegger defines "Idle Talk" as "the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own" (Heidegger; 1962). Evidently, this has hindered majority of our youths from the sufficient and grounded knowledge of what Paganism is all about. An individual may be into neo-Paganism but what it is all about is understood only superficially. As a result of this, our youths become closed-off in ignorance. They not only fall from their true authentic selves – as a result of the cut-off from their primary and primordial genuine relationship as being towards its very being-in – but groundlessly float in what they pretend to believe in.

Curiosity

Curiosity, according to Heidegger, is a tendency towards seeing – not towards a proper understanding of what is seen but just in order to see. The movement into Paganism by our youths may simply be for curiosity sake. As youths filled with exuberance, they, like Heidegger explains, "seek novelty only in order to leap from it anew to another novelty" (Heidegger; 1962). The ritual practices, especially those that appeal to the modern-day youths

such as masquerade festivals, ritual killing of fowls and goats, etc. may arouse this curiosity in them. This does not characterize authentic existence because out of this curiosity, they are everywhere but nowhere. They fall by not being present to themselves as to determine what they want irrespective of what drives them for according to A. Kaam, "existence means that it is man's nature to stand out into reality, to be present in all that is" (Kaam; 1968). Extending the investigation, this could be enlisted as one of the causes of the movements from one Christian faith to another.

Ambiguity

This is what certain scholars may refer to as 'crisis of faith.' Prof. Chibe Uzimba makes reference to this when he remarks that the proliferation of churches (each with her own doctrines and beliefs), is the major cause of this crisis. Overwhelmed in confusion and being unable to decipher which is which, our youths quickly surrender to Paganism – 'the religion of their ancestors' as they say – or to any other of their choice. In the dilemma of deconstructing what has been taught them in their religion of departure and accepting what is presented to them in their newly discovered religion, it becomes difficult for them to disclose what is and what is not. It is this situation of existence that Heidegger calls ambiguity – a situation in which it becomes impossible to decide what is disclosed in a genuine understanding and what is not, a situation of 'never dwelling anywhere' (Heidegger; 1962).

Evaluation and Conclusion

Through the concept of Fallenness, "Heidegger offers philosophical resources for a more balanced view of everyday life" (Blattner; 2007). Employing these philosophical resources in the investigation into religion, (precisely neo-Paganism, as one of the everyday life of man), reveal certain moments of man's 'ownedness' and 'disownedness.' By ownedness, the researcher do not mean a situation of one being true to neo-Paganism but rather a situation of one owning who one is in neo-Paganism. Therefore, a philosophical investigation of the movement into neo-Paganism mirrors two broad effects in the life of our youths: positive and negative. These two broad effects are inevitable; it is either one or the other.

Positive View of the effect of fallenness

Looking at the movement into neo-Paganism among our youths through the positive dimension of Fallenness, one visualizes a choice made by an individual towards the actualization of his being. Prior to making this choice, the individual first and foremost recognizes neo-Paganism as an authentic recognized religion. He acknowledges the lack in his being which could only be filled by that which is his concern –neo-Paganism. This system of belief now accepted, thus, guides him towards realizing his being.

Negative View of the effect of Fallenness

On the opposite, this movement shows some negative effects when viewed through the perspective of the downside interpretation of Fallenness. The evident dangers of groundless floating, curiosity and ambiguity, characteristic of this falling/movement crystallize in the crisis of religious identity, aversion for work and crisis of gender identity highly experienced among our modern-day youths.

Religious Identity Crisis

This crisis of identity is very evident in our society today that an individual cannot stand out to what he/she believes in and remains constant in that. Such individual sways from one religion to the other, or even, from one denomination to another. This manner of living creates in the individual an inauthentic personality, and Fallenness as we know, makes precise what it means to fail to be oneself. Remarking on this crisis of identity, C. Uzimba submits that such becomes the case when our younger ones who move over to Paganism are not very well grounded by those who practice unadulterated African traditional religion (Uzimba; 2019). They hold unto nothing which could bring stability to their lives. According to him, one of the fundamental motives that should guide any choice of Paganism is “for the purification of the soul” (Uzimba; 2019). This directs every act and practice in Paganism and the awareness of this should instill stability on the adherents.

Aversion for Work

The attitude to work – as a means of earning a living – noticed among the youths who move into neo-Paganism brings under question the claim that neo-Paganism ‘provides meaning and existential guidance to humanity.’ A handful of them seem to do nothing for a living, roaming about the villages and committing all sorts of crimes. Their life goes on and on, but without any progress. This manner of living questions the reason underlying this movement into neo-Paganism; is it actually out of the quest for self-actualization or is it just for social identification and belonging?

All these explains to what extent man has fallen from himself and from that through which his being could have been actualized. Heidegger’s Fallenness could be criticized for its polarized views. Heidegger, at the onset, divests Fallenness of any negative evaluation but as his analysis proceeds, he clearly drifts towards a disparaging connotation of the very same concept. Making no clarification of this ambiguity is a fault in his analysis of Fallenness.

Conclusion

Reclining on the fundamental claim that “religion stands to be condemned or commended by the practical life of the believers in the society” (Adibe; 2007). The researchers investigated into the high rate of departure into neo-Paganism by our youths. To enhance a philosophical investigation – devoid of bias from any religious affiliation – of this development, the researcher peered through the perspective of Heidegger’s Fallenness.

From the foregoing discourse therefore, this movement can be explained in two dimensions. First, as an essential characteristic of man’s existence, in which an individual choose neo-Paganism as a result of the ontological quest to realize and actualize his/her being. Second, as an absorption in which the individual not only fall from himself/herself as an authentic entity, but loses himself/herself in the religion which could have contributed in actualizing his/her being.

This essay makes claim that in the Igbo society under study, this latter dimension takes the upper hand. The cause of this is very evident in the re-interpretation of the characteristics of Fallenness – Idle talk, Curiosity and Ambiguity. These causes, of course, do not go without negative effects on our youths, namely, religious identity crisis, aversion for work and the

crisis of gender identity. This essay therefore, submits that with these effects, neo-Paganism, as it is being practiced today, renders our youths lost (fallen), inauthentic and groundless beings not in full possession of themselves. Thus, it recommends a re-evaluation of the choices we make – even the choice of religion – in our quest for self-actualization and authenticity. This points to the undeniable fact that there is freedom of religion; one is free to choose any religion of his choice. It is therefore within this spectrum that this work recommends a choice thoughtfully chosen, whereby our youths are free to choose a particular religion not solely for the reason of identifying with others but that of identifying, or realizing the 'self.' With this as the underlying drive, religion would no longer hold man back in bond but would rather be a source of liberation for man.

Among the young people in the present Igbo society, there are various cases of 'religious migration' from one religious platform to the other, that is, from Paganism to Christianity, and from Christianity to Paganism (with some attachments) but more of the latter. This research is not in any way a condemnation of such act but an unbiased investigation to determine whether this change is supported by Heidegger's idea of *Fallenness* as a 'motion' (an undertaking) towards self-actualization or towards the establishment of 'mineness' in our youths. If it is not so, this work therefore is an aid to our youths to discover that it is an act towards self-lost that rids them of true existence thus, groundlessly floating in the world.

Since this religious drama extends to migration from one Christian denomination to another (and considering the fact that neo-paganism is a relative term that denotes and includes new or non-orthodox pattern of worship), this study redirects the young generations of the present Igbo society in their wrong attitude to religion, that is, the attitude of jumping from one Christian Church to the other for the sake of novelty.

Finally, when this attitude is redirected, this study also goes a long way in curbing the unwarranted religious identity crisis that normally springs from this act. Thus, helps our youths to view religion not as an institution that presents itself as an idol that only make its adherents blind worshippers and not creative thinkers and architects of their existence, but as one of those structures of life where man discovers and realizes his Being.

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