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**PHILOSOPHY AND THE CHALLENGE  
OF RELEVANCE  
IN AFRICAN SOCIETY**

**Delivered by**

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**79<sup>th</sup> Inaugural Lecture**

**OLABISI ONABANJO UNIVERSITY  
AGO-IWOYE, OGUN-STATE**

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## **DEDICATION**

This Inaugural Lecture is dedicated to the memory of my Late Father  
and Mother, Very Revd. Fredrick Oyenuga Womiloju and  
Helen Olufunke Womiloju  
Also to two African Philosopher-Kings: Late Prof, Olusegun Oladipo  
and Late Prof. Kolawole Olu-Owolabi

# PHILOSOPHY AND THE CHALLENGE OF RELEVANCE IN AFRICAN SOCIETY

The Vice-Chancellor,  
Deputy Vice- Chancellor,  
Principal Officers of the University,  
Distinguished Members of the University Council,  
Provosts and Deans,  
Professors and Heads of Departments,  
The Royal Highness here present,  
My Lord Spiritual and Temporal,  
Distinguished Guests from Sister Universities,  
Gentlemen of the Press,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,  
GREAT OOUITES, GREAT OOUITES, GREATEST OOUITES!!!

## PREAMBLE

I thank God Almighty for making it possible to deliver this inaugural lecture today, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2018. I had wanted to give the lecture in December 2015 to enable my late father, Very Revd. Fredrick Oyenuga Womiloju, witness this august occasion, but man proposes while God disposes. This lecture happens to be the fourth from the Department of Philosophy but the first to be presented by a female Professor in the Department of Philosophy and the Faculty of Arts. I also happen to be the first female Professor in the Faculty of Arts, and the first female Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Olabisi Onabanjo University in its 35 years of existence. It is also the first inaugural lecture to be presented by a female Professor of Philosophy in Nigeria. I, therefore, owe God my gratitude for my choice of discipline and this rare privilege and great opportunity. The task before me today is to give an account of my scholarship in the last thirty-three years of university teaching and research. It is also an opportunity to tell this great audience how I found myself in the study of

Philosophy, how I have been relevant in the discipline and how my contributions have helped the African continent in the way it searches for knowledge and truth.

I grew up in a background that was not even sure if African Philosophy existed. The major question we examined in my first African Philosophy class back at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan in the 1980's was: Is there an African philosophy? This question remained unanswered by the time I assumed duties as an academic staff here at Olabisi Onabanjo University. Indeed, the question of the existence of African Philosophy remained my entry point into the teaching of African Philosophy at my first contact with each class of undergraduate students. Right from the onset, I have been more than convinced that African Philosophy existed but did not know how to go about proving it. A major problem was the limited books and articles to justify its existence. Besides, my training at the University of Ibadan was more of an exposure to Western Philosophy as Western Philosophy was considered to be “the philosophy”.

The history of Philosophy was primarily Western in nature and approach. Core areas of Philosophy include Epistemology, Metaphysics, Ethics, and Logic with Social and Political Philosophy, Aesthetics and other 'Philosophy of' as second order level of Philosophy. This was a period when Professors in African Philosophy were just doing African Philosophy without a clear delineation of its boundaries and African Culture. The main books available in the area of African Philosophy at that time were those written by J.S. Mbiti (1969) titled *African Religions and Philosophy*, Rev. Fr. Placide Tempels titled *Bantu Philosophy* (1945) and *Conversations with Ogotemeli : An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas*, written in 1965 by Marcel Griaule. The *Second Order Journal* was the only Philosophy journal published in Nigeria. Prof. Bodunrin's “The Question of African Philosophy” generated a heated philosophical debate for some decades after.

Professor Kwasi Wiredu published his popular book *Philosophy and An African Culture* about this time (1980). He was concerned about what

philosophy can contribute to African society, what African society can draw from Philosophy and whether there could be a truly African philosophy that goes beyond traditional folk thought. He later conducted a lot of research in African Philosophy (1995, 1996, 1998). His initial focus was “On an African Orientation in Philosophy” (1972) and “How Not to Compare African with Western Thought” (1984). I narrowly missed Prof. Kwasi Wiredu tutelage when he was on Sabbatical Leave at the University of Ibadan while I was on National Youth Service. His works majorly represent the Philosophy of the Akan. Prof. Olubi Sodipo's Inaugural Lecture (1972) titled *Philosophy and Culture* came in handy as a material for teaching my students. It enhanced my conviction that I could discuss African Philosophy better by relating it to African society and in this case Yoruba society, which I am more familiar with. However, I was also convinced that issues in African culture are not reducible to issues in African Philosophy as they are not interrogated from a critical and rigorous perspective.

Meeting Prof. (Mrs) Sophie Oluwole, the first Doctoral Graduate of Professor Bodunrin at University of Ibadan was a blessing for me. The then Dr. (Mrs) Sophie Oluwole supervised my Master project, titled: “A Critical Analysis of the Concept of Determinism in Traditional African Thought” (Oduwole, 1985). This work which, according to Professor Sophie Oluwole (2007:4) was described by then Dr. Akin Makinde of the University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University, as brilliant, critical and “not the type of thing you people do in Lagos”. I later, because of the good comments, became a Ph.D. student of Dr. Akin Makinde but, as fate would have it, I could not complete the Ph.D. research in African Philosophy under his supervision.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I consider the major problem with African Philosophy to be how African Philosophers and those trained in Philosophy who are Africans can, by their training, be relevant to their society. Oladipo affirms that a dimension in the crisis of relevance which African philosophers and students face is that they are Africans who teach, research or train in African universities and are expected to contribute as responsible citizens to the development of their societies.

Unfortunately, all they seem to do is imbibe ideas from and contribute to a philosophical tradition they could hardly claim as their own. (Oladipo 1992:15).

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, the primary concern of most African philosophers and philosophy in Africa since my launch into Philosophy has been to answer the question of the relevance of Philosophy to African society. Indeed, almost all the inaugural lectures delivered by professors of Philosophy in Nigerian universities before now interrogated and tried to resolve the question of the relevance of Philosophy to African society. This effort is evident in the inaugural lectures delivered by Prof. Ayo Fadahunsi (2009), Prof. Kolawole Olu-Owolabi (2011), Prof. Muyiwa Falaiye (2012), Prof. Ade Ali (2012) and Prof. Oladele Balogun (2014). My lecture today builds up on these previous inaugural lectures. Essentially, I seek, by this lecture, to showcase how my intellectual output, as an African Philosopher, has tried to establish that, contrary to popular assumption, Philosophy can be sensitive to social reality and relevant to the search for development in African society.

However, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, to achieve the objective stated above, it is pertinent to begin by asking: what is philosophy? From this question, we will proceed to discuss how Philosophy can be of relevance in Africa.

### WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

The question, what is Philosophy, is itself a philosophical question. The guidance counsellor that we sought counsel from when I gained admission into the University of Ibadan in 1980 told my father when asked what is philosophy that your daughter will turn out to be very brilliant after her studies in Philosophy. He was quick to tell my father that I would be outstanding amongst my peers in that I would be able to think brilliantly. However, from my first philosophy class, taken by Prof. P.O. Bodunrin, titled “Introduction to Philosophy”, though I wrote all the notes, all I could gather from the class was that Prof. P.O. Bodunrin ate egg in the morning and took a cup of tea. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, Professor Bodunrin's breakfast experience was supposed to introduce the

problem of skepticism and certainty, which is a major philosophical problem. If Prof Bodunrin was not sure of anything else in the world, at least he was sure that he ate an egg and drank a cup of tea.

To most professional philosophers, the question: “what is philosophy?” gives rise to a lot of disagreements because there are various definitions as we have philosophers. There are philosophers and schools of philosophy with different views about life, man and the universe. The word “philosophy”, from its Greek etymological usage, means “Philo”, “to love” and “Sophia” means “Wisdom”. It has to do with a love for the study of our beliefs about reality and man from a holistic perspective. H.S. Staniland (1979:3) for example, defines philosophy as: “the criticism of the ideas we live by”.

Prof. J.O. Sodipo (1972) shares the same view with Staniland by his definition of philosophy as “the reflective and critical thinking about the concepts and principles we use to organize our experience in morals, in religion, in social and political life, in law, in psychology, in history and in the natural Sciences”. Bertrand Russell (1985:89) said that some are inclined to doubt whether Philosophy is anything better than innocent but useless trifling hair splitting distinctions, and controversies on matters concerning which knowledge is impossible. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1969:119), a philosopher of the linguistic tradition, refers to philosophy as an activity than a body of doctrine. It aims, according to him, at the logical clarification of thoughts. A philosophical task thus consists essentially of elucidations. William James (1911:5), of the American pragmatic tradition, conceives of philosophy as a coherent account of human experience. According to him philosophy deals, “with the principles of explanation that underlie all things without exception”.

Having examined these definitions of philosophy, it can be stated, in agreement with Bodunrin (1981:12) that any definition of philosophy is apt to be personal. To attempt a definition of philosophy is to embark on philosophy itself; that is, to philosophize. Let us now look at the relevance of philosophy.

## THE RELEVANCE OF PHILOSOPHY

As earlier said in the introduction, to ask the question why do I need to philosophize assumes that we want to know the relevance, value or practical benefit of philosophy on individual life, society and humankind in general. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I stand here today to tell you that Philosophy is the queen of all disciplines. The knowledge of Philosophy is the solution to our many crises in Africa especially to our development and leadership crises. I join Plato to say that unless philosophers are made kings or kings made philosophers, there will be no end to the problems ravaging the state and humanity at large (Republic: 473d-e):

I recall with a sense of pride that the first Vice Chancellor of this University, Prof Olubi Sodipo, whose achievements cannot be disputed, was a philosopher and administrator par excellence. He laid a foundation upon which we are all building on.

Apart from excellence in leadership positions, Philosophy can be personally relevant in that it can be sought for its own sake. It develops the human intellect and mind. According to Woodhouse, (1994:27) involvement with philosophy can change our fundamental beliefs including our general view of the world and our system of values. A change in either of these could lead to a change in our personal happiness, goals within chosen profession or simply our general life-style. For example, a critical view of the idea of freewill and determinism could help a person to know that human actions are not totally determined or otherwise, thus the person in question can pursue a desired goal or profession and strive to achieve the best through hard work. Thus, knowledge of philosophy not only enlighten people on the question of whether human actions are determined or not, it helps to examine critically the two sides of the coin to achieve desired goals (say, choice of a profession) which will in turn affect the general life style. If, for example, human beings were not free, then punishment and capital punishment would be unjustified. Why do we need to punish people who cannot help anything they do? Our conception of moral behavior would also have far reaching consequences for our personal relationships. For instance, a moral egoist does not believe in altruistic behaviours. He

considers them on the long run as having egoistic motivations. This, in addition, to all that has been mentioned above, Philosophy, because of its deep, critical, analytic and expository nature, increases the intellectual independence, freedom from dogmatism and tolerance for different viewpoints (Oduwole, 1999).

At this juncture, it may be pertinent to ask: what exactly is the “real” practical benefit of studying philosophy. This question is necessary in our modern world where practical pursuit and accumulation of wealth dominate peoples mind. It must be said that the above question is usually true of most liberal arts disciplines. Nonetheless philosophy has an advantage of equipping people with important intellectual skills that are useful in all spheres of life (Oduwole: 1999). The importance of Philosophy as the mother of all disciplines, be it Humanities, Law, Science or Social Sciences, is underscored by the fact that the highest academic degree awarded in most academic, disciplines is described as “Doctor of Philosophy”.

In addition, the National Universities Commission (NUC) of Nigeria, the central body coordinating all university programmes in Nigeria, requires that all undergraduate students must be exposed to Philosophy, especially logic and critical thinking to equip them for their major courses and undergraduate training. Thus, while other disciplines provide raw materials in form of empirical evidence, philosophy provides the analytical powers which students apply to other disciplines and all spheres of life. In this regard, I appreciate all my former students who have through philosophy excelled in their different chosen career. Many of them are in the fields of Banking, Insurance, Military, Paramilitary, Information Communication Technology and Administration, to mention a few. NUC'S kind gesture can be extended to secondary education to enrich the analytical and critical reasoning of our youths.

It is unfortunate that most of the time, we are surrounded by the prejudice of what is wrongly called “practical benefit”. The word “practical benefit” or “relevance” is often used as something that provides and deals only with material needs. This is a view which makes

men realise that they need food for the body but oblivious of the necessity of providing food for the mind. This is entirely a wrong notion of what life is all about and of what the ends of life are. Indeed, true health and progress of any nation depend not only on material but also the mental qualities of the people.

Philosophy is also relevant to spiritual life. There are many questions that are asked by philosophers that have the profoundest implication on our spiritual life. These include, has the universe any unity of plan or purpose? Does God exist? How do we reconcile the existence of God with the existence of evil in the world? Are good and evil of importance to the universe or only to man? Although Philosophy may not be able to provide definite answers to the above questions, it is part of its business to consider them, make us aware of their importance and examine all approaches to them (Oduwole, 1999:168).

### **CONCEPTUAL DECOLONISATION: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, as an African scholar specialising in African Philosophy, most of my research enterprise has been to profile the relevance of Philosophy to African society. To do this effectively, I adopted Conceptual Decolonization as a tool for developing and discussing African Philosophy. I argue that Kwasi Wiredu's Conceptual Decolonization is a basic model for discourse in African thought and philosophy (Oduwole, 2004). Conceptual decolonization implies two complimentary things. One is negative, and the other is positive. On the negative side it is to avoid or reverse, through a critical analysis, the unexamined assimilation of the conceptual frameworks embedded in foreign philosophical traditions that have an impact on African life and thought. On the positive side, conceptual decolonization involves exploiting as much as is judicious, the resources of our own indigenous conceptual schemes in our philosophical meditations on all conceptual and technical problems of contemporary philosophy (Wiredu, 1995:22).

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, we carry a lot of philosophical concepts in our day to day philosophy. Some of them are colonized concepts such

as: 'Reality', 'Being', 'Existence', 'Opinion', 'Truth', 'Faith', 'Person', 'Individuality', 'Doubt', 'Certainty', 'Community', 'Mind', 'Soul', 'Freedom', 'Responsibility', 'Meaning', 'Death', 'Afterlife', 'Morality', 'Religion', 'Justice', 'God', 'Subjectivity', 'Objectivity', 'Evil', 'Immortality', and 'Determinism'. Thus, there is a need to decolonize because we were colonized in language, religion and politics. Language colonization left us with a form of mental colonization in that having been taught in English language, we tend to philosophize in English language, the result of which tends to be more of English philosophy than African philosophy. Conceptual decolonization therefore is a way forward in the teaching and research of African Philosophy (Oduwole: 2004:117).

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I conducted research in African Philosophy with the tool of conceptual decolonization, critical reflection and rigorous analysis. With conceptual decolonization, I began to examine the African concepts, values and principles that are to be retained and those to be stripped of colonial influence. My research in African Philosophy cuts across the major areas of philosophy namely, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, social and political philosophy and gender studies.

### THE QUESTION OF LANGUAGE

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, before I proceed to highlight my contributions to knowledge in the major areas of (African) philosophy highlighted above, I will quickly dispose of the question of language in the study of African Philosophy. This revolves round the question of if we must philosophise in African languages before we can study and research in African philosophy and if this will bring about the uniqueness in African Philosophy. The answer I came up with is “no”, especially taking cognisance of the fact that there are diverse languages in Africa and there seems to be no unifying lingua franca across African cultures and societies. While I recognise that the problem of language is a major concern to the question of the nature and authenticity of African

philosophy, authenticity should not be taken for uniqueness of African ideas and philosophy. Nonetheless, analysing day-to-day usage of African indigenous languages can bring about an authentic African Philosophy (Oduwole, 2010a). The day-to-day usage of African languages, comes in the form of proverbs, folktales and other oral sources which provide a vital entry-point into the study of African Philosophy. The Ifa literary corpus also provides a lot of raw materials for the development of African Philosophy.

However, it must be conceded that a good grasp of African indigenous languages will enhance an in-depth understanding of traditional proverbs, folktales, indigenous literature and, invariably enhance our capacity to engage in African Philosophy.

### AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I now proceed to examine my major contributions to the relevance of Philosophy to African society starting from a discourse in the area of epistemology. One of the major issues in both Western and African epistemologies is the problem of truth. There are three major traditional theories of truth in Western Epistemology: correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theories of truth. The correspondence theory has its roots in Aristotle's dictum that: “To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not is true” (Ross, 1924:1024b). A proposition is thus judged as true if there is a fact corresponding to it, false if there is not. The correspondence theory of truth derives from the empiricist tradition which emphasises perception. The coherence theory of truth stems from the rationalist tradition. It is an alternative theory of truth that says that truth consists in coherence. Bertrand Russell, in his discussion of the coherence theory, states that “the mark of falsehood is failure to cohere in the body of our beliefs, and that it is the essence of a truth to form part of the completely rounded system which is the Truth” (Russell, 1985:70). The pragmatic theory of truth defines truth in terms of useful beliefs and ideas. All the three theories stand separately as rival



theories with each claiming to offer the best explanation of what “truth” is.

Some scholars hold within African society that truth is purely moral without taking cognisance of its primary cognitive dimension. However, from my research, it can be argued that the ideas contained in Yoruba proverbs show that truth is recognised to have both cognitive and moral dimensions in many African cultures.

The criterion of truth in Yoruba is: “to say of what is that it is and of what is not that it is not” There is a popular proverb that points to this:

|                       |                                             |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Koko l'egun iyan      | lumps are the bones of pounded yam,         |
| Suku l'egun agbado    | the cob is the bone of a corn               |
| K'a s'oro k'a ba bee  | to make a statement which is found to be so |
| L'egun otito          | is the bone of truth.                       |
| K'a s'oro k'a be bee  | to make a statement which is found to be so |
| Oun ni iyi omo eniyan | dignifies a person.                         |

This criterion is empirical in nature and forms a foundation for the rational and pragmatic aspects of truth. For instance, the same word *otito* (truth) in Yoruba language applies to both the cognitive and moral aspects of truth. With this cognitive understanding, the Yoruba can be labeled as empiricists in their conception of truth (Oduwole: 2006e, 2009, 2011).

## AFRICAN ETHICS

### An Ethics of Virtue

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, my research in African Ethics established that the cognitive aspect of truth in Yoruba culture provides the foundation for the moral connotation of truth, which, in turn is an important pillar of virtue ethics. This demonstrates the relationship between epistemology and ethics. *Otito* (truth) in its moral dimension in Yoruba society, is a high moral virtue in that if one makes a statement and it is met as such, the person that made the claim is dignified:

|                       |                                             |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| K'a s'oro k'a be bee  | to make a statement which is found to be so |
| Oun ni iyi omo eniyan | dignifies a person.                         |

The following proverbs can be used to further buttress the point that *Otito* is an essential virtue.

|                              |                                                 |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Otito ni agba odu ni Ile-Ife | Truth is the greatest Odu in Ile-Ife.           |
| Otito ni t'o ni l'aiye       | Truth makes one live long.                      |
| A s'ototo ki ku s'ipo ika    | A truthful person does not die as a wicked man. |
| K'a s'oto ka ku o san ju     | To be truthful and die is better                |
| Ka s'ebita ka wa l'aiye lo   | Than to be untruthful and live.                 |

The opposite of *otito*, which is *iro*, is condemnable in Yoruba thought. From other Yoruba proverbs, we gather that:

|                      |                                                    |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Okun iro ki i pe pin | The cord of lies does not last (Obasa, 1984:18)    |
| Puro kin niyi ete ni | If you tell lies and get honoured                  |
| K'ogun puropuro      | You will eventually end in shame (Obasa, 1984: 18) |

Obviously, the Yoruba places a high premium on truth, which they hold as an important virtue that defines who an *omoluabi* (a person of good character) is. For the Yoruba, morality is virtue based as they hold that a primary objective of morality is to produce virtuous individuals, otherwise known as *omoluabi*. (Idowu: 1962, Oduwole: 2006a).

### The Moral Notion of Truth and the African Social and Political Order:

The moral notion of truth is crucial in nation building. It is shown that giving truth its rightful position in society creates a good social and political order which African states have been trying to achieve since they began to gain independence (Oduwole, 2011).

The Yoruba says:

|                    |                                    |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Ooto won ju iro lo | Truth is more expensive than lies. |
| To ba ra iro       | If you don't buy lies              |
| O le ra ooto       | you cannot buy truth               |

|                         |                                                        |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Otito d'oja o kuta      | Truth gets to the market and there is no one to buy it |
| Owon l'owon la nra iro  | Whereas lies are very expensive in the market          |
| Aye k'ooto              | The world rejects truth.                               |
| A s'otito Ibadan        | The one who tells the truth in Ibadan                  |
| N'be l'ona 'Jebu        | is on the way to Ijebu (Exile)                         |
| Puro-puro won           | liars are found                                        |
| Ni mbe l'ori esin       | on horseback.                                          |
| Olooto ki leni          | A truthful person does not have property.              |
| Olooto ilu ni osika ilu | A truthful person is the enemy of the land             |

If *Otito* is given its rightful position in society, Africa will be a better place to live in. Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, the Nigeria nation for example, does not celebrate truth and honesty. It is a nation where corruption, looting of public funds and embezzlement of money thrives. All these vices are antithetical to truth and cannot result in good nation building. Building a culture of truth, honesty, integrity and related virtues, can help Nigeria overcome the various sociopolitical and economic problems confronting it. Falsehood and other related vices should be discouraged.

### Homosexuality

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, part of my studies in African ethics centred on the issue of homosexuality. In contemporary Yoruba philosophical discourse, *Ifa* provides solutions to a lot of thorny issues and homosexuality is one of such. In Yoruba thought, there are two main positions on the reality of homosexuality. One denies the existence of homosexuality, seeing it as foreign to the African society and the other claims that there are traces of its origin in traditional Africa. From ordinary language and ideas in Yoruba thought, it is arguable that there are traces of homosexuality in traditional African society though the influence of Western culture might have made it to be more pronounced.

Nonetheless, homosexuality is generally seen as unacceptable in traditional Africa because it is believed to threaten traditional marriage

institutions, family values, acceptable cultures and other traditions which the Yoruba hold in high esteem. Also, there are strong religious bias against homosexuality among the Yoruba (Oduwole, 2010e). *Otura Goriirete* is an *Odu Ifa* that gives a vivid account of homosexuality and points to it as an exercise in futility.

The Odu says:

Okunrin meji sun botonrigin botonrigin  
Okunrin meji sun botonrigin botonrigin  
Obinrin meji sun botonrigin botonrigin

Two men are copulating  
Two men are copulating  
Two women are copulating,  
two women are mating

Ka lo mu okunrin kan  
Ka lo mu obinrin kan  
O di libilibi

Why don't we take a man?  
And then take a woman  
Why don't we take a man?  
And then take a woman  
Therein lies enjoyment and fulfilment

A dia fun Erifobogbile

divination was made for Erifobogbile

Babalawo ori difa fun ori

The (Primordial) Head's diviner divined for it too

Ori n lo mule ibudo

When head was to site a domicile

Won ni ki ori rubo

Head was told to offer a sacrifice

Ma sowo ma jere  
Ori je n bi egbewa lomo

May I trade and make profits  
My (primordial) head, may I have two thousand children

Ma sowo ma jere (Oduwole, 2010e)

May I trade and make profits

This folkloric saying:

Oju re pon kankan bi oju adofuro

His eyes are red like the eyes of one who has sex through the anus;

And this proverb:

A ri kan se kan lo mu obinrin  
gbe omu egbe re jo

It is idleness that causes a woman  
to fondle her mate's breast;

clearly show that the homosexuality is not as alien to traditional African societies as some people would want us to believe. However, it is equally clear that while there were traces of the phenomenon in indigenous Yoruba society, for example, it was generally considered to be unacceptable. Hence, the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act of 2014 in Nigeria is consistent with our cultural values.

### **African Bioethics**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, one of the thorniest issues in bioethics is euthanasia and it cannot be properly discussed outside specific cultural contexts. My research shows that the phenomenon of euthanasia is a lived experience that is known and acceptable in the traditional Yoruba society in some given circumstances. (Gbadegesin: 1993, 1998, Lanre-Abass: 2010, Oduwole: 2012). It is in this regard that the Yoruba would say that: *Iku ya j'esin lo* (death is better than shame or loss of dignity). This issue has been exhaustively discussed in my paper titled "Ethical Case Deliberation Involving End of Life Decision" (2012e).

End-of-life-decisions, involving patients who are in unbearable pain and intense suffering, with death inevitable, are usually not easy to make because of the moral dilemmas or conflicts involved. In such circumstances, patients, physicians and care-givers normally come together to decide on the ideal course of action. This is often influenced by the cultural disposition and values of the people involved in the process of decision making, and the Yoruba belief that *Iku ya j'esin lo* comes to play here. It also says a lot about the value and dignity associated with human life in Yoruba culture.

I wish to affirm at this point that Health Care/Hospital Ethics Committees should be established and made functional and effective in our hospitals and teaching hospitals to oversee decision making in health care delivery, especially when there are moral conflicts.

### **African Environmental Ethics**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I want to discuss an issue in environmental ethics that relates to animal rights (Oduwole & Fayemi, 2018). Recently, there is a renewed ethical consideration of human cruelty against animal, and the means-end treatments of non-human animals in Western intellectual discourse. For instance, the non-human animal liberation and rights movements seek to preserve and enhance animal welfare. Advocates of animal rights contend that speciesism, sexism and racism are morally unjustifiable on the same grounds.

Peter Singer (1975) believes humans and non-humans are to be grouped the same way. This is because all animals are equal from the perspective that both experience pleasure and pain. Similarly, Tom Regan (1985) argues that every living organism including animals have inherent value and thus deserve equal moral consideration.

In relating the advocacy of the animal right theorists to Yoruba culture, we addressed the following questions:

What are the defining moral principles underlying the attitudes and perceptions of the traditional Yorùbá towards non-human animals in their cultural milieu? Is there a correlation between the ontological perception of non-human animals and the ethics of human relationship with them in Yorùbá culture? Does the culture reflect the position of animal liberation, animal rights or animal care or an entirely different perspective from the known Western taxonomies? (Oduwole & Fayemi 2018:70).

In Yoruba world view, animals are food sources and also used for medicinal purposes and sacrifices to deities.

*A Yoruba proverb says:*

*Ife ti a fe adie ko denu, ibi ki a paaje lo mo* – Our love for roosters is not genuine; the point is to make it a delicacy (Olusola 2006: 168-169)

However, like the animal liberation/right theorist in the West that extends moral duty to animals based on sentience, the traditional Yoruba also recognized the sentient nature of animals and other species. Some of the proverbs depicting this are:

Ojú ni màlùù n ró, òbè ò dára lórùn      Knife is not something pleasant on the neck; the cow suffers pain in slaughtering (Olusola, 2006: 159)

Bí ó tí ńdun ?m? ?y?, bẹ̀ẹ̀ ló ńdun ?m? èyẹ̀yàn      As the young birds are hurt, so do humans experience pain.

These proverbs agree with the sentient view that other species feel pleasure and pain just as humans do. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, allow me to remind us of a Yoruba moonlight poetry which indicates that animals should be cared for:

Adìe mi      My rooster  
 Èyí tí mo rà      the one that I bought  
 Motoju re osi dagba      I cared for it till it grows  
 Losan ojan kan, ó sì je lo      It went out  
 Lálé ojó kan      One night  
 Ó kó sí kòtò      it fell into a pit  
 Ìyá bá mi gbé e      Mother helped me carried it  
 Gbígbé tí mo gbé e      as I carried it  
 Gbígbòn ní n gbòn      it was shaking  
 Mo wá fí yéná      I put it by the fire side for warmth  
 (Olusola 2006: 167).

After a deep interrogation of African environment, we argued that, it is a wrong presupposition that the Yoruba do not care for animals simply because of the instrumental values they derive from them. Rather, in Yoruba cultural context, there are patterns of both unhealthy and healthy relationships between humans and other animals. (Oduwole & Fayemi 2018:76).

The Yoruba recognise that animals have their own emotions and feelings, and that their pains are worthy of care consideration but not equal consideration with humans as advocated by Peter Singer. (Oduwole & Fayemi 2018:77). Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, humans are humans and animals are animals, and, they should not be given equal consideration as man. This, however, does not mean that humans should not care for animals.

### AFRICAN GENDER ISSUES

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, in my quest for the relevance of Philosophy to African society, I examined some gender issues in some of my publications (Oduwole: 2006c, 2007, 2010c). By fate, I happened to be the only female student in my undergraduate class and to the glory of God I had the best result in that set. Likewise, during the Master programme, I was the only female in the class. I was also the only female lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, Olabisi Onabanjo University for twenty-four years. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, rather than being oppressed, harassed or intimidated, I enjoyed a good working relationship with my colleagues both as a student and lecturer. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, how can a woman be equal to a man? It is not possible because a woman is a woman and a man is a man. The creator created men as men and women as women. Men and women have different roles in society that do not and should not infer superiority of one over the other. Rather, such roles are complementary and their actualization, if properly harnessed, will lead to holistic human development. So, rather than arguing for gender equality, we should argue for gender mainstreaming as it can give proper positioning to women in society. It is a means of ensuring the vital contributions of women to development in society (Oduwole, 2007a, 2010c).

Gender mainstreaming is a solution to the problem of human rights and gender inequality in African society, especially bearing in mind the gender stereotypes that exist in traditional African culture.

The following Yoruba sayings depict how women are stereotyped in Africa (Sheba 2006):

|                                                                         |                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Obinrin o ni gogo gongo<br>Eni obinrin pa ti ko ku , onitohun a pe laye | Women cannot keep secrets.<br>One who does not die in the hands of a woman will live long.                  |
| Eni ti o ba gun esin obinrin yoo subu.                                  | One who rides on a woman's horse will fall.                                                                 |
| Eni ti o da aso obinrin bora, werepe lo da bora.                        | The person who covers himself with a woman's cloth covers himself with the tormenting itching werepe fruit. |
| Ko see ni, ko see ma ni l'obinrin.                                      | Women are necessary evil<br>(Sheba, 2006:93)                                                                |
| Obinrin lodale, obinrin leke, keniyan omaa finu han obinrin.            | Woman is a treacherous person, a woman is a Liar, let no one keep secrets with a woman.                     |

Gender mainstreaming, which "is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality"(ILO: 2002).

Mainstreaming is about gender-specific activities and affirmative action. It is about redressing of situations where men or women are in disadvantageous positions. According to ILO "Gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively, men and women together, or only men, to enable them to participate in and benefit equally from development efforts. These are necessary temporary measures designed to combat the direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination" (ILO, 2002).

Anyiam Osigwe (2000, 2001, 2005) a Philosopher Sage in Africa, suggests that to attain an all- round development in Africa, there is a need

to imbibe the rich aspect of our culture which include the extended family system, communal living and the traditional role of women in the family and society.

Also in Oduwole (2010c, 2006), I emphasised the need for information and education as a tool needed for gender mainstreaming, eradicating human trafficking of girls and women for prostitution and other forms of slavery.

## AFRICAN METAPHYSICS

### Determinism and Human Freedom: The Notion of Ori and Human Destiny

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I argued in one of my papers (Oduwole, 1998) that the relationship between Determinism and Freedom is such that while some human actions can be said to be determined, there is room for human freedom which provides a philosophical justification for moral responsibilities. However, in my quest to become relevant to the African society, I situated this discourse within the Yoruba concepts of *ori* and human destiny and tried to establish that a fatalistic interpretation of the Yoruba concept of *Ori* and human destiny is more consistent with Yoruba belief than any other interpretation. This conclusion was arrived at through a rigorous philosophical analysis of the myths and beliefs in the Yoruba concepts of *ori* and human destiny. *Ori* is the third part of human beings, others being the *Ara* (body) and *Emi* (life-force). *Ori* is the bearer of human destiny.

The qualities of an *ori* can be either good or bad but this quality cannot be determined by mere physical appearance: size, shape, colour or texture. The quality of an *ori*, made by Ajala, depends so much on Ajala's mood or state of mind, and only he knows the contents of all the *ori* in his store house. Success in life, characterized by such things as good career, a happy family, good children and wealth indicate a good choice of *ori*. By the choice of *ori*, one's destiny is determined in the world, along with all the events of one's personal history. Thus, the choice of *ori* has been described in various ways. These include *Akunlegba* (that which is taken while kneeling) *Akunleyan* (That which one takes or receives while

kneeling) and *Ayanmo* (that which is affixed unto one). These three descriptions of how *ori* is acquired help to explain what goes on during the act of choosing *ori* (Idowu, 1962: 173).

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, some things should be obvious from the discourse on *Ori* in relation to human destiny:

- (a) The foundation of many things that would occur in the life of each person has already been laid down before the birth of that person. That is why Yoruba people says: A-kunle-yan-ni-ad'aiye-ba. That-which-is-chosen-kneeling-is-that-which-is-found-on-getting-to-the-world. (Idowu, 1962:171).
- (b) No person here on earth knows what type of foundation he has chosen, since it was sealed in heaven, and each person has to embrace the tree of forgetfulness.
- (c) There is a supposed act of choice present in the acquisition of *ori*. Each person goes to choose as he wishes. Even when Ajala, the moulder of heads, who is a drunkard, debtor and unstable being, helps, he is under no obligation to do so; neither is one forced to seek his assistance.
- (d) The responsibility for choosing is basically that of the individual. Thus, the act of choice brings a long lasting and significant effect on the life of the individual.
- (e) That destiny as it is cannot be changed; hence, the dictum “whatever will be will be” (Oduwole, 1996:47).

The above do suggest that the Yoruba conceptions of *ori* and human destiny are fatalistic in approach. The act of choice can be interpreted as one that is irrevocable and unalterable. Hence, the Yoruba hold that:

|                        |                                                                 |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| A-yan-mo o gb'ogun     | That which is affixed to one cannot be rectified with medicine. |
| Ori buruku ko gbose    | A bad head cannot be rectified with soap.                       |
| Ohun ori wa se l'aiye  | What the 'ori' comes to fulfil in the world,                    |
| Ko ma ni s'alai se e o | It cannot but fulfil it (Idowu, 1962:171, 185).                 |

For the Yoruba, everybody has got his biography written before coming into the world, such that whatever he does is not done out of free will, but because it has been pre-ordained. This is well illustrated in a play written by Ola Rotimi, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* (1975) and as Abimbola (1976: 115) rightly points out: “Indeed, the gods are not able to change destiny”.

That the Yoruba concept of human destiny is analogous to the concept of fatalism is further be strengthened by Sodipo's (1973) account of the Yoruba concept of cause and chance in that the Yoruba do not believe in chance; that is, things, for them, do not happen by chance. Familiar causes belong within one's destiny or *Ayanmo* which are determined by the gods. Though the Yoruba can explain things by natural causes, they also believe that there are many hidden factors or causes of an event. Hence, when the “How” question has been answered, there is still a “why” question to answer. In other words, even when the question “How did it happen?” which requires an empirical answer, has been addressed, there is still the metaphysical question of “why did it happen? to be addressed”. To answer this question is to probe into the hidden factors responsible for an event. (1973: 13).

The fatalistic interpretation of *ori* provides a solution to the paradoxes associated with the concepts of *ori* and human destiny and the debate on if destiny can or cannot be changed through a good character, by ones heavenly replica or by *omo araiye* (evil ones). My paper (“The Yoruba Concepts of *Ori* and Human Destiny: A Fatalistic Interpretation”) is one of the most cited of all my publications. Ebijuwa (1997) in criticising the fatalistic interpretation argued that I undermined the dynamic character of the concept of *Iwa*. He tries to distinguish between *iwa* as character and *iwa* as being. Fasoro (2000:14) saw a defense of the fatalistic interpretation as an uphill task in that it may be difficult to reconcile this conviction with equally strong belief among the same people that *iwa* (manner/character) is the determinant of human success or failure, and it is the only thing that follows a man even to his grave. Balogun (2007, 124) while arguing for a soft interpretation of destiny maintained that the fatalistic interpretation of the metaphysical nature of *ori* and human destiny in Yoruba thought system is philosophically

inadequate and does not represent a correct, coherent and consistent philosophical interpretation, reflective of the Yoruba belief in *ori* and human destiny. For Balogun, with the fatalistic interpretation of the Yoruba belief in *ori* and human destiny, the practice of performance of character formation becomes otiose, since it is not a product of man's making. (Balogun, 2007:125). Ekanola (2012) would rather interpret the concepts of *ori* and human destiny in naturalistic terms, especially in terms of biological and environmental factors that are relevant to character formation.

While it seems unacceptable to many of my colleagues to give a fatalistic interpretation of destiny in African thought, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I argue that if destiny cannot be changed, if *Ayanmo o gbogun*, if Odewale in *The Gods Are Not To Blame* in an attempt to have his destiny changed was actually fulfilling the destiny, if character is part of the destiny of a person, then all attempts to change destiny might actually be attempts at fulfilling it. Is destiny, therefore, not fatalistic in nature? (Oduwole, 1996). People attempt to change destiny by whatever means because they are in the world and have forgotten what choice of destiny they had made. The following Yoruba Proverbs underscore this:

|                            |                                                                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A kunle yan ni a d'aye ba, | That which is chosen kneeling is that which is found on getting the world. |
| A kunle yan pin            | We knelt and chose a portion                                               |
| A d'aiye tan oju nro ni    | We get to the world and are not pleased                                    |
| Ohun ori wa se l'aiye      | What the 'ori' comes to fulfil in the world,                               |
| Ko ma ni s'alai se e o     | It cannot but fulfil it (Idowu, 1962:171, 185).                            |

### Immortality and Reincarnation

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I want to take us briefly to one of the important and rigorous discussions that we engage in Philosophy, and more specifically, in African Metaphysics. This is the question immortality and reincarnation. In Christianity, it is claimed that it is appointed unto man to die once and after that judgment (Hebrews 9:27-28). This implies that reincarnation by implication does not exist. However, in Yoruba thought

system, there are some proofs or evidences to show that the soul is immortal and that it reincarnates.

### On Immortality

The belief in the immortality of the soul is evident in how the Yoruba react to the phenomenon of death. For instance, the aged in Yoruba land often anticipate their fate after death in their thought and speech, referring to after-life as home (*Ile*). They often say *Ile-to-lo* (It is time to go home) with *Aye* (world) considered as market place (*oja*) and the after-life as the permanent home (*ile*) (Oduwole, 1997:19).

The belief in immortality is also shown in the way Yoruba venerate their ancestors. For instance, the cult of *Egungun*, according to the Yoruba, consist of the spirit of deceased people manifesting in their communities. It materialises in robed figure which gives the impression that the deceased appears, albeit in a temporary figure in the material world. Hence, *Egungun* is usually referred to as “*Ara-Orun*” (somebody from the world above).

### On Reincarnation

Reincarnation is evidenced by children born into a family, especially after the death of a grandparent. They are usually given names to show that their father or mother had come back to life. Such names are Babatunde (father has returned) and Yetunde (mother has returned). Belief in reincarnation is also indicated in a rite known as *Gbigbo-ori-omo* (hearing a child's *ori*) or *Mimo-ori-omo* (knowing a child's *ori*). This rite helps to determine the kind of ancestor that has reincarnated (Oduwole, 1997:19).

There is the Yoruba theory of seven Heavens as related by Makinde (1983). This theory states that a person comes back to life sixteen times from the time of his restful death. If he was a good person, he comes back as a goat, an animal or inanimate thing like a tree.

It is pertinent to note that evidences in support of reincarnation also show that the soul never dies because it is immortal. Therefore, holding a belief in reincarnation entails that one is ready to accept that the soul

never dies. However, the reverse is not the case. That is, a person may be ready to hold that immortality is true without believing that the soul reincarnates. The fact that the soul never dies does not mean it must necessarily reincarnate in another body, be it animal, plant, tree or man. It might, as Christians hold, continue to exist either in heaven or hell. It might even be that all souls return to their creator (whoever this might be). Finally, it may be as the materialists would say: that death ends it all. In other words, that there is no life after death.

### **Philosophical Problems Associated with the Ideas of Immortality and Reincarnation**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, the central idea in the belief in immortality and reincarnation of the soul in Yoruba thought is that a human person is born as a creature of temporality and mutability, into a temporal and mutable environment. However, given the fact that there is something divine in him, he cannot but aspire for a good which is above time and mutability. If for example, death ends it all, it may not matter so much what sort of a soul man has; whether good or bad since in a few years, his wickedness or good life will end with his life. But, if we believe that the soul lives forever, it follows that it will take with it into the unseen world nothing but its own intrinsic character of good or evil and its unending future will depend on that. Given this, the hope of after-life or immortality is useful for moral purposes. So, one can conclude that the notion of immortality is a postulate for practical use (Oduwole, 1997:20).

Some others have argued that it is inconceivable to think of the extinction of humans. Science, it is stated, has established that souls cannot be extinct but can only be transformed. If this is true, then the materialists or one who thinks death ends it all will have to re-examine the claim. It is pertinent, however, to note that the concepts of immortality and reincarnation are both metaphysical in nature and are shrouded in supernaturalism. Like all metaphysical beliefs they cannot be proved empirically, and their truth or falsity cannot be determined (Oduwole, 1997:20).

Nonetheless, a philosophical interrogation of the concepts of immortality and reincarnation will not gloss over the problems associated with them. In this regard, Oluwole (1990:16) raised some philosophical questions which are most crucial in carrying out a critical review of the idea of reincarnation. These questions, for example, start from and relate to the rational justification, logical consistency to the epistemological cum explanatory role of the belief in reincarnation. However, in addition to these there are some further questions which are important for answers to them might help to decide whether to discard or hold on to the belief.

For example, it is important to ask:

1. What is the difference between children who resemble those who are still alive and those whose semblance with dead parents or grandparents, for example, is taken as cases of reincarnation?
2. Is it not plausible to take the two cases above as a simple case of family resemblance?
3. Which aspect of man reincarnates? Is it the “*Emi*” (life-force) or “*Ara*” (body) or “*Ori*” (personality soul)? This question is important in the light of the “*Yiya Ori*” (knowing the head) ceremony which reveals not only the type of “*Ori*” a child has brought to the world but also the type of ancestor that has probably reincarnated.
4. The above question, no doubt, creates a further problem in respect of the relationship between “*Ori*” “*Emi*” and “*Ara*”. That is, how does the “*Ara*” interact with the “*Emi*” and “*Ori*” as they are the non-physical aspects of man?
5. There is also the problem of personal identity. Since the body is useful in identifying a person, how then can we recognise souls in their reincarnated state?
6. From the above, one can ask in what state are disembodied souls? How can we recognise them?
7. How do we differentiate disembodied souls from unembodied souls? (Oduwole, 1997:20-21).



All the questions above appear simple yet are not susceptible to simple answers that can be easily provided or convincingly proved. Idowu (1962) and Mbiti (1969) who are eminent scholars in African traditional thought consider these as problems and paradoxes:

In propounding a solution to these paradoxes, Idowu (1962:194) suggests that there is no complete reincarnation; only partial reincarnation. He also admits that there are yet a lot that we do not know about human nature. It might be that there are possibilities which are beyond our empirical comprehension. There is no doubt that Idowu does not want to discard a belief so dear to him despite his recognition of some of the problems arising from holding such a belief. It appears that this led him to his idea of partial reincarnation.

While I may want to agree with Idowu that there are a lot that we do not know about ourselves, his idea of partial reincarnation which appears to be his simple solution to the problem of reincarnation may not be acceptable. As the philosophical problems have shown, the idea of reincarnation, whether in its partial or classical, involves more problems than it solves.

The belief in reincarnation, whether classical or partial with all its attending problems, needs to be re-examined especially in the light of the scientific explanation of genetic factors and family resemblance. The simple genetic explanation of family resemblance, for example, may be a better explanation to the belief in reincarnation. This is not only for its open-endedness, but because it is simple, and it solves many problems than the belief in reincarnation creates. Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) in the cells (gene) of every living creature account for the hereditary factor or family resemblance in every unit, be it animal or human being. This then helps to explain why a child displays the character trait of a parent while he is alive and at the same time another child displays the same qualities of the parent after his death. This is a situation which looks paradoxical and which the Yoruba man will consider as reincarnation.

In concluding this discussion on reincarnation, one may say that the

belief in immortality may, for its ethical implications, remains functional and as such, should be retained. However, a critical review might lead to an explanation that the belief in reincarnation arose in response to the need to explain the phenomenon of death, and some mysteries of life. However, with the advent of scientific investigation and discoveries, it may be necessary to re-examine it (Oduwole, 1997:22).

### **The Problem of Evil**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, still on my quest for relevance in African society, it will be interesting to examine how the Yoruba view the problem of evil, which I discussed extensively in one of my papers (Oduwole, 2007). The problem of evil is an age-long philosophical issue in metaphysics which hold that: If God is omnipotent, all good, all knowing, then why is there evil in the world?

The problem of evil can simply be stated in five propositions:

- A. God exists
- B. God is Omnipotent – all powerful; capable of performing any act, even those that violate natural laws.
- C. God is Omniscient – all knowing, continuously aware of everything on earth.
- D. God is Omnibeneficent – wholly good, Holy, loving, absolutely righteous
- E. Evil exists.

These five propositions can be reduced to three. (1) God exists (2) God is Omnipotent etc. (3) Evil exists. The three propositions are considered as logically incompatible with each other. Propositions B, C and D if jointly taken (God is omnipotent, God is omniscient and omnibeneficent) and proposition E (evil exists) seem incompatible with one another. If God is an omniscient being, then, it means there is no limit to his power and to what he can do. If God is wholly good or benevolent then, why is it that there is evil in the world? Why does evil exist? The two propositions

seem difficult to reconcile. The existence of an all-powerful, omniscient, holy God implies (or it is argued in Western philosophy) that either God does not exist, or He does exist but He is not Omnipotent or not wholly good or both. So, the problem is, which of the propositions about God should we abandon? Philosophers in Western thought have tried to present answers known as theodicy to this problem.

Mr. Vice –Chancellor, Sir, an analytical exposition into the Yoruba concept of evil and good, as discussed in my paper (Oduwole 2007c), revealed that the age long problem of evil is non-existing and assumes a dialectical explanation in the Yoruba thought system. The Africans, as in the case of Yoruba, affirm the co-existence of *Ibi* (evilness) and *Ire* (goodness) in the world without any contradiction. In African theodicy, there exist ministers or deities that include such deities as *Orisa-nla*, who does as he chooses and is responsible for such phenomena as albinos and hunchbacks. He serves in the theocratic government of the Supreme Being, Olodumare. Apart from *Orisa-nla*, *Esu* is a divinity that works hand in hand with Olodumare. The Yoruba conception of theocratic hierarchy shows how they consequently react to the problem of evil and how it is consistent with the concept of God. The following excerpts from the *Ifa* literary corpus related below show the Yoruba belief that good cannot exist in the world without evil, and vice versa.

An Ifa verse known as *Osa-Alawure* says:

|                              |                                                                                       |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Osa wure, o rin wure         | Osa who offers benevolent supplications, he goes about doing it.                      |
| A dia fun alawure            | A divination was conducted for he-who offers-benevolent supplications                 |
| Osa wure, o rin wure         | Osa who offers benevolent supplications, he goes about doing it.                      |
| A dia fun orori awobi        | A divination was conducted for the leader- of-those who offer-malevolent-supplcations |
| Awon mejeeji n ti ikole orun | They were both coming from the abode in heaven                                        |
| Bo si ikole aye              | to the abode on earth                                                                 |

Won ni ki awon mejeeji o rubo  
Orori awure nikan lo rubo

Nigba ti o rubo tan

O wa n bo ni ikole aye

Orori awobi to ko ti ko rubo

Oun naa gbaradi o nbo nile aye

Orori awure mura ikole aye

Orori awure ni ti oun ba ti de ile aye

Rere ni oun yoo maa se

Orori awobi ni nitoun o

Ibi ni oun yoo maa se  
Awon mejeeji de ile aye

Orori awure wa n se rere

Orori awobi wa n se ibi

Aye wa n ye orori awure

Awon nnkan re n dara

Orori awobi wa n fi

Ibi ba ti orori awure je

The two were asked to offer sacrifice  
It was only the leader of those-who-offer benevolent supplications who offered the sacrifice  
When he finished performing the sacrificial rites

He set forth on his journey to the abode on earth

The leader of those-who-offer-malevolent-supplcations refused to

offer any sacrifice  
He too, commenced his journey to the abode on earth

The leader of those-who-offer-malevolent-supplcations followed him  
The leader of those –who-offer-benevolent-Supplcations said when he gets to the abode on earth  
He would do only that which is good

The leader of those-who-offer-malevolent-Supplcations said  
He, would do only that which is evil  
That the two of them arrived the earth at the same time.

The leader of those-who-offer-benevolent-supplcations began to do that which is good

The leader of those-who-offer-malevolent-supplcations began to do that which is evil

Life became blissful for the benevolent supplication leader.

Whatever he laid his hands upon prospered

The leader of those-who-offer-malevolent- supplication began to disrupt all that benevolent supplication leader did

Nitori pe orori awure n se nnkan daradara For he did good things  
 Awon eniyan wa pe orori awure People called the leader of those-who-  
 offer-Benevolent-supplcations  
 Won beere lowo re pe They asked him  
 Ibi ti won n se fun e yii nko "All these evil deeds against you  
 Ki lo maa se sii? What do you plan to do about them?"  
 Olori awure wa da won lohun pe The leader of those-who-offer  
 benevolent-Supplcations answered them that  
 Oun ati awobi ni awon jo It was himself and the leader of those-  
 de ile aye Lati ode orun, who-offer-Malevolent-supplcations that  
 awon mejeeji Jo de ile aye ni came to the earth That the two of them  
 arrived the earth at the same time. It was  
 from heaven that the two of them descended  
 Tibi tire la de ile aye "It was with both evil and good that we  
 arrived the earth"  
 Awon eniyan wa ni People said "Well then...  
 "Too ko si sise There is nothing that can be done  
 Nigba to je pe atibi atire Since both Evil and Good  
 Won jo de ile aye ni" Arrived the earth-abode together"  
 Too, tibi tire ni won dele aye Well then, evil and good arrived the earth  
 together  
 Olori Awure wa ni bee ni The leader of those-who-offer-benevolent-  
 supplication said  
 "Tibi tire la dale aye" "Yes, Evil and Good, that was how we  
 arrived the earth- Abode".

Another Ifa verse cited by Akinwowo (1986) known as *Iwori-Ose* says:  
 Ise kii se laisi ire Poverty does not come without bringing  
 hand-in-hand Its companion, *Ire*  
 Eyi tii se omo iya ibi That which belong to *Ibi*  
 To je tire That which belongs to *Ire*  
 Adia fun owokosi-eniyan ko sunwon Are two co-existent emanations.  
 eniyan ko sunwon Thus it was divined for Owokosi-  
 Pe oju to sisee He was advised that the eyes which  
 beheld poverty  
 Ko gbodo soreti nu Should not lose faith  
 Sugbon ko kiyesi oruko rere But should strive to take care of his good  
 name,  
 Nitori adun nii gbeyin ewuro. For sweetness follows the tasting of bitter  
 leaf.

A part of Odu-Ifa known as *Irosu-Iwori* quote by Makinde (1988:10) says:

Bi a je adun titi laiye laiye ikoro die sii, if we taste all the sweet things in life  
 Without tasting a bit of bitter, life  
 will be most boring indeed.  
 Aye a ma su'ni je, Eniti ko je He who has not experienced  
 iponju ri ko le mo adun oro. extreme want In life will not  
 appreciate the sweetness of wealth

The Yoruba excerpts just highlighted represents the Yoruba theodicy and they clearly underscore the fact that the Yoruba believe that good cannot exist in the world without evil, and neither can evil be in existence in the world without good. Indeed, neither good nor evil will be meaningful without the other.

## CONCLUSION

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, this lecture represents my contributions as a Philosopher to the challenge of relevance of my discipline, Philosophy, to some issues that deserve attention in African society. It reflects how a philosopher interrogates issues that has to do with the day-to-day living of the African man. They are issues that the lay man will gloss over and assume that complexities does not arise from them. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, my conclusion is that there are a lot that philosophy can offer the African society. Philosophical discussions on several issues can assist in a rigorous reflection of our cultural heritage and thereby contribute effectively to international discourse. It can also help in the development of the human mind.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, my distinguished audience, I am not tired of Philosophising, I will continue to philosophise as long as I have my being. My present area of research is in Bioethics particularly Ethics of Genomic Research in Africa, Ethics of Quarantine, Ethics of HIV/AIDS and Stigma, Ethics of Cancer Research. I welcome collaborations in these areas apart from existing ones highlighted in this lecture.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, following the issues raised in this lecture, I hereby recommend the following:

1. That critical thinking and logical reasoning be introduced in the secondary school curriculum.
2. In contributing to Global Health discourse, that Bioethics be taught as general courses in the University so that the African voice can be properly represented.
3. Health Care/Hospital Ethics Committees (HECs) should be established in all hospitals and made effective to ensure improved patient-centred care especially when there are ethical conflicts in the management of health problems.
4. Attention should be given to African languages in our curriculum both at the secondary and higher institutions, as this will enrich critical discussions and enhance African contributions to global discourse.

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