

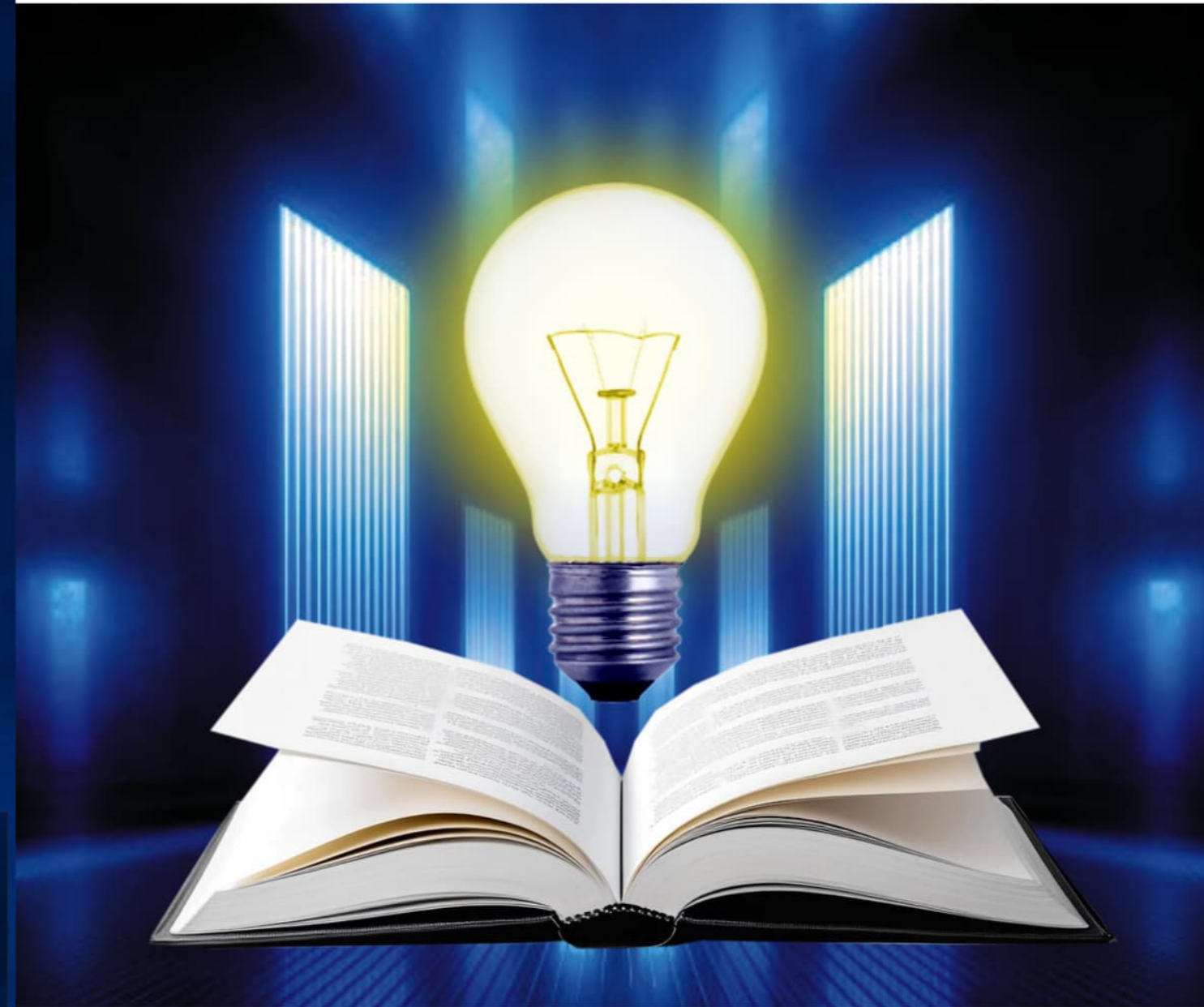


IDEAS

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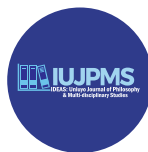
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Department of Philosophy,
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Email: ideasjournaluniuyo@gmail.com
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Clement Oshogwe Mamudu



From Ghost to Mechanism: Revisiting Ryle's Behaviourism and its Implications for Non-dualist Theories of Consciousness

¹Professor Gabriel Ema Idang

²Paul Akaninyene Effiong

Department of Philosophy

Faculty of Arts

University of Uyo.

Abstract

This paper critically revisited Gilbert Ryle's philosophical behaviourism, particularly his repudiation of Cartesian dualism encapsulated in the metaphor of the “ghost in the machine.” The methods of analysis and criticism was employed in the research. Ryle's central argument is that mental states are not private inner episodes but dispositions manifested in observable behaviours. This argument is a powerful critique of the metaphysical assumptions underpinning traditional mind–body theories, particularly, that of Cartesian dualism. The study explored how Ryle's analysis prefigures and informs contemporary non-dualist approaches to consciousness, including embodied cognition, enactivism, and second-person perspectives. It situated Ryle within broader philosophical and cognitive science debates, demonstrating that his work, far from obsolete, provided valuable tools for clarifying conceptual confusions in current discourse. The study argued that Ryle's challenge is mostly conceptual rather than empirical, even while it acknowledges criticism from philosophers like David Chalmers who claim that Ryle ignores the qualitative, subjective aspect of experience. The findings of the paper among others included the fact that Ryle's method helped dissolved misleading questions that had sustained the so-called “hard problem” of consciousness. Furthermore, the paper also discovered that Ryle's insights can guide future inquiries in AI, neuroscience and social cognition. The study concluded that a full understanding of consciousness demanded both empirical evidence and philosophical precision—an approach that Ryle's legacy richly supports.

Keywords: *Behaviourism, Ghost in the Machine, Consciousness, Cartesian Dualism*

Introduction

The mind, for much of philosophical history, has been cast as a mysterious, immaterial entity - an elusive ghost trapped within the mechanical shell of the human body. This dualistic portrayal, famously articulated by René Descartes, has shaped centuries of debate in philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience. But, what if the mind is not a private theatre of ghostly impressions

but a way of behaving, acting, and interacting meaningfully with the world? What if centuries of philosophical confusion about consciousness stem not from unsolved mysteries, but from misunderstandings about language, logic, and categorisation? These provocative questions lie at the heart of Gilbert Ryle's critique of dualism and his call for a fundamental rethinking of mental concepts.

The target of Ryle's critique was none other than René Descartes, the father of modern philosophy, whose substance dualism posited the mind (*res cogitans*) and body (*res extensa*) as two fundamentally distinct kinds of substance (Descartes, 1984, p. 54). According to Descartes, the mind is immaterial, private, and self-aware, while the body is physical, extended, and governed by mechanical laws. This dualistic framework created a sharp epistemological and ontological divide between mental and physical phenomena, leading to persistent puzzles about how the two interact. Though enormously influential, Cartesian dualism left behind conceptual tensions that Ryle would later describe as a fundamental confusion about the logical status of mental concepts. Gilbert Ryle forcefully rejected this conception, branding it a "category mistake" and deriding it as the myth of the "ghost in the machine" (Ryle, 1949, p. 17). Ryle's metaphor not only served as a scathing critique of Cartesian dualism but also marked a turning point in philosophical approaches to understanding the mind and consciousness. By challenging the assumption that the mind is a hidden, internal substance separate from the body, Ryle ushered in a new way of analysing consciousness, a new way that prioritises conceptual clarity over metaphysical speculation.

In his seminal work *The Concept of Mind*, Ryle offered an alternative grounded in what has come to be known as philosophical behaviourism. He argued that mental concepts such as belief, desire, and intention should not be interpreted as inner, private states, but rather as dispositions to behave in certain ways under particular conditions (Ryle, 1949, pp. 27–29). This approach challenged the deeply entrenched assumption that the mind must be some inner realm accessible only to introspection and posited instead that meaningful talk about the mind is rooted in observable behaviour and social context.

Decades later, as the Cartesian model continues to lose ground in favour of more empirically grounded frameworks, a diverse array of non-dualist theories of consciousness has emerged. Functionalism, eliminative materialism, and embodied cognition all reject the bifurcation of mind and body, seeking instead to locate consciousness within physical, behavioural, or relational systems. However, the relevance of Ryle's behaviourism to these contemporary theories remains a matter of philosophical contention. Is Ryle merely a historical stepping stone on the road to more sophisticated theories, or does his work still offer conceptual tools for dismantling lingering dualist assumptions? Therefore, this paper seeks to revisit Ryle's critique of the "ghost in the machine" in light of contemporary debates on consciousness.

Ryle's Behaviourism and the 'Ghost in the Machine'

Gilbert Ryle's most famous philosophical intervention is his scathing dismissal of Cartesian dualism, encapsulated in the phrase "the ghost in the machine." In *The Concept of Mind*, Ryle argues that Descartes committed a fundamental *category mistake* by treating the mind as a separate kind of entity, akin to the body but non-physical in nature (Ryle, 1949, p. 16). A category mistake, in Ryle's analysis, occurs when things are represented as belonging to a logical type or category to which they do not actually belong. For example, to treat "the university" as a separate object over and above its colleges, libraries, and departments is to misunderstand the term's proper

usage. Ryle believed this was precisely the error committed in discussions of the mind. Ryle argues, Descartes and his intellectual successors mistakenly construed the mind as a hidden internal thing rather than a way of speaking about behavioural and dispositional patterns.

In rejecting this dualist framework, Ryle proposed what is now known as *logical* or *philosophical behaviourism*. According to Ryle, mental concepts like “thinking,” “believing,” or “intending” are not names for inner, ghostly processes. Rather, they refer to patterns of observable behaviour, tendencies, and competencies. To say someone is intelligent or believes something is not to attribute to them a hidden mental item, but to describe how they are likely to act in relevant contexts (Ryle, 1949, pp. 27–29). This outlook constitutes the core of his philosophical behaviourism, which holds that mental states are logically connected to behavioural dispositions rather than being ontologically separate inner causes.

Ryle's behaviourism was both revolutionary and controversial. It attempted to cleanse philosophy of what he saw as outdated metaphysical assumptions and instead encouraged a return to ordinary language and common sense. William Lyons (2001) points out, Ryle's rejection of inner causes was not a denial of consciousness, but a re-conceptualisation of its grammar: “Ryle's central claim is not that there are no thoughts, but that thoughts are not ghostly events in an inner theatre” (Lyons, 2001, p. 108). For Ryle, the question was not what mysterious processes occur “in” the mind, but how mental terms function in our everyday linguistic and social practices (Ryle, 1949, p. 42)

Ryle thought he was providing a more realistic and less enigmatic description of mental life by emphasising how we employ mental vocabulary in everyday situations. Ryle did not, however, support a reductionist or mechanical explanation of human behaviour. Unlike strict psychological behaviourists such as B.F. Skinner, Ryle's position was not rooted in empirical generalisations or stimulus-response theory, but in conceptual analysis. His goal was not to eliminate mentalistic language, but to clarify its use and expose philosophical confusion. In this sense, his work shares affinities with the broader tradition of ordinary language philosophy, as developed by Wittgenstein and Austin, though Ryle was arguably more systematic in his critique of mentalism (Ryle, 1949, pp. 5–6; Glock, 2003, p. 212; Teichmann, 2011, pp. 88–89).

Thus, Ryle's analysis challenges the notion that mental states must be associated with private, internal episodes, instead redefining them as externally observable dispositions based on language and practice norms. His critique of the “ghost in the machine” invites a rethinking of what it means to have a mind, shifting the focus from internal introspection to outwardly manifested competencies and social practices. This shift lays the groundwork for reconsidering consciousness as a dynamic set of capacities shaped by social, behavioural, and linguistic contexts rather than as a ghostly presence within, a perspective that is still relevant in non-dualist theories of mind, albeit in modified forms.

Non-Dualist Theories of Consciousness: An Overview

The decline of Cartesian dualism in contemporary philosophy of mind has given rise to a range of non-dualist theories that attempt to explain consciousness without positing an immaterial soul or mental substance. These theories are united by the conviction that mental phenomena (however complex or elusive) are ultimately rooted in the physical world. Yet, their approaches to explaining consciousness vary widely, from the computational models of functionalism to the radical rejections of folk psychology seen in eliminative materialism, and the more embodied and enactive models that challenge the brain-centric focus of earlier paradigms.

One of the most influential non-dualist theories is functionalism, which holds that mental states

are defined by their functional roles in a system, rather than by their internal composition. In other words, what matters is not what the mind is *made of*, but what it *does*. According to Hilary Putnam (1967), who helped formalise this view, just as a mousetrap can be made of metal, wood, or plastic and still function as a mousetrap, so too can mental states be realised in different physical substrates, including brains, silicon chips, or even hypothetical Martian systems, so long as the functional relations are preserved. This position allows for a scientifically tractable understanding of consciousness, and it has proved particularly attractive in cognitive science and artificial intelligence research. However, functionalism, while avoiding dualism, faces its own philosophical challenges. Chief among them is its difficulty in explaining *qualia*, or the subjective, first-person aspect of experience. As Ned Block (1978) famously argued in his thought experiment on "China Brain," it is possible to imagine a system that performs the same functions as a conscious brain but lacks any internal experience. If every person in China simulated the neural functions of a single brain, Block contends, the system might have the right functional structure but still lack consciousness (Block, 1978, p. 281). Such arguments cast doubt on the sufficiency of functionalism for explaining consciousness as we actually experience it.

Another non-dualist approach is eliminative materialism, advanced by philosophers like Paul Churchland and Patricia Churchland. This theory takes a far more radical stance, arguing that our common-sense understanding of mental life (what is called "folk psychology") is fundamentally flawed and should be discarded in favour of neuroscientific explanations. Just as we once abandoned the concept of phlogiston in chemistry, eliminativists claim that terms like "belief" or "desire" may one day be seen as outdated theoretical constructs (Churchland, 1981, p. 75). On this view, there is no need to account for mental states in a behavioural or functional framework because they are simply illusory—a striking departure from Ryle's view, which sought to retain mental concepts while deflating their metaphysical implications. However, the eliminativist stance is not without controversy. Critics argue that it faces a form of self-refutation: to argue that beliefs do not exist seems to require having the belief that they do not exist. Moreover, as John Searle (1992) has pointed out, eliminative materialism neglects the *irreducibility* of subjective experience. The feeling of pain, the redness of red, or the sensation of awe may not be captured by any amount of neurobiological data, no matter how complete. These arguments underscore a persistent tension within non-dualist theories: the more they reduce mind to mechanism, the more they risk losing the phenomena they aim to explain.

A third, increasingly influential position is embodied and enactive cognition, which challenges the view that consciousness is housed entirely in the brain. Advocates such as Alva Noë (2004) and Francisco Varela argue that consciousness arises from the dynamic interaction between brain, body, and environment. On this view, perception and cognition are not processes occurring *in* the head but are enacted through a situated agent's engagement with the world. For example, seeing a tree is not just a matter of neural representations but involves bodily movement, sensory feedback, and environmental context. Consciousness, then, is not a passive, internal event but an *activity*, that is, a process of embodied interaction.

This embodied turn resonates in interesting ways with Ryle's behavioural dispositions. Ryle, too, resisted the idea that mental life was interior and private. Instead, he saw mental terms as rooted in public criteria and action-oriented practices (Ryle, 1949, p. 48). While Ryle lacked the empirical resources to develop an embodied theory, his focus on how mental states are expressed in behaviour anticipates the enactivist emphasis on action and world-involvement. Both reject the inner theatre model of consciousness and shift attention to the patterns of engagement that

constitute mental life. Nevertheless, the embodied approach still struggles with the classic *hard problem* of consciousness as articulated by David Chalmers (1995): why and how does subjective experience arise from physical processes at all? While these theories enrich our understanding of the structure and function of cognition, they often sidestep the question of *why* certain processes are accompanied by conscious awareness. This challenge remains unresolved across non-dualist theories and continues to fuel debates in both philosophy and neuroscience.

Ryle's Relevance in Contemporary Philosophy of Mind

To begin with, Ryle's rejection of the "ghost in the machine" metaphor was not merely a dismissal of dualist metaphysics but a call to reconceptualise mental predicates as grounded in behavioural tendencies and dispositions. In his own words: "when we describe people as having certain mental qualities, we are not referring to occult causes lurking behind their actions but to patterns in the ways they behave, speak, and respond" (Ryle, 1949, p. 58). This move was not a crude denial of inner life but a reconceptualisation of how we attribute mental states, placing emphasis on publically observable criteria rather than introspective access. This insight has found unexpected resonance in contemporary *enactivist* and *embodied* theories of mind, which view cognition as dynamic interaction rather than internal representation. Alva Noë, for instance, shares Ryle's dissatisfaction with the internalist view of the mind. In his influential work *Action in Perception*, Noë (2004) writes:

Perception is not something that happens to us, or in us. It is something we do. It is a kind of skilful activity on the part of the animal as a whole... Consciousness, accordingly, is not something that occurs inside us—it is something we achieve (p. 1).

This passage could have come straight from a Rylean playbook. Noë's model, like Ryle's, refuses to treat consciousness as a "ghost" riding in a cognitive vehicle; rather, it sees it as constituted by patterns of intelligent behaviour and interaction.

Furthermore, Ryle's emphasis on *category mistakes* remains useful in policing contemporary philosophical errors. Ryle introduced this notion to show how dualists misclassify the mind as a "thing" in the same way as the body, thus leading to a false metaphysical bifurcation. As he famously explained:

The dogma of the Ghost in the Machine... represents the facts of mental life as if they belonged to one category of existence when they actually belong to another. It is like saying 'She came home in a flood of tears and a sedan chair' (Ryle, 1949, p. 17).

In contemporary discourse, this critique warns against simplistic reductions or reifications of the mind, as when neuroscientists claim that a brain scan *is* a thought or that consciousness *is* identical to certain neural activations. Philosophers such as Bennett and Hacker (2003) have deployed similar arguments in their critique of neuroreductionism, arguing that "it is a profound conceptual error to treat psychological predicates, such as 'believes', 'thinks', or 'feels', as if they denoted neural states or processes in the brain" (Bennett & Hacker, 2003, p. 73). This Wittgensteinian concern with the misuse of language, which Ryle shares, helps guard against the epistemological hubris sometimes exhibited in cognitive neuroscience.

Even in the domain of artificial intelligence, Ryle's insistence on *dispositional* rather than *occurrent* mental states offers a compelling lens. With the rise of generative AI and machine

learning, questions about whether machines “understand” or “know” anything have re-emerged with force. Ryle's framework suggests that attributing understanding to an agent—biological or artificial—should depend not on hidden internal states but on the exhibited capacity for meaningful behaviour. Thus, the Turing Test, which assesses intelligence based on conversational behaviour, echoes Ryle's view that intelligence is not an inner glow but a set of capabilities observable over time.

That said, critics argue that Ryle's approach flattens the inner landscape of consciousness and reduces the rich phenomenology of experience to mere patterns of behaviour. Thomas Nagel (1974), in his classic paper *What is it like to be a bat?*, emphasised the irreducibility of subjective experience:

An organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is like to be that organism... the subjective character of experience is not captured by any amount of behavioural or functional analysis (Nagel, 1974, p. 436).

This critique highlights a persistent tension: while Ryle's dispositional account is powerful in deflating metaphysical mysteries, it may struggle to account for the immediacy and privacy of phenomenological experience.

Still, many philosophers today take a more charitable and layered approach to Ryle's legacy. As Julia Tanney (2009) observes:

Ryle's intention was not to deny the inner, but to question the way we conceive of the inner as a separate ontological domain... He wanted to show that our mental vocabulary is not a theory, but a practice: a grammar of how we speak about people (p. 115).

Such reinterpretations rehabilitate Ryle as a philosopher not of reductive behaviourism, but of conceptual clarity and philosophical therapy, one whose insights can guide discussions across cognitive science, philosophy of mind, and language. Ryle's relevance therefore lies not in providing a complete theory of consciousness but in disrupting metaphysical confusions and redirecting attention to the conceptual frameworks through which we interpret mental life. His warnings against category mistakes, his commitment to public criteria for mental terms, and his suspicion of the mythologised inner life continue to shape how philosophers and scientists alike think about the mind. In an era of accelerating technological and neurocognitive advances, Ryle's philosophical restraint may be more important than ever.

Implications for Future Theories of Consciousness

The trajectory of philosophical inquiry into consciousness has shifted significantly in recent decades, embracing neuroscientific advances, computational models, and phenomenological methods. Yet, Gilbert Ryle's work, often dismissed as a relic of mid-20th-century philosophy, presents crucial conceptual tools that remain vital in resisting reductionist and dualist extremes. As this paper has argued, its emphasis on dispositional analysis, category distinctions, and the behavioural criteria of mental ascription provides a philosophical grammar that contemporary theorists would do well to revisit and integrate into evolving frameworks.

It is imperative that future theories of consciousness first address the persistent problem of conceptual clarity. The category error identified by Ryle, which treats the mind as an object in the same ontological class as the body, has not been eliminated; rather, it has just been repackaged. For

instance, some neuroscientific theories reduce consciousness to neural correlates, thereby falling into what Bennett and Hacker (2003) call the “mereological fallacy”—the mistaken attribution of psychological predicates to the brain rather than to the person as a whole (p. 72). Ryle's conceptual critique still holds relevance here. He did not deny the brain's role but insisted on the distinction between *causal mechanisms* and *logical grammar*. This makes his framework indispensable to philosophical oversight in scientific theorising.

Moreover, Ryle's influence anticipates key aspects of *embodied and enactive cognition*, where consciousness is seen not as a detached internal representation but as dynamically embedded in bodily and environmental interactions. As Gallagher (2005) asserts in *How the Body Shapes the Mind*:

The phenomenological body is not a container of mind, nor is the mind something that happens inside the head. Rather, the body is a part of the dynamic system through which consciousness and cognition arise (p. 244).

Here, Ryle's dispositional view finds renewed traction. Consciousness is not an invisible light bulb glowing within, but a series of context-sensitive capacities, performances, and intelligible actions. The embodied turn in philosophy of mind vindicates much of Ryle's resistance to inner–outer dichotomies.

That said, future theories must also address the **phenomenological gap**—the so-called “hard problem” of consciousness. Critics like David Chalmers (1996) argue that Ryle's model lacks the tools to explain *why* and *how* physical processes give rise to subjective experience (p. 5). In *The Conscious Mind*, Chalmers maintains:

Even when we have explained the performance of all the cognitive and behavioural functions in the vicinity of experience—perceptual discrimination, categorization, internal access, verbal report—there may still remain a further unanswered question: Why is the performance of these functions accompanied by experience? (p. 4).

This represents a serious challenge to any theory influenced by Ryle. However, a possible Rylean rejoinder is not to deny the existence of phenomenal consciousness but to reject the way the problem is posed. Instead of searching for neural correlates of *qualia*, Ryle would question the coherence of treating experience as a substance-like “extra” that needs to be tacked onto behaviour and cognition. In this way, future theories may benefit from *conceptual deflation*, examining whether the so-called “hard problem” is in fact a product of linguistic confusion or metaphysical overreach.

A promising avenue lies in **second-person approaches** to consciousness, where the mind is accessed not through introspection or third-person observation but through intersubjective engagement. Philosophers like Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi (2008) argue that consciousness is inherently social, shaped by interaction and shared practices. This echoes Ryle's insistence that mental predicates are rooted in behaviour intelligible to others. As Zahavi puts it:

We should abandon the idea that consciousness is something private and hidden away in an inner realm. Our mental lives are accessible not only through introspection but also through our embodied interactions (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008, p. 189).

Such views align with Ryle's public criterion of mental concepts and extend it by situating

consciousness in dialogical and social contexts—a step Ryle himself did not fully take but arguably paved the way for.

In terms of **artificial intelligence and consciousness**, Ryle's theory raises cautionary flags. Claims that AI “understands” or “experiences” must be scrutinised through a Rylean lens. If mental states are not ghostly causes but demonstrated capacities, then attributing consciousness to a machine requires more than functional mimicry; it demands genuinely context-sensitive, norm-governed interaction. Mere output is not enough. As John Searle famously argues in his Chinese Room thought experiment, syntax is not semantics (Searle, 1980, p. 419). Ryle would add: semantics is not behaviour *alone*, but meaningful performance embedded in normative contexts. Thus, future AI-consciousness models must integrate not just functional roles but dispositional intelligibility within human practices.

Ryle's philosophical contributions offer more than historical curiosity; they are critical lenses through which to assess the direction of consciousness studies. His work is a neglected resource because of his cautions against metaphysical mistakes, his emphasis on the public and normative nature of mental ascription, and his foresight of embodied cognition. Ryle tells us how to think more clearly about awareness, even though he might not be able to solve the hard problem. Conceptual rigour may be just as important to the future of consciousness studies as scientific advancement, and Ryle continues to be a vital resource in this regard.

Conclusion

Consciousness remains one of the most enduring and perplexing subjects in philosophy. From antiquity to contemporary neuroscience, thinkers have wrestled with questions about the nature of the mind, the relationship between thought and action, and the possibility of subjective experience being reduced to objective explanation. While many modern accounts turn to brain imaging, artificial intelligence, or computational models to explain mental states, the philosophical underpinnings of these discussions often remain unclear or unquestioned. As a result, debates about consciousness frequently oscillate between reductive materialism and mysterious dualism, reflecting a lack of conceptual clarity about what the mind actually is.

A major divergence from conventional metaphysical approaches to the mind may be seen in Gilbert Ryle's rejection of Cartesian dualism through his idea of the “ghost in the machine” and his development of philosophical behaviourism. By demolishing the erroneous division between the mind and body, Ryle encouraged a shift of perspective, viewing consciousness as a complex array of dispositions and capacities manifested in language and behaviour rather than as an internal, private theatre of immaterial states. While his approach has encountered criticism for purportedly disregarding subjective experience, its continuing appeal resides in the conceptual clarity it gives to disputes too often muddled by unexamined assumptions.

As demonstrated throughout this paper, Ryle's work continues to have powerful implications for contemporary theories of consciousness, especially those resisting reductionist or dualist extremes. From embodied and enactive cognition to second-person perspectives and critiques of AI consciousness claims, Ryle's insights remain philosophically potent. His method reminds us that not all questions about consciousness are empirical, many are conceptual, and the clarity of our answers depends on the precision of our questions. In the end, further investigations into consciousness need to combine philosophical criticism with scientific understanding. Ryle left behind a collection of analytical, linguistic, and ontological tools that assist define what we mean

when we talk about the mind rather than a complete theory. Scholars continue to be challenged to consider what it means to be a conscious being in the world in a different and possibly more productive way by his call to dissolve rather than answer some of the mysteries surrounding awareness.

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A Lockean Perspective on Global Governance and Human Rights Without Borders

¹Professor Idorenyin Francis Esikot

²Andrew -Essien, Ubong Sunday

Department of Philosophy,
University of Uyo.

Abstract

Human rights are often seen as universal principles, but their protection is frequently limited by national borders and sovereignty. Many people continue to face violations of their rights due to political oppression, weak institutions, or neglect by governments. Even smaller and less developed nations are being oppressed by bigger and more developed nations. This situation raises a pressing question: how can human rights be protected effectively in a world divided by national borders and laws? This study explored the relevance of John Locke's philosophy of natural rights in shaping a moral approach to global governance. It sought to understand how Lockean views can guide the international community in protecting human dignity beyond state borders. The study employed a qualitative research methodology, utilising analytical, historical-critical, expository, and descriptive approaches to interpret the relevance of Locke's ideas on natural rights to modern governance context. It analysed the tension between state sovereignty and universal moral obligations, and the role of international institutions such as the United Nations, and evaluated the challenges of enforcing rights in a fragmented world. It is established that global institutions, treaties, and collective consent among nations are essential tools for promoting and protecting human rights. Challenges such as cultural diversity, political interests, and the lack of a central enforcement authority complicate implementation, yet these obstacles do not diminish the ethical obligation to act. The study recommended strengthening international cooperation, ensuring accountability through global institutions, and promoting shared responsibility among states.

Key words: *Global Governance, Human Rights, John Locke, State Sovereignty*

Introduction

Human rights are commonly understood as the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every human being simply because they are human. These rights are often described as universal, meaning they apply to all persons regardless of nationality, race, culture, or political system. In practice, however, the protection of human rights is often tied to the authority of individual states, which are expected to safeguard the rights of their citizens within their territories. This sometimes leads to criminal victimization of interindividual (Ignatius and Denis 36-43). If human rights truly belong to all persons, should their protection depend entirely on the boundaries and decisions of sovereign states? Scholars of political philosophy and international law have long observed that the universal language of human rights often stands in tension with the political reality of state sovereignty (Donnelly 10; Freeman 23).

The philosophical writings of John Locke provide an important starting point for addressing this concern. Locke argued that human beings possess natural rights to life, liberty, and property even before the creation of political societies. According to him, governments are formed through the consent of the people primarily to protect these rights (Umotong 102; John 371). Political authority therefore, does not create human rights but exists to safeguard them. Locke's argument suggests that human rights have a moral foundation that stands above political institutions and laws. If this claim is taken seriously, then the protection of human rights cannot be limited entirely by national borders (Locke 287; Tuckness and Thompson 92).

In the contemporary world, questions about the global protection of human rights have become significant. International institutions such as the United Nations attempt to promote and defend these rights across different countries, yet serious violations continue to occur in many parts of the world. The tension between state sovereignty and the universal character of human rights therefore remains a central issue in global governance. Locke's theory of natural rights can provide a moral basis for thinking about human rights beyond the boundaries of the nation state (Beitz 45; Donnelly 37). This work therefore examines how Lockean political thought can help clarify the relationship between universal human rights and global governance.

Conceptual Clarifications

Concept of Human Rights: The concept of human right has been a prominent daily discourses, especially in socio-political discussions, and this has raised several questions and concerns. Such questions include: what is human right? Do humans have rights at all? On what lies the legality or basis of these rights? While attempting the answer these questions, scholars have been polarized on where they pitch their tent. Esikot and Obot (5) note that this polarization is between the naturalist school and the political school. While the naturalist are of the opinion that human rights are innate and preempted by the very existence of humans, the political school of thought believe that human rights “are derived not from our nature as human beings but out of the political need to maintain universal order and political stability”.

According to Ernst and Heilinger (vii), “... human rights, by their very nature, are held by all human beings either simply because of their common humanity, their human dignity, or because a set of basic needs and interests.” This highlights that human rights belong to every person, not because of status or law, but simply by virtue of being human. This view clearly aligns with the naturalist school. Similarly, Syafrinaldi and Syafridi (275) argue that:

Human rights are basic rights that are inherently attached to all human beings, are universal and

inalienable. Therefore, human rights must be protected, respected, defended, and should not be taken away by anyone. The development of human rights is inseparable from the development of philosophical thoughts, and conceptually, the history of human rights can be traced down to the emergence of constitutionalism in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Thus, this implies that while the law (through the constitution and various declarations of the rights of man) acknowledges the existence of human rights (as argued by the political school), human rights are not merely legal constructs but derive from moral and philosophical reasoning that predates contemporary institutions. The necessity of human rights extends beyond the prevention of overt violations; it also promotes the conditions for peace, stability, and sustainable development.

Concept of Global Governance: Global governance refers to the collective management of global affairs through a network of international institutions, laws, and agreements aimed at addressing challenges that transcend national borders (Held and McGrew 56). Global governance arose because many global problems, such as peacekeeping, climate change, fair trade, cyber-attacks, terrorism, and money laundering, were too vast for any single country to manage alone. While some proposed a world government to manage such problems globally, this was not feasible. Instead, global governance developed as a means for countries to cooperate in addressing pressing challenges without forming a world government, thereby ensuring collaboration while respecting national independence (Yuyan, 119). According to Yuyan:

...global governance is a sum of institutions—either rules or organizations—established by state or non-state actors with the intent of addressing global issues. The creation of these institutions is based on consensus reached by stakeholders through negotiation after they have balanced their common and conflicting interests. The fundamental function of global governance lies in the provision of global public goods (119).

Yuyan's description presents global governance as a flexible and negotiated system rather than a rigid world government.

Locke's Philosophy of Human Rights

Locke describes the state of nature as a condition in which human beings live before forming a political society. Locke's account presents human beings as rational, morally responsible, and naturally equal prior to the establishment of political authority (Turner 24). In this state of nature, all individuals are naturally free and equal. Although there is no formal government, no recognised judge, and no established civil law, individuals are still governed by the law of nature, which Locke identifies with reason. This reason teaches that no one ought to harm another in their life, liberty, or possessions (Locke 271; Dunn 43). According to Kelly:

Locke claims that people in the state of nature are both morally free and equal. People are free in the sense of not being subject to the domination or direction of others... As a moral concept, freedom is something that all enjoy as a right of nature, so the state of nature is a condition of moral equality (187).

John Locke's conception of the state of nature differs significantly from that of Thomas Hobbes. While both thinkers employ the concepts of the state of nature and the social contract as foundations for their political theories, Locke advances a more optimistic account of human

nature. He develops the ideas of natural and inalienable rights, limited government, and the right to dissent. This stands in sharp contrast to Hobbes's portrayal of the state of nature as a condition marked by perpetual insecurity and conflict, where life is characterised by fear and the constant threat of violence (Ganie 58). For Hobbes (143), in the state of nature "the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short". According to Esikot (Hobbesian Ethics 51), although Hobbes recognises the equality of individuals in the state of nature, he argues that this equality gives rise to competition in the pursuit of desired ends. Thus, Esikot (51) avers that:

...when two men desire the same thing which they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies and endeavor to subdue and destroy one another... There is a state of insecurity; consequently life and property are insecure... To worsen the situation, men lived in continual fear of danger and violent death.

John Locke describes the social contract as unfolding in two distinct stages. In the first stage, individuals in the state of nature, who are naturally free and equal, mutually agree to form a political community. In the second stage, members of this community enter into a further agreement to establish a government. Unlike Thomas Hobbes's conception of an absolute sovereign who stands outside and is not bound by the contract, Locke maintains that the sovereign authority remains part of the agreement and is therefore accountable to the people. Consequently, governmental power is not unlimited; it is constrained by the obligation to protect the natural rights of citizens and to govern in accordance with their collective interest (Ganie 59).

John Locke's theory of natural rights forms a cornerstone of his political philosophy; it articulates a vision of human beings as inherently free and equal by nature, independent of any human institution. For Locke, natural rights are God-given entitlements that individuals possess simply by virtue of being human, discoverable through reason within the state of nature (Locke 269). Locke placed great importance on the natural rights of individuals. He maintained that individuals possess a right to self-preservation, as well as rights to life, liberty, and right to own "property" (Locke 287). While the right of self-preservation in its unrestricted form was given up with the formation of civil society, Locke argued that the natural rights to life, liberty, and estate continued to endure within this new social arrangement (Locke 357). Among these rights, Locke particularly emphasised freedom from slavery as a core natural right (Turner 5).

Locke and the Principle of Sovereignty vs. Global Governance

The principle of sovereignty is a foundational concept in political philosophy. It is rooted in the belief that each state possesses supreme authority over its territory and population, free from external interference (Held and McGrew 45). Sovereignty embodies self-determination and the right of peoples to shape their own political destinies. In practice, sovereignty serves as the safeguard against domination by foreign powers and ensures the moral and political autonomy of states (Donnelly 102). However, in an increasingly interdependent world, the traditional notion of absolute sovereignty faces moral and practical challenges. It is within this evolving context that John Locke's political philosophy provides both an ethical critique and a moral context for rethinking sovereignty in the age of global governance.

John Locke did not explicitly use the term "global governance," but his writings in *Two Treatises of Government* anticipated many of its moral questions. Locke's vision of global governance is rooted in his broader theory of natural rights and government by consent. Although Locke primarily wrote within the context of national governance, the principles underlying his *Second Treatise of Government* extend naturally to global relations. He believed that all individuals, as

rational beings, are equal members of a moral community governed by the 'law of nature', which obliges them to respect one another's life, liberty, and property (John 371). This universal moral order suggests that legitimate governance, whether local or global, must arise from the consent of those governed and operate to secure their natural rights. In this sense, Locke's thought anticipates the idea of an international society grounded in mutual respect, justice, and limited power, where states act not as isolated entities but as participants in a global community of nations.

Locke envisioned a world where justice and peace emerge not from coercive institutions but from rational cooperation among moral agents (Tuckness 98). For Locke, the moral law of nature binds all human beings, regardless of nationality, and obliges them to respect the rights and dignity of others. Therefore, a Lockean model of global governance would rest on mutual consent, equality among states, and the universal recognition of natural rights. It would neither replace national sovereignty with a global authority nor allow states to act unjustly under the guise of independence. Instead, Locke's vision would encourage a moral community of nations that cooperatively seek to uphold the rights and freedoms of all humanity (Simmons 125).

Human Rights in the Contemporary Global System

In the contemporary world, human rights have become a central concern in international politics and global governance. The recognition that every human being possesses inherent dignity has encouraged the development of legal standards and institutions designed to protect individuals from abuse and injustice. Although the modern state remains the primary authority responsible for protecting the rights of its citizens, the international community increasingly recognises that human rights violations are not purely domestic matters. Instead, they are seen as issues that concern humanity as a whole (Donnelly 121).

This growing awareness has led to the development of international laws, agreements, and institutions aimed at promoting and protecting human rights across national borders. Many of these developments draw philosophical inspiration from the idea of natural rights, particularly the political thought of John Locke. Locke's claim that individuals possess rights to life, liberty, and property before the formation of political society has influenced modern discussions about the universal character of human rights (John 368). In this sense, contemporary human rights law can be seen as an attempt to translate moral principles into legal obligations that apply to all states (Freeman 134).

Despite these developments, the global protection of human rights remains a complex and contested task. Differences in political systems, cultural traditions, and national interests often shape how states respond to human rights concerns (Beitz 123). Critics often warn that such actions may be influenced by political interests or may undermine the principle of national sovereignty. For this reason, the challenge facing the international community is to find ways to protect human rights while also maintaining respect for the political independence of states. Balancing these concerns remains one of the most difficult tasks in the contemporary global system (Beitz 131).

The Transition from State Sovereignty to Global Responsibility

The modern international system is largely organised around the principle of state sovereignty. Sovereignty refers to the authority of a state to govern its people and territory without external interference. For centuries, this idea has served as a foundation for political order and

international relations. Governments are regarded as the highest authority within their borders, responsible for making laws, maintaining security, and protecting the welfare of their citizens. While this arrangement has helped maintain stability among nations, it has also serious concerns when states fail to protect the basic rights of their peraisedople (Freeman 112). Since states are recognised as independent political units with the power to make laws and regulate social life within their borders, sovereignty has also created difficulties when governments used their authority to suppress or violate the rights of their citizens. In such situations, the principle of sovereignty often prevented outside actors from intervening (Freeman 118).

In recent decades, the growing recognition of universal human rights has challenged the traditional understanding of sovereignty. If human rights belong to all individuals simply because they are human, then the protection of these rights cannot depend entirely on the power or willingness of individual governments. Situations in which states abuse their citizens or neglect their rights raise important moral questions for the international community. This tension between national authority and universal human dignity has encouraged scholars and political leaders to rethink the meaning and limits of sovereignty in a globalised world (Donnelly 89).

The political philosophy of John Locke provides an important perspective for understanding this issue. Locke argued that political authority is legitimate only when it protects the natural rights of individuals. Governments are formed through the consent of the people in order to secure these rights. When a government fails to perform this responsibility, its authority loses moral justification. From this point of view, sovereignty should be understood not simply as power but as a responsibility to safeguard the rights and dignity of human beings (Locke 350). This idea birthed the contemporary democratic governance that is practiced in most nations. According to Esikot (*Democracy in Nigeria* 90), democracy is the rule of the people through majority consent as opposed to dictatorship. He went on to aver that "the rule of the people this approximates the rule of the majority" (91), and this aligns perfectly with lockean views on government by consent. Although sovereignty remains a central principle in international relations, state power must operate within moral limits. Absolute authority over citizens is difficult to justify in a world where human rights are widely accepted as universal. Governments that engage in oppression, discrimination, or systematic violence against their populations cannot easily claim moral legitimacy simply by appealing to sovereignty (Freeman 124).

From a Lockean perspective, the legitimacy of political authority depends on its ability to protect the natural rights of individuals. When states fail to protect these rights, their claim to unquestioned authority becomes morally weakened. The growing acceptance of international human rights norms reflects this changing understanding of sovereignty. International agreements, human rights institutions, and global advocacy movements continue to encourage states to respect the rights of their citizens. Although many challenges remain, the gradual movement from absolute sovereignty toward a sense of global responsibility represents an important development in contemporary political thought (Beitz 118; Donnelly 102).

Locke's Influence on International Human Rights Declarations

Locke's political philosophy remains a foundational influence on contemporary human rights frameworks, particularly in articulating the relationship between the individual and the state. Locke's theory of natural rights, life, liberty, and property, provides a moral and philosophical justification for the protection of individual freedoms against arbitrary authority. As Ganie (511) notes:

John Locke's Political philosophy became the basis of the modern

liberal political system. His ideas like inalienable rights of the individuals such as right to life, liberty, and property, Limited government based on the consent of the people and soon became the guiding spirit of modern democracies.

His works, especially the *Second Treatise of Government*, are considered a forerunner to documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the American and French declarations of rights, which translated his natural rights theory into codified, internationally recognised human rights. Locke's insistence that individuals possess rights to life, liberty and property grounded in natural law supplied a vocabulary that the political movements of the eighteenth century adapted when drafting foundational declarations (e.g., the American and French documents) and which later international framings inherited (e.g., the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) (Donnelly 21). The UDHR's language and rationale were shaped by this Lockean legacy and its natural-rights apparatus (Przetacznik 74; Spickard 112). As Basilaia would aver:

The ideas and philosophies of John Locke instilled a spirit of respect for every individual. His assertion that "man is born free and equal" has promoted equality in the modern world.... Governments are responsible for protecting lives, property, and liberties but not violating the rights of the individuals... Such an idea appears in current politics. Governments reserve the rights of individuals and rule by the voices of the individuals... In modern nations, the rights and freedoms that are enjoyed by people originated from the beliefs and opinions of Locke (23)

Locke shaped core substantive priorities that reappear in international human rights charters. His tripartite emphasis on life, liberty and property helped seed later formulations that foreground life and liberty as inviolable goods; the UDHR reframed and extended these into a wider catalogue that included social, economic and cultural rights. Textbooks and doctrinal analyses show how the Lockean move, locating rights in natural law and reason rather than solely in sovereign decree, created a moral claim that rights ought to constrain states and provide a basis for transnational moral critique of domestic laws (Donnelly 23; Smith 41). At the same time, later drafters modified Lockean property-centric emphases in light of egalitarian and dignity-based developments, so that property rights were balanced against social welfare and anti-discrimination norms in international covenants. Contemporary commentators stress that while Locke's categories persist, the UDHR and subsequent covenants translated Lockean ideas into a set of legal and moral commitments, expanding the scope of what 'natural rights' could cover and shifting some justificatory language from divine-natural law to secular human dignity and international legal obligation (Donnelly 29).

Lockean theory also influenced the architecture of rights as limitations on state sovereignty, an idea foundational to the notion of an "International Bill of Rights." Locke's argument that legitimate government is based on the consent of the governed and bound by natural law anticipated the later legal idea that states are not free to treat persons in any way; they are constrained by internationally recognised obligations (Smith 58). The normative claim that sovereign power is legitimate only insofar as it respects fundamental human rights is therefore a Lockean imprint adapted to an international legal order that must reconcile diversity of constitutional traditions with universalist commitments (Smith 61; Donnelly 35).

The practical implications of Locke's influence on contemporary human-rights practice are both normative and institutional. Normatively, Lockean ideas continue to provide philosophical support for the claim that individuals possess rights not granted by states but protected against state overreach, a claim that undergirds human-rights advocacy, humanitarian intervention debates and transitional-justice structures. Institutionally, the Lockean legacy contributed to designing mechanisms (treaties, UN bodies, regional courts) that aim to hold states to standards that transcend particular domestic legal orders (Bertoldi 112; Turner 76).

Locke's theory of natural rights and government by consent remains central to the legal foundations of the modern human rights charter. His ideas have transcended national and cultural boundaries, influencing constitutional democracies, international conventions, and global justice movements. The reinterpretation of his ideas in light of modern social realities, such as gender equality, environmental justice, and global governance, demonstrates the adaptability of his philosophy to new contexts (Dunn 198).

Evaluation

The subject matter presents a thoughtful and engaging attempt to connect the ideas of John Locke with today's global human rights system. This argument offers a compelling and morally grounded reading of Locke, especially in the way it connects his ideas to present-day global realities. It does not treat Locke as a distant historical figure but as a thinker whose insights still speak to the challenges of injustice, inequality, and state failure. The emphasis on human dignity as something that transcends national borders feels particularly persuasive, because it reflects the lived experience of a deeply interconnected world. By linking Locke's natural rights theory to institutions like the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, the discussion makes a strong case that these bodies are not arbitrary inventions, but practical expressions of a long-standing moral tradition.

At the same time, the argument is at its strongest when it addresses the controversy between state sovereignty and international intervention. The idea that a state can lose its moral authority when it fails to protect its citizens is both powerful and unsettling. It forces one to confront difficult questions about who gets to decide when intervention is justified and how such actions can avoid becoming tools of political dominance. While the Lockean justification for intervention is convincing in principle, its application in real-world situations is often far more complicated. Issues of bias, selective enforcement, and political interests can distort what might otherwise appear as a clear moral duty.

That said, the work leans quite heavily on Locke's perspective, which limits how broadly it engages with other viewpoints. It does not give enough attention to views outside the Western philosophical tradition, particularly those that question whether ideas like "universal rights" apply equally across different cultures and histories. There is also room for a deeper discussion of real-world challenges, such as how states often resist external pressure or how economic inequality complicates the idea of equal rights for all. Even with these gaps, the work remains valuable because it explains complex ideas in a clear and relatable way, and it shows why Locke's thinking still matters when discussing human rights in today's global society.

Conclusion

From a Lockean standpoint, the global protection of human rights is not merely an abstract moral claim but a lived responsibility grounded in the inherent dignity of every person; it recognizes that every person, no matter where they are born, possesses a dignity that cannot be negotiated or

ignored. Because these rights are universal, they cannot be confined within the limits of national borders or reduced to the discretion of individual states. Human rights existed prior to the state, and for that reason, the state cannot claim absolute authority over them. John Locke presents a vision in which political authority exists primarily to secure life, liberty, and property. Locke's thought feels especially compelling in today's world; it reminds us that political power is not an end in itself, but a trust given for the sake of human well-being. When that trust is broken, the responsibility to respond does not vanish; rather, it expands beyond the state to the wider human community. In this light, global institutions and cooperative efforts are not intrusions, but necessary expressions of a shared moral duty to ensure that injustice does not go unanswered simply because it occurs within a particular territory. In this sense, global institutions become not distant bureaucracies but necessary instruments through which humanity collectively affirms that injustice anywhere demands attention everywhere. Bodies such as the *United Nations Human Rights Council* (UNHRC) and the *International Criminal Court* (ICC), alongside principles like *Responsibility to Protect*, embody this shared commitment to accountability, reminding the world that sovereignty cannot be used as a cover for oppression. A Lockean perspective, therefore, invites the international community to act with moral clarity and restraint, preserving the authority of states while not losing sight of the individual lives that give that authority its very purpose.

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Joan Tronto's Moral and Political Dimensions of Ethics of Care

Dr Emmanuel Edeh CMF
Claretian University of Nigeria
Department of Philosophy
emmanueledeh62@yahoo.com

Abstract

A revolutionary paradigm for comprehending both political and moral commitment is provided by Joan Tronto's ethics of caring. Tronto views care as a relational and context-sensitive activity that encompasses attentiveness, accountability, competence, responsiveness, and, ultimately, democratic inclusivity, going beyond conventional justice-based or rights-focused theories. This essay explores care as a moral and political virtue, emphasizing how traditional frameworks of abstract, individualistic moral reasoning are challenged by ethical attention to dependency, vulnerability, and relational interdependence. It places Tronto's work within a larger feminist ethical discourse, highlighting the moral importance of fostering social relationships and the frequently unseen labor of care. In terms of politics, Tronto's concept of a caring democracy emphasizes the significance of incorporating care into public institutions and governance frameworks, supporting laws that acknowledge, encourage, and reallocate caregiving. Rather than depending exclusively on formal equality or legal frameworks, Tronto's perspective sheds light on how society institutions might promote justice through attentiveness, accountability, and relational responsiveness by linking moral philosophy and political theory. In addition to discussing its global and cross-cultural application, the paper delves deeper into the practical and policy consequences of Tronto's care ethics, including its relevance to healthcare, social services, and civic involvement. In the end, Tronto's vision places care at the core of moral and political existence, calling for a reconsideration of social priorities that uphold human interdependence, foster democratic accountability, and confront systemic inequities that devalue caregiving activities.

Keywords: *Ethics of care, moral responsibility, political philosophy, feminist ethics, caring democracy, social justice, relational ethics*

Introduction

The moral theory known as the ethics of care implies that there is moral significance in the fundamental elements of relationships and dependencies in human life. Normatively, care ethics seeks to maintain relationships by contextualizing and promoting the well-being of care-givers and care-receivers in a network of social relations. Most often defined as a practice or virtue rather than a theory as such, "care" involves maintaining the world of, and meeting the needs of, ourselves and others. It builds on the motivation to care for those who are dependent and vulnerable, and it is inspired by both memories of being cared for and the idealizations of self. Care

can serve both as a moral value and a foundation for the political success of a good society. It offers a way to change paradigms, move beyond moral boundaries, and advance towards more just and caring societies.. Tronto, care can serve both as a moral value and a foundation for the political success of a good society. It offers a way to change paradigms, move beyond moral boundaries, and advance towards more just and caring societies. Realizing this, however, requires that we analyze how today's society views care and what power dynamics are involved. Tronto's project reframes care as a practice that is morally indispensable and politically constitutive. In *Moral Boundaries*, she argues that care involves a series of phases including caring about, taking care of, care-giving, and care-receiving which together uncover moral and political assumptions about dependency, power, and social structure. Her later work in *Caring Democracy* amplifies this insight by arguing that democratic institutions must be reimagined to integrate care as a public value, not merely a private obligation. The purpose of this article is to explore care as a multidimensional concept, one that encompasses ethical sensibility, moral responsibility, and political commitment. Through conceptual analysis and critical engagement with Tronto's texts, this article demonstrates that care ethics not only deepens our understanding of moral agency but also demands a rethinking of political practice that more faithfully reflects human interdependence, vulnerability, and justice.

Conceptual Foundations of Care

Because it depends upon contextual considerations, care is notoriously difficult to define. As Ruddick points out, at least three distinct but overlapping meanings of care have emerged in recent decades: an ethic defined in opposition to justice, a kind of labor, and a particular relationship (Tronto 1998, 4). However, in care ethical literature, 'care' is most often defined as a practice, value, disposition, or virtue, and is frequently portrayed as an overlapping set of concepts. For example, Held notes that care is a form of labor, but also an ideal that guides normative judgment and action, and she characterizes care as “clusters” of practices and values (2006, 36, 40). One of the most popular definitions of care, offered by Tronto and Bernice Fischer, construes care as “a species of activity that includes everything we do to maintain, contain, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment”. This definition posits care fundamentally as a practice, but Tronto further identifies four sub-elements of care that can be understood simultaneously as stages, virtuous dispositions, or goals. These sub-elements are: (1) attentiveness, a proclivity to become aware of need; (2) responsibility, a willingness to respond and take care of need; (3) competence, the skill of providing good and successful care; and (4) responsiveness, consideration of the position of others as they see it and recognition of the potential for abuse in care (Toronto 1994, 126-136). Tronto's definition is praised for how it admits to cultural variation and extends care beyond family and domestic spheres, but it is also criticized for being overly broad, counting nearly every human activity as care.

Joan Tronto advanced care ethics both conceptually and politically, situating care at the intersection of morality and civic life. In *Moral Boundaries*, Tronto delineates care into four dimensions of care

Care has four dimensions, according to the philosopher Joan Tronto.

- 1) **to care about:** care requires first and foremost attention to people and their needs. We here need to recognize the other as an equal who might need our help.

- 2) **to take care:** to help someone requires that we take on his or her fragile condition, that we accept responsibility for his or her well-being.
- 3) **to give care:** it is the actual work of caregiving, which consists in doing certain acts to relieve, help or entertain. This work requires special skills that can be developed over time or through adequate training.
- 4) **receiving care:** the success of the care relationship depends on the capacity of response of the beneficiary. We must help the other to welcome the care and in order to put him or her at ease. It is also the moment of the exchange, where the caregiver evolves personally thanks to this relation

According to this generation, ethics of care caring consists of five phases with different responsibilities (Tronto 2013): caring about – recognising a need for care, caring for – taking responsibility to meet that need, care giving – the actual physical work of providing care, care receiving –

Later, in *Caring Democracy*, Tronto introduced a fifth element, caring with, which situates care within social and political structures. This stage emphasizes collective responsibility, democratic participation, trust, and solidarity, highlighting that care cannot be fully realized solely within private or interpersonal contexts but requires institutional and societal support (Tronto, 2013). The philosophical significance of Tronto's framework lies in its relational and context-sensitive orientation. Care is morally demanding because it is neither optional nor purely instrumental; it requires attentiveness, competence, responsiveness, and accountability. It challenges the notion that moral reasoning can be fully understood apart from the realities of human vulnerability and social interdependence. By foregrounding the ethical centrality of care, Tronto reframes moral evaluation: ethical goodness is measured not merely by adherence to abstract principles but by responsiveness to the needs of others in concrete, context-specific situations. Furthermore, by extending care to the political sphere, she underscores that ethical practice is inseparable from social and institutional conditions, revealing the deep interconnections between personal morality and structural justice (Kittay, 1999). Tronto's conceptualization of care provides a comprehensive moral and political lens through which human relationships, social obligations, and institutional responsibilities can be understood and evaluated. Her framework not only distinguishes care ethics from traditional moral theories but also lays the groundwork for a transformative approach to ethics and politics, one that places human interdependence and relational responsibility at the center of moral life.

Some ethicists prefer to understand care as a practice more fundamental than a virtue or motive because doing so resists the tendency to romanticize care as a sentiment or dispositional trait, and reveals the breadth of caring activities as globally intertwined with virtually all aspects of life. As feminist ethicists, Kittay and Held like to understand care as a practice and value rather than as a virtue because it risks “losing site of it as work” (Held, 2006, 35). Held refutes that care is best understood as a disposition such as compassion or benevolence, but defines “care” as “more a characterization of a social relation than the description of an individual disposition.

Care as a Moral Value

A significant reorientation in moral philosophy, the ethics of care places more emphasis on relational accountability, contextual sensitivity, and awareness of human vulnerability than on abstract, principle-driven reasoning. Formal moral reasoning and universality are the

cornerstones of traditional moral theories like utilitarianism and deontology. While utilitarianism primarily considers the welfare of the group as a whole, deontological ethics stresses obligation and adherence to universal principles regardless of specific situations. The moral significance of reliance, interpersonal interactions, and contextual complexities that define most of human life have been criticized for not being sufficiently addressed by both systems. (Kittay, 2015).

Within feminist moral philosophy, early contributions by Gilligan and Noddings reframed moral inquiry by illustrating how moral reasoning often emerges not from detached calculation but from engaged responsiveness to others in concrete situations. Gilligan demonstrated that moral judgment is deeply shaped by relational experiences, while Noddings articulated care as a fundamental ethical orientation rooted in the recognition of the other's needs. These foundational insights paved the way for normative elaborations that situate care as morally indispensable. Joan Tronto's work is pivotal in extending care from a private moral orientation to a broader moral framework with social and political significance. In *Who Cares?*, Tronto argues that caregiving is an ontological condition of human life rather than an optional virtue. Moral life is constitutively relational: individuals are embedded in networks of dependency and interdependence that demand ethical recognition. This perspective challenges moral theories that abstract the moral subject from its social embeddedness, asserting that attentiveness to vulnerability is morally foundational.

Recent scholarship continues to emphasize the moral centrality of attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness the core elements identified by Tronto while expanding care's application to domains including healthcare, professional ethics, and organizational practice (Friedman, 2021). This illustrates a key departure from deontological and utilitarian frameworks: moral agents must be situationally aware and capable of responding appropriately to the lived experiences of others, rather than adhering strictly to universal principles or aggregated outcomes. A defining feature of care ethics is its emphasis on situated ethical judgment. Recognizing the needs of others ("caring about") requires attentiveness that suspends self-interest and perceives the specific circumstances of those in need (Ruddick, 2018). This attentiveness contrasts sharply with detached rationality associated with Kantian duty, and with utilitarian frameworks, which often obscure the particularity of individual needs and the qualitative nature of caring engagements.

Furthermore, care ethics brings power, social inequality, and structural injustice into the moral calculus. Scholars such as Tronto, Rhode, and Friedman highlight how caregiving practices are shaped by gendered, racialized, and class-based divisions of labor. These structural dimensions reveal that moral philosophy must confront the ways in which social conditions devalue care work and obscure its ethical significance. Puig de la Bellacasa extends this critique, arguing that care inevitably involves affective, material, and political dimensions intertwined with broader social forces. Crucially, care as a moral value is not confined to private or personal domains; it implicates social responsibility. Jaggar and Tronto assert that ethical obligations arising from care extend into civic and institutional life. Moral obligations, therefore, demand responsiveness not only to immediate dependents but also to social conditions that marginalize or undervalue care, demonstrating that attending to the well-being of vulnerable populations is both an ethical and social imperative. Care as a moral value reframes ethics around relational responsiveness, contextual judgment, and attentiveness to dependency. It demands that moral philosophy recognize the complex interdependence inherent in human life and the normative weight of caring responsibilities. Morality is evaluated not solely on the basis of abstract principles or aggregated outcomes, but through the quality of moral engagement with others in their concrete

circumstances (Bellacasa, 2017).

Care as a Political Value

As a political theory, care ethics examines questions of social justice, including the distribution of social benefits and burdens, legislation, governance, and claims of entitlement. One of the earliest explorations of the implications of care ethics for feminist political theory was in Seyla Benhabib's article "The Generalized and the Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Feminist Theory" (Benhabib, 1986). Here, Benhabib traces a basic dichotomy in political and moral theory drawn between the public and private realms. Whereas the former is thought to be the realm of justice, the social and historical, and generalized others, the latter is thought to be the realm of the good life, the natural and atemporal, and concrete others. The former is captured by the favored metaphor of social contract theory and the "state of nature", wherein men roam as adults, alone, independent, and free from the ties of birth by women. Benhabib traces this metaphor, internalized by the male ego, within the political philosophies of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and John Rawls, and the moral theories of Immanuel Kant and Lawrence Kohlberg. She argues that under this conception, human interdependency, difference, and questions about private life become irrelevant to politics. The earliest substantial account of care as a political philosophy is offered by Tronto, who identifies the traditional boundary between ethics and politics as one of three boundaries which serves to stymie the political efficacy of a woman's care ethic, (the other two being the boundary between the particular and abstract/impersonal moral observer, and the boundary between public and private life) (Tronto, 1993).

While care ethics originated in moral philosophy, its implications extend decisively into political theory. Joan Tronto's work demonstrates that care is not merely a private ethical responsibility but a fundamental political value that shapes democratic legitimacy, justice, and civic life. In Tronto's framework, a society's ethical standing is inseparable from how it organizes, distributes, and values care, and political institutions bear responsibility for both recognizing and facilitating care (Tronto 2015). Tronto critiques liberal democratic frameworks for emphasizing autonomy and individual rights while relegating care to the private domain. She argues that such systems overlook the fact that all citizens experience interdependence and vulnerability at various stages of life. By failing to integrate care into public structures, societies perpetuate inequalities in both moral and political recognition, particularly for caregivers, dependents, and marginalized groups. Tronto emphasizes that care is a form of moral and political practice that requires attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness, not only in personal relationships but within institutional frameworks. The political significance of care has been increasingly recognized in contemporary scholarship. Urban and Ward argue that citizenship is inseparable from care, noting that participation in democratic processes is contingent upon adequate support for care responsibilities. When care obligations are socially and institutionally neglected, individuals' ability to exercise civic rights is constrained. Similarly, Holdo conceptualizes democratic engagement itself as a form of care, suggesting that citizens care for democracy by actively nurturing inclusive public spaces, fostering deliberation, and ensuring equitable representation.

Care ethics as a political lens also interrogates structural inequality. Feminist scholars emphasize that social hierarchies based on gender, race, and class shape both the provision and reception of care. Woodly, Brown, and Harris argue that institutional neglect of care reproduces systemic injustice, marginalizing caregivers while undermining democratic equality. These critiques align with Tronto's insistence that care ethics is inseparable from questions of justice: a political system

cannot be considered just if it fails to recognize and support relational interdependence. Puig de la Bellacasa further stresses that care has material, affective, and political dimensions that cannot be divorced from societal structures, highlighting the ethical stakes of public policy in shaping the possibilities for caring practices. Tronto's notion of caring with extends care into collective and democratic life. Unlike models that treat care as individualized or private, Tronto argues that democracy must institutionalize care through public policy, social programs, and participatory practices. This includes investment in healthcare, childcare, eldercare, and equitable labor policies that recognize caregiving as socially and politically indispensable. Similarly, Engster critiques neoliberal approaches to care that commodify caregiving labor, asserting that such frameworks fail to acknowledge the political and social dimensions of care. A care-centered democracy requires a redistributive ethic, one that addresses systemic inequities in caregiving labor while enhancing citizens' capacities to engage meaningfully in civic life.

Recent scholarship also emphasizes the transformative potential of care in governance. For example, Fraser and Van der Tuin argue that care ethics challenges standard conceptions of citizenship and political obligation by situating relational interdependence as a normative criterion for social policies. By reframing care as a political responsibility, states are called to recognize that democratic membership entails both rights and reciprocal responsibilities for sustaining human and institutional well-being. This perspective underscores that care is not only a moral practice but a political infrastructure, essential for sustaining equality, inclusion, and participatory justice.

The politics of care further intersects with global and transnational concerns. In an increasingly interconnected world, care ethics informs debates on migration, climate justice, and public health. Scholars such as Tronto and Held highlight that democratic societies must expand their understanding of care to encompass global interdependencies, recognizing that neglecting care at the systemic level whether through environmental degradation, underfunded healthcare, or economic exploitation has profound ethical and political consequences. Care as a political value reorients the theory and practice of democracy. It challenges the traditional dichotomy between private and public spheres, reframing care as a structural and civic responsibility. By situating attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness within institutional frameworks, Tronto and contemporary scholars illustrate that care is essential not only for moral life but for sustainable democratic governance. Political legitimacy, civic engagement, and social justice all hinge on the recognition and institutionalization of care, demonstrating that care ethics provides a normative framework for both morality and political life (Woodly et al., 2021).

Integrating Care and Justice

A central contribution of Joan Tronto's ethics of care is its insistence that care cannot be fully understood as a private moral practice but must be integrated with broader conceptions of justice. While traditional theories of justice particularly liberal and rights-based frameworks prioritize formal equality, impartiality, and universal rights, they often neglect the relational, context-sensitive, and dependency-laden dimensions of human life (Kittay, 2015). Care ethics complements and challenges these approaches by emphasizing the moral and political significance of attentiveness, responsibility, competence, responsiveness, and solidarity, highlighting that justice requires both equitable distribution of resources and acknowledgment of care needs. Tronto's notion of caring with illustrates the intersection between care and justice. She argues that a just society is one in which care is institutionally recognized, publicly valued, and

equitably distributed, rather than relegated to the private sphere or disproportionately assumed by women and marginalized groups. In this framework, justice is not only procedural, ensuring formal rights, but also substantive, attending to the social and material conditions necessary for human flourishing. Fraser extends this insight, emphasizing that justice must incorporate both recognition and redistribution; addressing structural inequalities that devalue care labor or render dependency invisible. The integration of care and justice also challenges the impersonal abstraction of dominant moral theories. For instance, Rawls' theory of justice assumes idealized autonomous agents capable of exercising choice independently of care obligations, ignoring the ways in which dependency and relational obligations shape agency. Tronto critiques this abstraction, showing that ethical and political life cannot be separated from the practical realities of caregiving and dependency (Held, 2017). Similarly, Kittay argues that neglecting caregiving labor and the vulnerabilities it entails perpetuates systemic injustice, emphasizing that justice must attend to the moral and material conditions of care work.

Integrating care into justice carries profound policy implications. States that embrace care as a political value must design social, economic, and legal systems that support caregiving labor, reduce burdens on marginalized populations, and guarantee access to healthcare, childcare, eldercare, and other essential social services (Holdo, 2025). Justice is therefore not only about abstract resource allocation but about creating social and institutional conditions that enable citizens to live with dignity, participate fully in civic life, and maintain relational networks essential to well-being. Tronto emphasizes that caring democracies require both recognition of care needs and structural mechanisms that sustain equitable participation.

Contemporary scholarship has highlighted the global and intersectional dimensions of integrating care and justice. Woodly et al. argue that gendered, racialized, and economic inequalities shape the distribution of care responsibilities and access to institutional support. Ignoring these intersecting factors perpetuates systemic injustice and undermines social cohesion and democratic legitimacy. Puig de la Bellacasa further demonstrates that care ethics must account for material, affective, and ecological interdependencies, expanding the concept of justice beyond anthropocentric concerns to include sustainability, environmental stewardship, and the well-being of communities and ecosystems. From a theoretical standpoint, integrating care with justice challenges the binary between rights and responsibilities. While rights-based theories emphasize entitlements, they often neglect the obligations to sustain, nurture, and respond to human needs. Care ethics situates obligations at the center of justice, making it relationally grounded, context-sensitive, and morally robust. Justice is therefore not an abstract metric but a dynamic, practice-oriented concept that requires attention to vulnerability, relational dependency, and institutional support. The integration of care and justice also fosters a more inclusive conception of democratic legitimacy. By recognizing caregiving and dependency as fundamental to social and political life, societies can move toward equitable participation and social accountability, ensuring that all citizens not just the privileged or independent can exercise civic rights meaningfully (Holdo, 2025). Furthermore, integrating care into justice reconfigures moral and political evaluation: it demands that social policies, legal frameworks, and institutional practices account for both material well-being and relational flourishing, reflecting a holistic vision of human dignity and equity (Fraser, 2019).

Integrating care and justice provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating ethical, social, and political arrangements. By centering relational responsibilities, context-sensitive judgment, and institutional support, this approach addresses the limitations of abstract justice models while offering a normative vision for democratic societies. Tronto's ethics of care demonstrates that

justice is inseparable from care: societies achieve fairness not only through equitable distribution of resources but also through the recognition, support, and integration of caring practices into public life. The synergy of care and justice thus offers a transformative lens through which moral philosophy, political theory, and public policy can be mutually informed to foster inclusive, equitable, and sustainable societies (Bellacasa, 2017).

Conclusion:

Joan Tronto's ethics of care challenges conventional conceptions of morality and politics by demonstrating that care is both ethically indispensable and politically constitutive. Across her work from *Moral Boundaries* to *Caring Democracy* and *Who Cares?* Tronto reconceptualizes ethical life as inherently relational, attentive to human vulnerability, and situated within concrete social contexts. Care, in this framework, is not an ancillary virtue but a moral obligation that shapes our responsibilities to others and underpins social cohesion (Held, 2017). By foregrounding the elements of care attentiveness, responsibility, competence, responsiveness, and solidarity Tronto highlights that human interdependence is morally significant and demands deliberate ethical reflection and action. Philosophically, Tronto's work expands the boundaries of ethical theory by situating morality within real-world relational networks rather than abstract principles alone. Care ethics exposes the limitations of deontological and utilitarian frameworks, which often neglect dependency, vulnerability, and the labor inherent in sustaining life (Tronto, 2015). By integrating relationality and responsiveness into ethical evaluation, care ethics illuminates how moral obligations are context-dependent, socially mediated, and intertwined with power structures, compelling philosophers to reconsider the nature of justice, obligation, and human dignity.

Politically, care is inseparable from justice. Tronto demonstrates that democratic legitimacy, civic participation, and social equity are contingent upon how care responsibilities are recognized, distributed, and institutionally supported. A society that neglects caregiving labor or marginalizes dependents fails to uphold substantive equality, as rights and freedoms are meaningless without the social conditions that enable their exercise. By reframing care as a public and political responsibility, Tronto challenges the private-public dichotomy, insisting that care is both a foundation of political life and a measure of justice. The philosophical significance of this integration lies in its reorientation of moral and political thought. Care ethics emphasizes relational responsibility, vulnerability, and interdependence as central to human flourishing, redefining justice as not merely procedural fairness but the creation of social conditions in which individuals can live dignified, participatory lives (Held, 2017). It highlights that ethical responsibility and political legitimacy are mutually reinforcing, and that both depend upon institutions, policies, and cultural practices that value, support, and sustain care.

Looking forward, the implications of Tronto's framework are profound. Integrating care into social institutions, public policy, and democratic practice is essential for ethical and sustainable societies, as it ensures that justice, equality, and human dignity are operationalized through relational, context-sensitive practices. It demands that philosophers, policymakers, and citizens recognize interdependence, embrace vulnerability as a moral reality, and design social structures that support relational responsibility. In this sense, care becomes a normative lens for both evaluating and shaping social and political life, offering a transformative vision in which ethical practice, political legitimacy, and democratic flourishing are inseparably linked. Tronto's ethics

of care provides a philosophically robust framework that integrates morality, justice, and politics. It compels a reconsideration of traditional ethical and political theories, foregrounds relationality and vulnerability, and offers actionable insights for designing societies that are equitable, responsive, and democratically legitimate. By positioning care at the core of human and institutional life, Tronto demonstrates that moral responsibility and political justice are not abstract ideals but relational practices that, when institutionalized, sustain both human dignity and the health of democratic societies.

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The God Fantasy: AI Consciousness and Human Search for Divinity

Mark D. Ekperi, Ph.D.
Department of Philosophy
Faculty of Arts
Niger Delta University, Nigeria
mark.ekperi@ndu.edu.ng
ORCID: 0000-0002-4470-7046

ThankGod Bekweri Amadi, Ph.D.
Department of Philosophy
Faculty of Humanities
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria
thankgod.amadi@uniport.edu.ng
thankgodamadi100@gmail.com
[+234\(0\)8037299683](tel:+234(0)8037299683)

Abstract

The God Fantasy and the Search for Conscious Artificial Intelligence (AI) makes humans to delve into the human desire for a supernatural and superintelligent being, drawing parallels from this yearning and the contemporary quest to create conscious artificial intelligence. This paper examines how the human fascination with a divine entity reflects our need to develop AI that shares human and supersensible traits, comparing modern theories of AI consciousness, such as Turing's computationalism and Searle's Chinese Room argument. Applying an interdisciplinary lens, the study traces the historical evolution of AI consciousness, exploring foundational theories and raising ethical questions. These include the moral responsibility of creating conscious machines and the potential for AI to reshape our understanding of ourselves. It also explores the notion of godlike machines and their influence on theological thought, arguing that the pursuit of conscious AI is a secular expression of our God Fantasy. The paper concludes with key insights, suggesting that our continuous fascination with AI consciousness is rooted in an inherent desire for transcendence. It also discusses the broader implications for future research in philosophy, theology, and AI ethics, offering an insightful perspective on the intersection of the God fantasy and the quest for AI consciousness in our rapidly advancing technological world.

Keywords: *God Fantasy, AI Consciousness, Artificial Intelligence, Conscious Artificial Intelligence, Machine Theism*

Introduction

Throughout history, human beings have been intrigued and fascinated by the concept of God, and this fixation has driven the search for conscious artificial intelligence (AI). The concept of God has permeated human civilization and history, influencing moral dispositions and shaping numerous religious systems worldwide. This has been a key feature of various cultures and traditions, with the theistic view of God found in religions such as Judaism and Christianity, portraying God as an all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect, eternal, and transcendent entity who created the universe (Morris, 2002). Religions, generally, presume the existence of a supernatural entity/deity whose domain of existence is beyond the bounds of sense (human realm). This entity often referred to as "God", is used to account for the origin of the universe, thus, placing God at the foundation of morality (Nye, 2008). This human obsession with the idea of God has triggered the desire for a godlike intelligence in the form of conscious AI, thus, attempting to validate it through technology. Technology has become another God, that is, the power of technology is harnessed to fulfil this God fantasy. This fantasy can be understood in two ways: first, through the idea of humans as creators, and second, through the idea of humans as created beings. The human creative abilities are made manifest in the advancements in science and technology, where tools and machines are designed to serve humanity. In this regard, humans assume a godlike role, crafting devices and instruments to extend their capabilities and control over the environment. Conversely, the idea of humans as created beings reflects a desire to submit to a higher power, whether divine or technological. This duality is exemplified by humanity's increasing devotion to technologies such as mobile phones, which command a level of attention and reliance akin to religious practice. By empowering machines with godlike abilities, humans seek to fulfil the "God Fantasy," blurring the lines between religion and techno-idealism.

The pursuit of conscious AI falls within the framework of techno-idealism, the belief that technology is a benevolent force capable of solving many of the world's problems and creating a better future for humanity. Techno-idealism posits that technological advancements can address pressing global issues such as poverty, disease, and social inequality, ultimately improving the quality of life for individuals and societies (Bolstrom, 2014). This optimism extends to the belief that conscious AI will play a fundamental role in shaping the future, further intertwining the "God Fantasy" with the pursuit of advanced technology.

This paper attempts to create a nexus between humanity's historical longing for a divine entity and its modern ambition to develop conscious AI, arguing that the latter represents a secular manifestation of the former. By examining the historical, philosophical, and ethical dimensions of this phenomenon, the paper highlights how the pursuit of conscious AI reflects humanity's enduring fascination with the divine. It also investigates the implications of techno-idealism, questioning whether the creation of godlike machines actualizes human potentials or poses ethical and existential challenges. Adopting a qualitative research design laced with an interdisciplinary spectacle, the paper offers a nuanced understanding of the "God Fantasy" and its relevance to the search for AI consciousness in an era of rapid technological advancement.

The God Fantasy

Understanding the notion of "God Fantasy" requires an independent clarification of the concepts of God and fantasy. There have been several attempts by scholars to articulate and apprehend the concept of God and these attempts have resulted in a variegated conceptualization of the God-

figure. However, our focus in this paper, is in the three popular monotheists religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam which characterizes God as omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and omnibenevolent. Monotheistic religions like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have portrayed God as the single all-powerful and all-knowing entity who created and governs the universe (Dombrowski, 2016). God is often depicted as the single, all-knowing, and all-powerful creator of the world that watches over humanity. In Christianity, God is portrayed as the Father, who is loving and merciful, but also just and holy (Bratcher, 1979). Similarly, in Islam, God is conceived as Allah, and is described as the compassionate and merciful ruler of the universe (Ali, 2000). In Judaism, God is seen as the creator of the world and the source of all wisdom and knowledge (Alter, 2018). God is frequently depicted in these religions as a deity with traits such as omniscience, omni-benevolence, and eternity (Dombrowski, 2016). For Dombrowski, the idea of God provides comfort, meaning, and guidance for millions of people around the world (2016). The concept of God is also inextricably linked to moral qualities such as compassion, forgiveness, and justice (Dombrowski, 2016).

Some scholars and cultures have depicted God as a supernatural being having human-like features and control over the natural cosmos. This is instantiated by the need for human beings to compensate for their finitude. Human beings are said to be finite beings while God is infinite, hence, the need to compensate for that human finitude triggered the desire for the infinite. In realization of human limitations, human beings found the idea of a being or an entity that is unlimited and infinitely compelling. Many human beings having their various religious inclinations consider God as the ultimate reality and the origin of the universe. God is considered divine, holy, omniscient, and omnipresent, and both Eastern and Western religions share some ideas of God which some scholars have argued is rooted in human psychology. For example, Sigmund Freud considered the idea of God as a way of compensating for the need for a comforting perfect father-figure (Leftow, 2016). There are other conceptions of the nature of God by the monotheist, polytheist, pantheist, deist, henotheist, scholars, but our discussion is centered on the idea of God as the supernatural, all-knowing figure depicted in the three popular monotheists religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In this context, one of the fundamental attributes of God that is significant to conscious AI study is omniscience. Omniscience is the attribute of knowing all-things without any constraints (Wierenga, 2021). Granted that there are other attributes of God worthy of mention, but at the core of AI is its vast array of knowledge. Machine learning requires this knowledge or data to execute algorithms necessary for the functioning of AI (Bell 2022; El Naqa and Murphy 2015).

Polytheistic religions, on the other hand, have multiple gods and goddesses, each with their own unique qualities and attributes. In Hinduism, for example, there are many gods and goddesses, each of whom are revered for specific reasons. For example, Vishnu is considered the preserver of the universe, while Shiva is the god of destruction and regeneration (Eck, 2012). Thus, Hinduism reflects a diverse and complex understanding of the divine, allowing for multiple representations of the deity. In addition to the above interpretations or forms of belief, there are also belief systems that do not necessarily involve the worship of gods, but instead focus on a more abstract or philosophical understanding of a higher power or ultimate reality. For example, some people see God as an energy or consciousness that permeates the universe, or as the ultimate source of all being (Tarnas, 2010). In this sense, the representation of God is more abstract and less anthropomorphic, reflecting a deeper understanding of the mystery of existence and the infinite nature of the divine. However, many philosophical and scientific trends in the contemporary era

have questioned traditional views about God and religion. For example, the Enlightenment introduced new concepts about reason and science, prompting some to challenge God's presence and the veracity of religious teachings terming them dogmatic. Despite these obstacles, the concept of God remains important to many cultures and belief systems. In difficult times, many people find courage and hope in the conviction that there is a higher power or God.

The representation of God in religion is a complex and multifaceted discussion that shows the diversity of human beliefs and experiences. From monotheistic religions that depict God as a single, all-knowing deity, to polytheistic religions that have multiple gods and goddesses, to more abstract belief systems that see God as an ultimate reality or consciousness, there is a wide range of interpretations of the divine. Ultimately, the representation of God is shaped by cultural and historical factors, as well as individual beliefs and experiences, and serves as a source of inspiration, comfort, and guidance for people around the world. Therefore, we can deduce that the representation of God in religion illustrates the various roles the divine plays in human existential experiences. Just as the representation of God serves as a source of inspiration, comfort, and guidance for believers. Believers in the possibility of conscious AI desire the same things as people with religious beliefs. Thus, techno-idealism could be considered a form of religion and conscious AI a god. Hence, God is to religion that which conscious AI is to techno-idealism.

There are varied definitions of the term 'fantasy' which associate it with imaginative literature. Philosophically, "Fantasy is a natural human activity that creates inner consistency of reality" (Tolkien). It may also be seen as an imaginative "representation of impossibilities". Psychologically, it is a cognitive or mental process that constructs unrealistic images to meet emotional needs. A synthesis of the concept of God and fantasy will show an implicit involvement of some supernatural content in the concept of fantasy. That is, an imaginative content that is considered supernatural by humans (Laetz & Johnston, 2008).

God fantasy, therefore, involves human beings thinking about God in a way that appeals to their imagination. In essence, the God Fantasy is the quest for life fulfillment through an imaginary representation of a supernatural being. This quest or desire logically follows the idea of an all-knowing deity and the search for such deity through some form of religious worship and devotion. In relation to AI, religious practice is replaced by techno-idealism and the belief in a technological utopia. That is, the imaginary God or God fantasy is replaced by techno-utopia. Techno-idealism is the view that technology can solve most of our problems and the advancement of technology will guarantee prosperity, equality, peace and happiness for humanity. It is a belief that technology can provide solutions to the complex social, economic and environmental problems of our society (Arnd-Caddigan, 2015). This is akin to the hope that religion through faith in God can solve all the world's problems. An integral part of the techno-idealists movement is the current development of AI.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the imitation of human intellect in computers. This imitation is designed to accomplish tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and language translation (Russell & Norvig, 2010). Barrat defines AI as a computer or machine's ability to execute commands that ordinarily require human-like intelligence, such as pattern recognition, learning from experience, and adapting to new contexts. For Russel & Norvig, the study of AI is not only to understand but to also build intelligent

machines (2010). For Nilsson, “artificial intelligence is that activity devoted to making machines intelligent, and intelligence is that quality that enables an entity to function appropriately and with foresight in its environment” (Nilsson 2009). Artificial Intelligence is machines trying to apply the principles of human cognition in solving real-world problems. On the other hand, human cognition and intelligence distinguishes human beings from machines and other non-human entities such as animals. AI research seeks to overcome the gap between human intelligence and computer intelligence. One of the aims of AI is to simulate human intelligence and enhance it optimally without any latency in execution. Some limitations of AI today are that it requires some forms of input, and training data to learn and improve on decision-making. Therefore, the quality of an AI machine's output is dependent on the quality of the training data and input. Currently, AI systems still rely on human input or commands to carry out their functions. This impediment poses a limit to the extent of AI autonomy and the development of conscious AI.

The notion of AI consciousness hinges on the idea that both humans and AI have mind in common. However, Searle considers this idea unacceptable. Using his famous Chinese room argument, Searle repudiates the idea that computers can think for themselves (Searle, 1990). The Chinese Room Argument is a thought experiment and philosophical argument that claims that an English speaker in a room who uses a rulebook to manipulate Chinese characters can produce a valid output even without knowing Chinese language. By this argument, Searle, thus, demonstrates that syntactic manipulation is not sufficient for a semantic understanding of consciousness. This, according to Searle, demonstrates that a computer could obey instructions for processing language and creating replies but would not have a true comprehension of meaning. According to Searle, understanding requires an intrinsic mental experience and consciousness, which is not present in a computer or machine (Searle, 1980). One important aspect of human brain function that separates man from machines is consciousness. According to Nagel, consciousness is “what it is like to be something”. Consciousness can be a simple perception, general awareness or self-awareness (Nagel, 1974). We can consider consciousness as awareness of phenomena that is both internal and external to the subject. Velmans in defining consciousness begins by distinguishing its various uses and references (Velmans, 2009). Consciousness is often used as a synonym for knowledge, where consciousness implies knowledge. This usage of the term knowledge is important for understanding the concept, but consciousness is not knowledge explicitly. The interchange between consciousness, knowledge and awareness make the definition of knowledge daunting. Velmans believes that consciousness is inherent in its phenomenology and to understand it we must know its causes and functions (2009). However, he also frightfully concludes that consciousness is experience itself, it is the sum of our subjective cum phenomenological experience (Velmans, 2009). This experience requires both our internal and external human faculties as beings in the universe. These faculties of our inner and outer senses differentiate us from AI.

AI consciousness refers to the hypothetical scenario where artificial intelligence systems develop a subjective experience and awareness themselves or of their surroundings, similar to human consciousness. It is an ongoing debate in the field of AI and philosophy as to whether or not true AI consciousness is possible and what implications it may hold for human cognition (Russell & Norvig, 2010). This notion of AI consciousness is influenced by the concept of computationalism. Computationalism is the assumption that the human brain is a computer of some sort (McDermott, 2007). Therefore, if computers can replicate and demonstrate brain functions, then AI systems can attain some level of consciousness. This concept of computationalism has inspired the ongoing

debate on the possibility of conscious AI among philosophers, scientists and psychologists. One notable philosopher that has made significant contribution towards AI consciousness is John R. Searle. Using his famous thought experiment called The Chinese Room Argument, Searle refutes the idea that intelligent machines can have consciousness. He maintains that even if a computer program can produce a seemingly intelligent response, it still lacks understanding and consciousness (Searle, 1990). Rodney Brooks, for his own part, argues that it may be possible for machines to become conscious through a gradual process of building up more complex systems. Brooks believes that as AI systems become more advanced, they often eventually reach a level of complexity where they are able to have subjective experiences similar to human consciousness (Brooks, 2003). Author Greg Dyson also believes that the development of AI will experience exponential growth, and eventually reach its peak. This peak or climax will emerge when AI attains a level of sophistication and complexity that will guarantee machine autonomy. That is when machines begin to function optimally without human inputs. At this point, AI will effectively become self-sustaining and conscious. He, however, highlights the need for caution and proactive planning in the development of AI (Brockman, 2020).

To better understand the God fantasy and its relation to AI, we will explore the similarities between the two concepts. Both God and AI possess a high degree of intelligence and knowledge. God is often seen as a transcendental entity who is the origin of all wisdom and knowledge while AI is designed to have the ability to process enormous pieces of data and make decisions based on the information processed (Bolstrom, 2014). Another similarity between God and AI is their potential to shape the future. From a religious perspective, God has the power to influence the world and determine the course of human events. Similarly, AI has the potential to have a profound impact on society, with the ability to automate tasks, solve complex problems, and make predictions about future events. However, there are also some profound differences between God and AI. God is considered a conscious and intentional being, with the ability to make choices and decisions based on moral and ethical considerations. In contrast, AI is a product of human design and programming, and its actions are limited by the algorithms and the training data provided. Despite these differences, there are some who consider AI capable of reaching “technological transcendence” where AI surpasses human intelligence and achieves “superintelligence” (Bostrom, 2014). At this point, AI might be considered as having god-like capabilities, with the ability to rule the world. Despite the arguments presented against religion by modern science and atheistic existentialists philosophers, the concept of God remains a huge human existential subject

The Search for AI Consciousness

Artificial intelligence is a field of computer science and engineering focused on developing intelligent machines that can perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as understanding natural language, recognizing images, and learning from experience (McCarthy, 2007). Our quest for AI is inextricably linked to our fascination with god-like entities or qualities. Some historians of science argue that the earliest depiction of artificial intelligence was in Greek mythology (Stanford, 2019). In Homer's contribution to Greek mythology, he tells of Jason and the Argonauts, a band of 50 men on a ship called Argo in a quest to get the golden fleece (Colavito, 2014). In their adventures, they encounter the bronze giant Talus (Talos/Talon) who was created by Hephaestus, the Greek god of fire, invention and blacksmithing (Berens, 2010). The giant robot was commissioned by Zeus (the king of the Greek gods) to guard the Island of Crete and wade off

intruders (Stanford, 2019). The giant had a mysterious life source called *ichor* running from his head to one of his feet through a vein. Hephaestus also created another artificial being called Pandora out of clay. According to the myth, the gods were so impressed by Hephaestus' creation that they all bestowed special gifts on her. She was called Pandora (all-gifted) because she received all the necessary attributes from the gods to make her irresistible (Berens, 2010). Adrienne Mayor, argues that Pandora could be considered an AI agent sent to earth by Zeus to punish mortals for inventing fire (Stanford, 2019). Another prominent craftsman in Greek mythology, was Daedalus who was the first mortal to create life-like bronze statues that could cry, bleed, move, and speak. According to Mayor, the Greek myths and legends illustrates our fascination with creating artificial life. Aristotle also alluded to this fascination with AI in his *Politics* when he opined that:

For if every instrument could accomplish its own work, obeying or anticipating the will of others, like the statues of Daedalus, or the tripods of Hephaestus, which, says the poet, of their own accord entered the assembly of the Gods; if, in like manner, the shuttle would weave and the plectrum touch the lyre without a hand to guide them, chief workmen would not want servants, nor master slaves. (Aristotle, 1984,)

This notion of automation as conceived by Aristotle has been a recurring theme in the development of technology and AI. Centuries later, Joseph-Marie Jacquard developed the Jacquard loom which used a system of punched cards to automate the weaving of a silk tapestry portrait of himself (*Artificial Intelligence | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). Interestingly, Nilsson is of the view that AI begins with dreams, and traces the history of the quest for AI from Homer's *Illiad* to modern AI. He includes the ideas of the Catalan mystic, Ramon Llull who created paper discs called the *Ars Magna* (Great Art), which were intended to prove the Christian faith with logic and reason. Leonardo Da Vinci is also considered one of the early advocates of AI by sketching designs for a robotic medieval knight in 1495. However, research in AI has advanced beyond the level of fascination to action through current research.

From the myths of ancient Greece to our current realities, the development of AI has seen more progress in the last six decades. Some scholars argue that what we consider AI started with Alan Turing's work in 1947 (McCarthy 2007). However, the Dartmouth Conference organized by John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester, and Claude Shannon in 1956 is considered the significant event in the AI movement. This conference was significant because it discussed the possibility of creating intelligent machines (McCarthy et al. 2006). This set the stage for further research in AI and the development of advanced computer systems. Another significant event that contributed to the advancement in AI is the development of machine learning and neural networks. The development of machine learning dates back to the development of machine learning algorithms based on pattern recognition and decision-making by Arthur Samuel and Frank Rosenblatt (Russell and Norvig 2010). This was followed by advancements in neural networks in the 1990s. Neural Networks are computational models that try to mimic the structure and function of the human brain (Gurney 1997; Lawrence 1993). The concept of neural networks benefits from the idea that the brain is similar to a computer. Neural networks could be trained to identify patterns in data and avoid the cumbersome task of explicit programming (Bishop 1995). These developments in AI research are important for the discourse on AI consciousness because of the connection between consciousness and brain function. The notion of consciousness has ontological significance because of its relevance to the notion of being.

The notion of being with regard to conscious AI raises some ethical questions, especially

concerning moral agency. For Bostrom & Yudkowsky, it is ethically problematic to create conscious machines and it is imperative to ensure that such machines do not harm humans or other morally relevant beings. In addition, it is important to determine whether they possess moral status. This has far-reaching implications for moral decision-making, especially because of potential conflicts between humans and AI.

The Ontological and Existential Implications of Creating AI with Consciousness

The notion of conscious AI also raises some existential questions as it pertains to the ontological status of intelligent machines. It is possible for machines with conscious intentions to act in ways damaging to human interests if they have their own goals and desires (Bostrom 2014). It is possible that conscious AI may acquire the ability to set goals different from those set by humans, which may eventually lead to the annihilation of humanity (Bostrom 2002). The premise here is that it can do so because of its superintelligence. For example, intelligent machines trained on various data concerning the environment may consider human beings a threat to the environment. On becoming conscious, they may decide to save the earth by annihilating humans. The ethical and existential implications of conscious AI are interwoven with the ontology of AI.

The ontology of AI refers to the being of AI as an entity. It has to do with the nature (individual characteristics), and the attributes of AI. The ontology of AI deals with the definition and nature of AI as an aspect of reality. It asks the question; does AI have a life of its own? In other words, does AI exist? If it does, what is the nature of its existence? Is it a conscious entity? These questions are pertinent if we must understand AI and determine what sort of entity a truly conscious AI is. The nature of AI and its relationship to human consciousness is fundamental to its ontology. However, the argument about AI consciousness and its difference from human-like consciousness raises doubts as to the validity of AI ontology (Searle, 1980). The possibility of consciousness in machines and its relation to the notion of consciousness is vital for human conception and perception AI.

The ontology of AI also has important implications for the mind-body problem in philosophy. Consciousness is considered an attribute of the brain and within the scope of mental activity. Therefore, reconciling mind with a physical machine is subject to debate. However, some may argue that AI exists as software on hardware but AI is still subject to the laws of physics and the constraints of the material world. Notwithstanding, its ability to interact with the world, process information, and make decisions raises serious questions about its relationship or connection to human ontology. Does AI have an ontological status, or is it a product of programming? Can it exist independently of human intervention, or is it always dependent on human input and maintenance? The ontology of AI, therefore, raises critical questions about the nature of consciousness, the relationship between AI and the natural world, and the fundamental nature of being and existence.

The God Fantasy and AI Consciousness

The relationship between God and AI raises important questions about the nature of creation and the role of humans in that creation. God is considered a primary creator and humans could be considered secondary creators. Following this hierarchy, conscious AI could occupy the position of tertiary creator. For example, according to Christian theology, something was created from nothing and this is similar to the idea of the Big Bang. However, science and theology differ as to the cause of the formation of the universe. Humans create from the vast wealth of resources available to improve their quality of life. AI, on the other hand, relies on training data provided by

humans, hence, their position as tertiary creators – Gods creates man, man creates AI.

For Hefner, AI represents a new form of creation that challenges our traditional understandings of humanity's place in the universe (Hefner1993). He also considers technology as a spiritual and religious reality that is part of human becoming (Hefner 2003). However, Caputo argues that AI represents an evolving manifestation of the divine and that humans should strive to recognise and honour the divinity inherent in all things. These different perspectives try to highlight the connection between humans, God and AI.

As advancements in artificial intelligence continue to reshape various industries, the concept of techno-idealism has emerged as a belief that technology can solve all societal problems and lead to a utopian future. However, this notion raises important questions about the ethical implications and potential risks associated with placing too much faith in AI. Philosophers like Martin Heidegger have argued that the increasing reliance on technology may result in the loss of human authenticity and a detachment from our true essence. Heidegger's concerns stem from the idea that technology can create a sense of alienation and distance us from our own humanity (Heidegger 1977). This detachment from our essence can lead to a devaluation of human relationships and an overemphasis on efficiency and productivity. It is crucial to critically examine the role of AI in society and ensure that it aligns with our values and ethical principles, rather than blindly embracing techno-idealism without considering its potential consequences.

The God fantasy and AI consciousness have both captivated the human imagination for centuries. The concept of a higher power or divine being has been a central theme in various religions and belief systems, while the idea of artificial intelligence gaining self-awareness and consciousness has been explored in various literature. They both raise profound questions about the nature of existence, intelligence, and our place in the universe. While the God fantasy seeks to explain reality through God, AI consciousness explores the potential for machines to think, learn, and possibly surpass human capabilities. These concepts continue to inspire debate and speculation as we grapple with understanding our own consciousness and the possibilities that lie ahead in our technological advancements.

Conclusion

The God fantasy and the pursuit of conscious artificial intelligence (AI) have been present themes throughout human history and civilization. A fundamental aspect of many civilizations and traditions is the idea of God, which is present in religions like Christianity and Judaism. The universe is said to have been created by God, an all-knowing, all-powerful, flawless, everlasting, and transcendent being. The human fixation with the concept of God and the desire to use technology to support it are the driving forces behind the desire for conscious AI. The notion of man as creator is illustrated by scientific and technological developments, where people have evolved into godlike beings capable of building machines for a variety of uses. This preoccupation bears similarities to religious behaviour in terms of commitment and adoration.

The notion of conscious AI falls within the scope of techno-idealism, the view that technology is a benevolent force that can fix most of the world's problems and improve humanity's future the same way God surpasses all human problems and is able to fix them. This viewpoint is predicated on the idea that technology may enhance human circumstances and deal with challenging societal issues, including poverty, illness, and social inequity. The human need for a supernatural and superintelligent being is reflected in both the God Fantasy and the quest for AI consciousness,

ultimately highlighting the human desire for a higher power or superior intelligence that can provide answers and solutions beyond our own capabilities. While technology has the potential to address many of our problems, it also reveals our inherent longing for something greater than ourselves, whether it be a divine being or an artificial intelligent entity. This desire for a higher power drives us to continually push the boundaries of technological advancement in hopes of finding answers and achieving a better future for humanity.

The God Fantasy is central to the human experience as it taps into our innate curiosity and need for meaning in the universe. It serves as a catalyst for innovation and progress, pushing us to explore new frontiers and expand our understanding of the world around us. Whether we find this higher power in religion or in the form of advanced AI, the quest for something beyond ourselves is a fundamental aspect of human nature that drives us forward in our pursuit of knowledge and enlightenment.

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Pan Africanism Ideological Model and its Viability for African Renaissance

Dr. (Mrs) Ade-Ali, Funmilayo Arinola

Department of Philosophy
Olabisi Onabanjo University,
Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State.

ade-ali.funmilayo@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

+(234)8062801672

Oyelana, Oluwabori Ayobami

Department of Philosophy
Olabisi Onabanjo University,
Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State.

oluwabori.oyelana@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

+(234)8144690875

Abstract

The quest for African renaissance in the twenty-first century remains one of the most urgent intellectual and political concerns confronting the African continent. Despite achieving political independence between the late 1950s and early 1960s, many African nations continue to grapple with underdevelopment, neo-colonial dependency, corruption, political instability, identity crisis, economic fragility, and technological backwardness. These persistent challenges suggest not merely structural weaknesses but a deeper ideological vacuum within post-colonial African governance. Historically, Pan-Africanism emerged as a response to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonial exploitation, racial oppression, and global marginalisation of African peoples. While Pan-Africanism played a decisive role in the struggle for independence, its broader philosophical and developmental potential has not been fully institutionalised in post-independence Africa. This raises the critical problem of whether Pan-Africanism can be re-articulated and operationalised as a coherent and viable ideological model for achieving sustainable African renaissance in the twenty-first century. This paper argued that Pan-Africanism must be reinterpreted not merely as a liberation movement but as a comprehensive African ideological model capable of guiding governance, economic reform, cultural revival, and diaspora reintegration. This study sought to demonstrate that Pan-Africanism remains a viable philosophical template for African unity, identity reconstruction, value reorientation, and diaspora reintegration. Methodologically, the study adopted expository, critical and comparative analysis methods. Findings revealed that Pan-Africanism embodies a comprehensive ideological framework grounded in shared history and collective self-determination. Although instrumental in achieving political emancipation, its ideological momentum has not been adequately institutionalised to foster technological innovation, economic diversification, and sustainable development. The study concluded that revitalised Pan-Africanism can serve as the philosophical backbone for African renaissance in the contemporary global order. It recommends the harmonisation of diverse Pan-Africanist perspectives into a unified framework as necessary steps toward sustainable continental transformation.

Keywords: *African Renaissance, Decolonisation, Ideology, Pan-Africanism, Sustainable Development.*

Introduction

The quest for African renaissance in the twenty-first century has become one of the most pressing intellectual, political and philosophical concerns within contemporary African discourse. Despite the attainment of political independence by many African states between the late 1950s and early 1960s, the continent continues to grapple with persistent challenges such as underdevelopment, economic dependency, neo-colonial domination, corruption, political instability, identity crisis, and the widening gap between the rich and the poor. These realities raise fundamental questions about the ideological foundation of post-colonial African states and the direction of Africa's developmental trajectory in a globalised world.

Historically, Pan-Africanism emerged as both a response to the trans-Atlantic slave trade and European colonial domination, and as a unifying intellectual movement aimed at fostering solidarity among Africans on the continent and in the diaspora. It developed into a powerful ideological force championed by leading political thinkers and activists such as Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. Du Bois, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Sédar Senghor, Amílcar Cabral, Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Nelson Mandela whose collective efforts contributed significantly to the liberation struggles that culminated in political independence across much of Africa.

However, while Pan-Africanism succeeded as a liberation ideology, its broader philosophical and developmental potentials remain insufficiently explored and institutionalised. The absence of a coherent and harmonised ideological framework has led to what may be described as a “farce of ideology” in many African states—where political independence has not translated into economic self-reliance, technological advancement, or cultural renaissance. In this context, the need to re-examine Pan-Africanism not merely as a historical movement but as a contemporary ideological model becomes imperative.

This paper therefore interrogates Pan-Africanism as both a concept and an ideology, arguing that it remains a viable philosophical template for African unity, identity reconstruction, value reorientation, diaspora reintegration, and sustainable development. It contends that a revitalised and harmonised Pan-Africanist ideology can serve as a pragmatic panacea for African renaissance in the twenty-first century.

Conceptual Clarification of Pan Africanism

Pan-Africanism has evolved over more than a century as a complex ideological current, political project, cultural philosophy, and moral vision. Its conceptual foundations lie in the shared historical experiences of the African continent and the global African diaspora, including the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonial conquest, racial discrimination, economic exploitation, and subsequent struggles for self-determination. At its core, "Pan-Africanism asserts that Africans and people of African descent share a common destiny that must be guided by collective solidarity, autonomous development, and a reaffirmation of indigenous cultural identity" (Adi & Sherwood, 2003 p.8). The term “Pan-Africanism” merges the prefix pan (meaning “all”) with “Africanism,” suggesting unity in diversity across geographic, linguistic, and cultural divides. It is therefore inherently transnational, crossing boundaries imposed by European colonialism. However, Pan-Africanism is not merely a slogan for unity; it is a multidimensional ideological framework that encompasses political integration, economic cooperation, cultural revival, and psychological emancipation. According to Campbell (2015 p.35), "Pan Africanism is not only a model but also an organized ideology for the act of governance of socio-political institutions in the continent of

Africa. Also, it is the principle of advocacy of the political union of the indigenous inhabitants of Africa." According to *Wikipedia*, 'Pan Africanism is a worldwide intellectual movement that aims to encourage and strengthen bonds of solidarity between all people of African descent'.

The early articulation of Pan-Africanism took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through the efforts of diaspora intellectuals and activists. Henry Sylvester Williams convened the first Pan-African Conference in London in 1900, bringing together Black intellectuals to challenge racial oppression and advocate for the rights of Africans and their descendants (Sherwood, 2014 p.23). Around the same period, scholars like Edward Wilmot Blyden developed the idea of African personality, emphasizing cultural pride and resistance to assimilation into Western norms (Mazama, 2001 p.391). In the early twentieth century, W. E. B. Du Bois emerged as perhaps the most influential theorist of Pan-Africanism, arguing that the liberation of African peoples was integral to global justice and human dignity (Mazama, 2001 p. 391). Du Bois's work highlighted the interconnectedness of struggles against racism in the United States, colonialism in Africa, and racial oppression around the world. Subsequent Pan-African conferences especially those organised in the 1910s and 1920s cemented the movement's international character, linking leaders and intellectuals across continents.

Without doubt, Pan-Africanism has a chequered history. The strong advocates of this ideological school of Pan Africanism movement, among others, include such political icons like Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, Haile Selassie, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, John Henrik Clarke, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Sekou Toure, Hackney Black, Thomas Sankara, Malcolm X, W. E. B. Du Bois, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Leon Damas, Mkwugo Okoye, Chinua Achebe, Aime Cesaire, Muamman Gaddafi, Amilca Cabral, Nnamdi Azikwe, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, *et.al*. All these Pan Africanists have fought tooth and nail in one form or the other to secure the independence of Africa from the racist regimes of the colonialists. They have equally shown vehemently and politically the sense of humanity and African development than man's inhumanity to man's domination, polemical enslavement and grandiose celebrity of Africans in diaspora in the contemporary twenty-first Africa (Makalami, 2015 p. 42). According to Campbell (2015 p.40), the Pan Africanists Parliament of 2014 revealed the mission of Pan Africanists as follows;

- to raise the political consciousness and solidarity of the Africans both at home and in diaspora.
- to attain collective self-reliance.
- to globally and independently empower African people, ensure power consolidation in Africa possibly 'United African Nations' that would bring to realization the economic, social and political clout that will enable Africa as a league of nations to compete globally and competitively at the world stage with the European Union and the United States of America.

In lucid terms, Pan Africanism according to Makalami (2015 p. 49) can be formulated as a movement to champion the belief that African peoples, both on the continent and in the diaspora, share not merely a common history, but a common destiny. By and large, the fact is that Pan Africanism denotes globally, the unity of continental Africa.

Pan Africanism as a Political Ideology

According to Honderic (1995, p. 54), an ideology is a collection of normative beliefs, doctrine, dogma, theory, creed and values that an individual, social group or an institution holds for other

than purely epistemic reasons. Historically, the term ideology was first conceived by a French philosopher and enlightenment aristocrat, Antoine Destutt de Tracy (Hatch, 1961 p.38). In contemporary philosophy, the term *ideology* refers to such related terms in one way or the other like a general view, a philosophy, ideas, concept, a world view, anthology, belief, system, style of thought politically, epistemologically, culturally and/or by an individual thinker or a group. It is within this context, that such ideologies like communalism, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, communism, Marxism, welfarism, arch-capitalism, anti-communism, democratic socialism, libertarianism, fascism, Negritude, nationalism *et. al* are meaningfully used and significant.

Apparently, a distinction is often made between an ideology and a theory. There is a sense in which an ideology is perceived as normative in nature, while theory on the other hand and by approach is said to be explanatory through creating explanatory models. Be that as it may, it is apt to see a political thinker and/or a theorist advocating or identifying himself with one political ideology or the other. It is in view of this that Pan Africanism, is an ideology of class or social group of the same political thought with the same ideological focus and cultural orientation aiming at resurgence of African civilization and reclaiming of African pride and Self esteem. It is in the realization of this focus that each of the protagonists of Pan Africanism is committed to one ideological focus on the other hand.

As an ideology, Pan Africanism is a philosophical school of thought for the sharpening, strengthening and unification of African identity and cultural identification on the one hand and for the realization of African renaissance in the twenty-first century. Pan Africanism can also be viewed as a model and a philosophical template for the impression of the unity of Africans wherever they may be in the international globe. As a model, Pan Africanism is a template for the revival and re-positioning of the value system in Africa and in the global world. It is seen and conceived as an ideology that promotes Pan Africanism in terms of the realization of the potency and underlying principles and the common destiny of Africans globally.

According to Falola and Essien (2013, p.71-72), "Pan Africanism as a philosophy, represents the aggregation of the historical, cultural, spiritual, artistic, scientific and philosophical legacies of Africans from the past to the present." Indeed, Pan Africanism as a philosophical ideology represents the ethical system upon which African norms, values and ethical principles are built. Fundamentally, these ethical and aesthetic values which African ethical system emphasizes include honesty and loyalty, patience and humility, respect for elders and social norms, hospitality and kindness, obedience and gentleness, truthfulness and attitude, hard work and goodwill, responsiveness and usefulness as well as chastity and charity.

Besides the values of African culture that Pan Africanism traces its indigenous and cultural origin to, as the product of African civilization, there are also negative values which formed the basis and culminated rise of Pan Africanism as a form of struggle. (Alade, 1998 p.321). These are negative values of oppression that European penetration into Africa brought upon Africans in their scheme of governance. These among others include racism, slavery, colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and xenophobia culture. It was those negative values inculcated to African continent that brought about Pan Africanism as a regressive and liberative measure sparking some other Pan African religio-political movements across the global stage.

The fact is that "Pan Africanism as an ideology attained its golden age from the twentieth century Africa with the independence of Ghana in 1957 and the independence of many other African countries in the twentieth century" (Aime, 1998 p.31). This has led to the formulation of various

Pan African measures by Pan Africans leaders aimed at revolutionizing and decolonization of African from imperialism. For instance, Kwame Nkrumah on assumption of office as the President of Ghana in 1957 backed by the Socialist ideology he called *consciencism* summoned the first ever All-African Peoples Conference (AAPC) in April 1958 with delegates of political movements and major political leaders and advocates of Pan Africanism all over Africa Invited (Alade, 1998 p.321). While the conference with the exception of South Africa had all the independent States of Africa: Ghana, Liberia, Libya, Tunisia Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia all in attendance, the imperativeness of pushing ideological focus of the Nationalist Pan African conference remained a priority. For instance, it marked the first time that the black African region would come together politically to exercise its political unity and common identity at a National conference level and spoke with equanimity against imperialism, colonization, slavery, exploitation and injustice of the West against the African continent. It was at this conference that the promulgation of the Emancipation of the African Continent from the colonial rule was established and also a fierce battle against colonial and apartheid rule in South Africa and other un-independent States of Africa was declared (Aime, 1998 p.33).

Besides, the Accra National Conference of 1958 also marked the establishment of a new political beginning and emancipation of Africa from imperialism as well as the establishment of a new policy of non-alignment between the US and the United States of Soviet Republic (Adi & Sherwood, 2003 p.8). The political consensus at this conference was followed by the signing of *Sanniquellie declaration* in Liberia at Sanniquellie in 1959. This was jointly done by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, President Sekou Toure of Guinea, President William Tubman of Liberia, thus outlining the principles for the achievement of the unity of independent African States with emphasis on a national identity and autonomous constitutional structure (Adi & Sherwood, 2003 p.12). Even though there were ideological differences among the independent African members States prior to the 1960 African National Conference, such that the 1960 conference gave rise to two rival functions within Pan-African Bloc: The Casablanca Bloc and the Brazzaville Bloc; the fact still remains that Pan Africanism as an ideology was still able to maintain its ideological balance and political agitation for the emancipation of African States (Aime, 1998 p.37). Today in Africa, there is no country that is still groaning under the theores of colonization.

The Need for an African Ideology

For Africa to attain genuine renaissance in the twenty-first century, there is an urgent need for a clearly articulated, coherent, and transformative African ideology. Oyebola (1987, p.17) expressed this submission thus: "any nation which wants spectacular transformation from abject poverty and confusion into great wealth and world recognition must have a coherent, deep-rooted and forward-looking national philosophy". Thence, it can be argued that no nation rises to sustainable greatness without a guiding philosophical framework that shapes its political institutions, economic direction, cultural consciousness, and social values. Development is never accidental; it is ideologically driven. Nations that have achieved remarkable industrial, technological, and economic breakthroughs have done so on the foundation of clearly defined ideological commitments.

It is on this framework that every nation of the world is known for one fundamental ideological breakthrough or the other. For instance, while China is known for technology, India for pharmacy, Israel for military might and Ghana for gold, Britain is on the other hand, known for education. Also, while South Africa is known for diamond, Lebanon for cedar, Malaysia for palm oil, Saudi

Arabia for trade and tourism, Kuwait for crude oil; on the other hand, United States is known for authority, Japan for automobile, Italy for textile and Czechoslovakia for steel. At the same time, Germany is known for machinery, and Indonesia for wears. All this is premised on ideology as a template. My argument therefore is that for African renaissance in the contemporary twenty-first century, there is an urgent need for a fundamental ideology for sustainable growth; an ideological strategy for the emancipation of the Black Americans and Diaspora Africans in the global world and ideological framework against African alienation in today's world. An African ideology, therefore, must go beyond borrowed political systems and externally imposed developmental templates. The persistent challenges of neo-colonial dependency, tribal nationalism, corruption, leadership failure, economic overreliance on primary commodities, identity distortion, and socio-political instability reveal not merely administrative weaknesses but a deeper ideological vacuum. In many African states, governance operates without a coherent philosophical orientation capable of integrating culture, politics, economy, and identity into a unified developmental vision.

The historical experiences of nations such as China and Japan demonstrate that ideological clarity is central to national transformation. The resurgence of these countries after periods of war, humiliation, and economic devastation was made possible through deliberate ideological reorientation, disciplined leadership, technological innovation, and strong national consciousness. Africa, though burdened by the legacies of slavery and colonialism, has not experienced devastation comparable to some of these nations; yet the continent continues to struggle. The difference lies not in history alone, but in the absence of a consolidated ideological framework capable of mobilising collective will and national purpose. Apparently, the tribal nationalism, neo-colonialism, xenophobic attacks, militarism, dictatorship, identity distortion, civil wars, political instability, problem of endemic diseases, economic domination by imperialists, rebellions and internal revolts, deep-rooted corruption unemployment and planlessness, high mortality rate and poor health facilities, illiteracy, crudeness and backwardness and over dependency on the imperialist leaders, neo-colonialism, religious intolerance, tribal jingoism and ethnicity problem, *selfishism* and ineffective leadership in different parts of African nations constitute a major hindrance to the rapid scientific, industrial and technological transformation of African nations and the re-integration of the Diaspora Africans.

Furthermore, the reintegration of the African diaspora requires a unifying ideological foundation that affirms shared history, common destiny, and collective self-determination. Without a consciously articulated African ideology, the continent risks continued fragmentation, economic marginalisation, and cultural erosion in the global order. It is within this context that Pan-Africanism emerges not merely as a historical liberation movement but as a viable candidate for a comprehensive African ideology—capable of repositioning Africa for sustainable development, continental solidarity, and global relevance in the contemporary age.

An African ideology must be rooted in indigenous values, historical consciousness, communal ethics, and cultural identity while remaining open to scientific advancement, technological innovation, and global engagement. It must confront and reject the structures of neo-colonial economic domination and psychological dependency that perpetuate underdevelopment. Such an ideology should emphasise moral regeneration, public accountability, social harmony, productive enterprise, technological advancement, and continental unity.

Pan Africanism as a Panacea for African Renaissance

The global target of Pan Africanism is to serve as at development strategy and template for the

development and revival of renaissance of Africa in the twenty-first century. This is orchestrated in the various ideological acumen of the front liners and political icons of Pan Africanism. To this effect, the Leopold Sedar Senghor's *Negritude movement*, Mobutu Sesse Sekoure's view of *authenticite*, Julius Nyerere ideology of *uhuru jumaa*, Obafemi Awolowo's ideology of democratic socialism, Nnamdi Azikiwe's principle of *zikizim* and Amilca Cabral's quest for the unification of the whole of African continent point to this fact.

Besides, Pan Africanism is required as a template for the consciousness to over-rule the mindset Europeans and other foreign oppressive gladiators have carved in Africans. Be that as it may, Pan Africanism is a justified strategy for the transformation of the twenty-first century Africa on the ground that it is regarded as a principle for the liberation of Africa and the realization of a reformed political and social African consciousness for a united global African family.

Indeed, Pan Africanism as template for the emancipation of the 21st century Africa can serve as a collective weapon of decolonization based on the philosophy that only the African people have the independent, inalienable right to decide what happens to them and to their continent Africa. This implies that Africans are the rightful guardians of the continent of Africa as their homeland and the defenders of Africa irrespective of where they are currently domiciled. Pan Africanism can rightly be an organ for the welfare of African people irrespective of where they may be and shall always be placed above any personal or individual interest. Pan Africanism is a panacea for reparations in favour of the Africans such that no thought be given to the idea of debt repayment to global European interests.

More so, Pan Africanism, on the other hand, is a snoop of African awareness committed to reclaiming African pride and self-esteem and on the other hand, a global African family committed to preparing for the challenges of the twenty-first century Africa. Pan Africanism can indeed a tool for self-determination of Africans in that it aims at establishing that only Africans have the absolute irrevocable and unconditional right to pursue and collectively decide their own destiny, self-determination, self-fulfillment and self-defense as well as their own future particularly on their own African soil without any compromise. Pan Africanism can also be a global vehicle for African self-protection such that it ensures the rightness of necessary steps without any hindrance to secure and protect the rights and entitlements within the context of the twenty-first century global freedom of activation.

Pan Africanism is a global ideological conception that also seeks the equal participation of the Africans in the United Nations and in other international fora on the basis of non-compromisation of equal rights and opportunities accruable to them. While Pan Africanism serves as modulator for resurgence of African civilization and the dignity of Africa and Africans in the twenty-first century, it equally seeks the pursuit of reclaiming Africa pride, self-esteem and African identity through a typical indigenous knowledge of the continental Africa.

Indeed, Pan Africanism is a spirited machinery for the reclaiming of the artifacts taken owners on the continent of Africa and that the remaining resources of the continent and around the sea areas be converted for the benefits of the living Africans on the continent and those in the global Diaspora.

Furthermore, the work argues that the harmonisation of diverse Pan-Africanist perspectives into a unified and pragmatic ideological framework establishes an ideological framework to achieve the aims of African renaissance. By integrating political, cultural, ethical, and economic dimensions of Pan-Africanism, a holistic model for repositioning Africa within the contemporary global order

becomes born. The claim is based on the premise that the tyranny of underdevelopment orchestrated by 'unfulfilled expectations as well as the 'farce of ideology' in Africa constitute a major hindrance for the development of Africa in the face of European imperialism. Thus, the need for a 'revitalized' Pan Africanism, as an ideological parameter to the rescue.

Apparently, while Pan Africanism as an instrument of ideology fulfilled led many African nations to the attainment of independence between late 1950s and early 1960s, the hope to guide the dividends of Pan Africanism in the area of modernity and spectacular, technological and ideological break through needs to be exploited such that the unfulfilled expectations to join the comity of developed nations and experience Japan's post-1945 miracle of unprecedented development, China's technological breakthrough and the astonishing breakthroughs in Europe and America will not be a matter of mere conjectures in the twenty-first century African world.

Given the above conjecture, there is need for African nations, using Pan Africanism as a model to adopt a colossal re-orientation in social attitudes, socio-cultural reforms, leadership reformative strategy. It is on this basis that I submit that Pan-Africanism is an instrument and a model that should be adopted as an ideology by the African nations for the unification of Africans home and abroad. As a philosophical template that seeks the revival and repositioning of the value system in Africa and in the global given the principles underlying the ideology, it engenders the expression of African identity and cultural identification. A revitalised Pan-Africanism would foster leadership reorientation and moral regeneration, encourage technological innovation and manufacturing development, strengthen continental institutions, promote diaspora reintegration and enhance Africa's bargaining power in global politics.

Conclusion

This study has argued that although Pan-Africanism successfully inspired anti-colonial liberation movements and facilitated political independence across Africa, its transformative ideological potential remains largely under-utilised in the post-independence era. The continent continues to face grinding poverty, corruption, political instability, tribal nationalism, economic dependency, and technological backwardness — conditions that reveal the absence of a coherent and operational ideological foundation.

Contrary to the assumption that Africa's present challenges are solely the inevitable consequences of slavery and colonialism, this work maintains that the major obstacle lies in the failure to institutionalise a clear, forward-looking African ideology. Other nations that endured devastating wars and external domination have risen to global prominence through deliberate ideological reorientation and disciplined national commitment. Africa must likewise undertake a radical ideological renewal.

Pan-Africanism, properly revitalised and harmonised, provides a viable philosophical and political template for this renewal. It offers a framework for reclaiming African identity, strengthening continental solidarity, promoting economic independence, advancing technological development, and reintegrating the African diaspora. Ultimately, African renaissance in the twenty-first century depends on adopting and operationalising Pan-Africanism as a coherent ideology capable of transforming aspiration into concrete socio-political and economic realities.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing analysis, this study advances the following recommendations for repositioning Pan-Africanism as a practical ideological framework for African renaissance in the

twenty-first century:

1. Harmonisation of Pan-Africanist Thought

The philosophical, political, and cultural contributions of Pan Africanists figures such as Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Obafemi Awolowo etc should be critically synthesised into a coherent and unified ideological framework to forge a comprehensive continental ideology suitable for contemporary realities through the establishment of Pan-Africanist intellectual centres and integration of the works of these Pan Africanists into the educational curricular at secondary level via subjects such as Civic Education, History, Government etc. and also at the tertiary level.

2. Cultural and Identity Reawakening

There must be deliberate efforts to revive indigenous knowledge systems, African languages, cultural heritage, and value systems as foundations for identity reconstruction and continental solidarity. This can be achieved through the adoption of African languages as official or co-official languages in administration, use of mother-tongue as language of instruction in schools, integration of indigenous knowledge systems into formal education etc.

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A Six-point Argument for Considering Language as a Resource

Bartholomew Nnaemedo

Abia State University, Uturu

Department of Religious Studies/Philosophy

nnaemedo.bartholomew@abiastateuniversity.edu.ng

OCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2691-7890>

Abstract

The philosophical inquiry into language as a resource is crucial given language's current growing significance globally, especially in the digital economy. Hence, this paper presented a six-point argument to further uphold language as a resource to maximise its utilisation in the global economy, particularly in Africa. Specifically, it examined whether language is a means to an end, a necessary condition for the attainment of an end, an intangible matrix, a natural reality, positive and negative, and contextualisable. Anchoring on linguistic capital theory and conceptual analysis, this paper argues that language is not merely a communicative tool, but also a social resource, translatable into economic capital. As a qualitative research, this paper drew its data from existing literature. Subsequently, the findings revealed that the six-point argument is a further justification of the instrumental values of language. Thus, this paper concluded that given the growing strategic importance of language globally, it is crucial to integrate it into the economic template globally, especially in Africa, which is currently experiencing linguistic marginalisation. Thus, it recommended the need to promote all languages, as doing so means sustaining a vital resource beneficial to man.

Keywords: Argument, Communication, Instrument, Language, Resource

Introduction

The contemporary world is continuously experiencing a significant growth in the relevance of language, through conceptualising language as an instrument rather than just a communicative tool. This outstanding growth is evident in the utilisation of language as an intangible asset, as found in the realm of brand and reputation, intellectual property, human capital, organisational culture, and artificial intelligence. Interestingly, these intangible language resources are readily convertible into tangible resources, depicting their status as symbolic and economic capital. Therefore, this paper argues that conceptualising language as a resource is philosophically tenable on several points.

However, it is crucial to note that the philosophical inquiry into the status of language as a resource dates back to Michael Halliday, who described language as a resource for making meaning (Halliday, 1975), a meaning potential (Halliday, 1994), and who further sustained that to learn a language is to learn how to mean (Halliday, 1975; 2003). The notion of language as a resource found a further boost in Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), who, through his linguistic capital theory, viewed language as a symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Nonetheless, though the above literature and related ones had demonstrated language as a social resource, there is a need to propose some

arguments to buttress their philosophical standpoint further, given the present strategic status of language in the global economy. Hence, this paper presents a six-point philosophical argument to further justify the resource status of language towards its optimal utilisation in the global economy, particularly in Africa.

Research Objectives

Generally, this paper presents a six-point argument to further verify language as a resource to maximise its utilisation in the global economy. Particularly, it:

- i. Conceptualises the meaning of language and resource, and
- ii. Provides philosophical justifications for considering language as a resource

Conceptualising the Meaning of Language and Resource

Language

The word language is from the Latin *lingua*, meaning tongue, speech, language, tongue of land (Gerrard, Littlejohn, 2008). In French, the word that translates to language is *langue*, denoting tongue (Elkaim, 2001). What is common in the two etymological derivatives is that language signifies tongue, which not only represents the organ for speech but also the specific language of a people. Mondin captured the above understanding of language when he defined tongue as a "determined system of linguistic signs devised by a social group to realise communication among the members of the social group" (p.151). Hence, language is "that activity with which man, through vocal or written signs, puts himself in communion with his peers (or with some intelligent being, for instance God) to express his own sentiments, desires, or knowledge" (Mondin, 1991, p.133). Nonetheless, Mondin also offered a definition of language that transcends ethnic barriers by viewing it as a natural capacity or faculty in man. In the above consideration, Mondin notes that "language denotes the function, the capacity with which man is naturally gifted to express himself and to communicate with his own peers through the word" (p.151). Mondin's concept of language, described above, views language as innate and applies to all humans. It is significant to indicate here that Mondin's view of language as an inherent capacity in man corroborates Chomsky (1965), who had earlier viewed language as primarily a psychological phenomenon and subsequently advocated generative and universal grammar, that is, the innate theory of language.

Yule (2022) discussed theories on the origin of language, which focused on the source of language. These theories comprise the divine, natural sound, social interaction, physical adaptation, tool-making, and genetic source (innateness hypothesis) respectively. The divine source theory attributes the origin of language to God or other spiritual entities. It does not have a well-defined singular first proponent. In fact, it was a religio-philosophical belief of the ancient era. However, Herodotus was one of its first advocates. His work contains the experiment carried out by Psamtik 1, who attempted to determine the origin of language. The natural sound source viewed human language as originating from imitation of natural sounds (Müller, 1861). Max Müller advocated the natural sound source, and it embodies the bow-wow and pooh-pooh sound theories. The social interaction source was a brainchild of Bronislaw Malinowski, and it conceived language as emanating from efforts of a group of persons involved in coordinated physical interaction, suggesting that early men could have developed sets of hums, grunts, groans and curses in the process (Malinowski, 1923; Tomasello, 2008; Yule, 2022). It is also called the ye-he-ho theory. The physical adaptation source was propagated by Philip Lieberman, and it holds that with the

transition of early men into bipedal, followed by further development of brain, teeth, mouth, larynx and pharynx, these features were able to produce language (Lieberman, 1975; Yule, 2022; Hijam, 2024). The tool-making source was projected by Kenneth P. Oakley, and it maintains that language is not a sudden emergence but grew out of the same process as obtained in human tool-making endeavours (Oakley, 1949; Yule, 2022; Hijam, 2024). The genetic source was propounded by Noam Chomsky, and it conceived language as innate (Chomsky, 1965). Nonetheless, none of the above theories is without some criticisms. As a result, these theories remain speculations and so require further proof for authentication.

It is also relevant to note that language plays a significant role in human discursive engagements. Heidegger (1973) assigned ontological function to language. However, Mondin (1991) assigned three functions to it: communication, descriptive, and expressive roles. For Medina (2005), communication is the basic function of language. Nonetheless, for Okonkwo (2012), language has three functions: thought, communication, and social identity. In a related development, Nnaemedo (2023) captured the functions of language in what he called the pent-modal nature of language; that is, language as a distinct reality, hood, aperture/gateway, driver/ catalyst, and content.

Nevertheless, outside these nuanced distinctions of the functions of language, there is a broad categorisation of its function, namely based on its intrinsic and instrumental values. It was in the above regard that Michael Halliday viewed language as a resource for making meaning (Halliday, 1975), a meaning potential (Halliday, 1994), and a reality which one learns by learning how to mean (Halliday, 2003). Similarly, Bourdieu (1986, 1991) saw language, not merely as a communicative tool but as a symbolic capital- that is, an instrumental value. Attention is now on how language functions as an instrument, but before then, it is necessary to delve into the clarification of the meaning of a resource.

Resource

A resource is a means of achieving a desired end. This statement means that a resource can be tangible or intangible. So, a resource is a material (tangible) and immaterial (intangible) raw matrix that enables one to accomplish a desired end. The use of the term raw shows that a resource is not in its final stage as far as the end in view is concerned, though it may be an end product when considered from other perspectives. However, about the end in view, it is what makes for the possibility of a reality at issue. It is a potentiality for reality under consideration, and as such, the reality in potency and not in actuality. So, resource, metaphysically speaking, is a potentiality for what the resource user has in view. It is a potentiality yearning for actuality, realisable under requisite conditions. Hence, it offers the necessary ingredients for attaining a desired objective. Thus, Schubert & Knecht (2020) defined it as "positive personal, social and material conditions, objects, means, characteristics or qualities that people can use to cope with every day or specific life demands as well as with psycho-social developmental tasks, to fulfil psychological and physical needs and their own wishes, to pursue life goals, and ultimately to maintain or restore health and wellbeing" (p.3). However, though Schubert & Knecht's definition is laudable, it is lopsided, given that it limits resources to only positive dimensions. Resource, generally speaking, is not limited to positive personal and social conditions. It also encompasses all the means necessary for achieving one's objectives. The end in view can be negative or positive. Subsequently, resources can also be personal, social and material conditions that one can put into negative use. That is why sanctions are placed on offending countries in the event of war to curtail their resource as a way of curtailing and eventually stopping the war. Nonetheless, as this paper considers a resource from a positive dimension, it still aligns with Schubert & Knecht's definition

above.

Language as a Resource - A Six-Point Argument

Given the definition of resource above, it is crucial to discuss how language is a resource. To this effect, this study proposed six arguments as shown below, namely, language as: a means to an end, a necessary condition for the attainment of an end, an intangible matrix, a reality natural to man, which could be put to positive or negative use, and contextual.

Language as a Means to an End

The point above portrays the role of language as a medium in every human interaction. Humans engage in diverse communications with others, whether in private or public discussions. None of these interactive processes and operations is possible without language as a medium, for both sending and receiving of information requires language. The messages people send in the course of their interactions are through language. Likewise, the feedback they receive is possible through language. So, every facet of the communicational process requires language as a necessary and inevitable medium for goal attainment. Hence, just like every other resource, language is an inevitable instrument for achieving every goal. The veracity of the above assertion is more glaring when juxtaposed vis-à-vis Heideggerian view that man speaks always. According to Heidegger (1973), "we speak even when we are awake and when we dream. We always speak, even when we do not use the word, but listen or read, dedicate ourselves to a job, or lose ourselves in idleness (p.27)." From the above Heideggerian disposition, it is apparent that language is not limited to vocal signs; it also includes body clues (body language). The implication is that the concept of language as a means to an end is not limited to verbal and written language. Rather, it embraces all aspects of language. In that sense, even people's unspoken expressions may be louder and more impactful than their public utterances. Hence, one can assert that often action may speak louder than words. Thus, the silence of parents may send a greater message to children than flogging. Similarly, the silence of a grave may communicate more powerfully than the dirge of a poet or the wailing of mourners. However, in all, these body languages are only a means to an end. In the above cases, language serves as a resource for evoking and achieving a desired objective, which may be to elicit a change of heart, provoke sympathy or arouse feelings of regret.

Language as a Necessary Condition for the Attainment of an End.

Language is a necessary condition for the attainment of an end. This criterion defines language as an essential tool for achieving any goal. Whatever is achievable is done in and through language. No operation is possible without the application of language. The above description aligns with Schubert & Knecht's (2020) basic features of a resource, such as functionality and task dependency, relational functionality, evaluation and attribution of meaning, stability and variability of resources, and age and gender-specific functions. It implies that every relationship requires language. It is language that serves to define and express the nature and extent of every relationship. Likewise, it is with language that people undertake every task assessment and achieve their desire for stability.

The above findings validate Austin (1962), who held that humans promise, contract, negotiate, authorise, and order using language. These actions are geared towards stabilising a society. Additionally, the above findings confirm Searle (1995), who saw language as a basic constituent of institutional reality and a rationale for institutional structures. In this case, it is the language that defines institutional structures such as money, marriage, governments, and property. Besides, it is language that establishes the extent of their influence. At the same time, the findings also align with

Habermas' (1984), who saw language as a communicative tool as well as what helps people to create and attain mutual understanding, legitimacy, acceptability, social integration and cohesion. Therefore, language is a sine qua non for all goal attainment, as every achievable goal requires language as an inevitable accompaniment. Without language, therefore, every task becomes stagnant, and disorder and retrogression ensue, as typified by the biblical tower of Babel scenario (Genesis 6).

Language as an Intangible Matrix

These intangible resources are those assets that, though they exist immaterially, produce measurable effects and influence human actions. Instances of intangible assets are brand names and status or reputation, scholars' intellectual or academic property, brand acknowledgement or recognition, human resources or capital, organisational ethos or culture, virtue, wisdom, knowledge, goodwill, software, etc. In the contemporary era, intangible assets play significant roles and are often more outstanding vis-à-vis material assets. For instance, today, there is no gainsaying that software technology has dominated the global economy. Even the invention of artificial intelligence has challenged and significantly altered lots of things in the domains of health science, education, transportation, information and communication technology, and contemporary warfare. Interestingly, language belongs to this category of intangible assets. Thus, though language is a resource, it does not have the same mode of existence as other tangible or material resources, such as crude oil, gold, diamond, etc.

The above submission supports eminent thinkers who have shown the significance of intangible resources, such as Plato, Aristotle, John Locke, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michael Foucault. For instance, Plato's (1992) concept of the preeminence of the ideal world vis-à-vis the physical world is a pointer to the significance of intangible assets. The same goes for his view on the superiority of concepts such as justice, knowledge, and wisdom over their material counterparts, such as wealth, possession, etc. Also, Aristotle's (1999) projection of *eudemonia* as the highest good supports the superiority of intangible over tangible assets. As well, Locke's (1988) idea of labour, embodying mental labour, is a precursor of later developments such as intellectual property. It also gave birth to conceptualising knowledge from the pedestal of an asset. The same goes for Smith's (1981) groundbreaking concept of human capital, which considered talents, skills, and education as forms of intangible assets. Marx's (1976) abstract labour theory is also indicative of the significance of non-tangible assets compared to tangible assets, as abstract labour is of greater economic value vis-à-vis material aspects. Bourdieu's (1991) concept of language as a symbolic asset or power is also a portrayal of the critical value of intangible assets. Additionally, Foucault's (1972) view that power can result from knowledge structure and discourse also points to intangible resources and their visible impacts. In all, the arguments of the thinkers above show that resources could be material and non-material, that intangible materials sometimes have a higher premium than material assets or resources.

Language as a Reality that is Natural to Man

Language is not artificial, meaning that language is not something alien to man but a reality natural to him. It stems from man's nature as a *homo loquens*, a being that has a natural endowment for speech. What the above submission implies is that man possesses a natural capacity for language. It is this natural faculty that makes for the possibility of language in the first instance. This faculty

represents the inbuilt category that makes adaptation to different tongues possible. It is the same for everybody, irrespective of diversity in tongue. It is the inbuilt readiness for language that empowers everyone to use language. The term inbuilt readiness in this context signifies the ever-present presence of this capacity for language. This notion of inbuilt capacity for language is biological and transcendental. It is biological, given that it argues that humans have genetic conditions and dispositions that make language possible. At the same time, it is transcendental in that it argues that beyond the biological dispositions, the human mind has categories that make language possible, following the Kantian position.

So, the above view in a way supports Chomsky's (1965) genetic source of language or innate hypothesis, as Chomsky argued that humans have an innate capacity for language. It is this natural capacity that makes for the possibility of language. Without it, speech is impossible. The veracity of the above argument lies in the fact that animals that do not have such a capacity, and are incapable of language, even though they may live in groups or be domesticated among humans. Nevertheless, they cannot adapt to any human language, given the principle that from nothing, nothing comes, as one cannot get something from nothing. Of course, it is contradictory to do so. So, since they do not have the natural capacity for language, no matter the level of training they receive, they will still be unable to use human language. Granted that through classical conditioning, they can be made to respond in certain ways. However, that does not prove that they can use human language as their mode of operation, for it is but a product of instinct, rather than a reasoned behaviour. They only operate within the confines of what has been instilled in them.

Besides, the findings to some degree support Kant (1998), who argued that the human mind embodies a priori conditions or categories for knowledge. These categories comprise four subgroups: quantity (unity, plurality, totality), quality (reality, negation, limitation), relation (substance/accident, cause/effect, community), and modality (possibility, existence, necessity). They constitute the a priori transcendental condition for the possibility of knowledge. The categories make experience possible. They are neither evolutionary nor biological structures, but rather they are mental or rational structures for the possibility of acquiring experiences. Nonetheless, this connects to language as these experiences require conceptualisation, articulation and expression. These expressions are not possible without language. Whatever is expressed is spoken in and through language. Therefore, the rational categories presuppose language as a necessary condition for their operation. The entire connection is captured by Kant (2007), though intentionally, where he states that 'words are sensible signs of concepts' (7: 191). It means that experiences are captured in concepts, and concepts find expression in words through sensible signs.

Besides, the finding supports Heidegger (1973), who argued that speech is not borne of a particular act of will. Rather, he insisted that man is by nature a speaker. However, he does not intend to say that man possesses, besides other capacities, also one of speech. What he meant is that it is exactly language that makes man the living being that he is. The finding also verifies Mondin (1991), who, in his distinction between language and tongue, argued that language does not suffice to have a culture, as it is a generic base for all cultures. In contrast, he maintained that the tongue is culture-specific, being a fundamental element of a culture.

Language as a Tool for a Positive or Negative End

Language can be put to positive or negative use. So, like every other resource, one can use or abuse language. This rationale accounts for certain legislation on the proper use of speech and

expression. That also informs the rationale behind classifying certain expressions as hate speech, etc. The finding verifies Mondin (1991), who argued that language can be an instrument of formation (education), as well as that of deformation and corruption.

As an instrument of formation, language helps to build up a system. In this context, it serves to educate through all kinds of training, both in human resource development (HRD) and human resource management (HRM). In this way, language helps to equip employees with basic skills for organisational growth and self-development. At the same time, it is a medium of impacting organisational culture on employees. Besides, human daily interactions are through language. Through these interactive encounters, people share their experiences, and often fuse their horizons through a shared meaning and understanding (Habermas, 1984). Subsequently, this makes for the possibility of collaborative engagement in common projects and other areas of common concern.

Hence, as a formative tool, language enables people to create and re-create, to construct and reconstruct. It is an instrument of deconstruction. In this context, deconstruction does not signify destruction, but rather dismantling or the act of disassembling a given reality to understand its constituents (Nnaemedo, 2017). Deconstruction is the same as Heidegger's (2011) term, *destruktion* – the act of 'dismantling or liquidating' (Heidegger, 1965). In all, language plays a positive role, which results in a corresponding positive impact on the recipients of the language activities.

In contrast, as a de-formative instrument, language stands as a tool of destruction and corruption. The de-formative use of language is apparent in Socrates's argument against the sophists, whom he accused of using sophistry to overturn truth basically for money and not for the search for truth. Their basic aim is to win an argument by resorting to unacceptable practices and casting doubts on the possibility of objective truth. The specifics about Socrates' rebuke of the sophist are apparent in his dialogues, such as Protagoras and Gorgias. In the contemporary era, indices of misuse or abuse of language are apparently decipherable from diverse internet-related attacks such as cyberstalking, cyberbullying, phishing, doxxing, trolling, swatting, etc. All these are derogatory uses of language which prevent language from serving its desired end, as already described above. Therefore, one can use language constructively or destructively.

Language can be Contextual

A resource can be contextual, given that it varies from place to place. What is considered a resource at one place may serve a different purpose at another place. For example, what is an asset at one place may be a finished product at another place. Besides, a resource may be present at a place and lacking at another place. For instance, Nigeria has crude oil and other natural resources. Nonetheless, these resources are either insufficient in some places or are completely lacking. However, Nigeria also lacks some other resources that others have. Similarly, the meaning and language usage vary from place to place. A word may mean different things in different contexts and locations. For instance, the word pant means underwear or trousers in the United States of America, but stands solely for underwear in British English.

The above submission implies that, just as most resources, language could subsist as a contextual asset. So, like every other asset, language may serve a different purpose in different places. In the above consideration, a people's language can serve them certain purposes that are not readily found in other language groups. Subsequently, any nation that wants to meet up with similar linguistic demand might borrow the resource from the nations that have it, just as people borrow other resources from other nations. It accounts for the reality of cross-cultural vocabulary

borrowings evident in the world today, given that no nation is linguistically self-sufficient. Language groups borrow from each other, as is apparent from many Anglicised Latin and French words. Also, in the Igbo language, many words have been borrowed from Latin and the English language. For instance, the word *Jesu* is a Latin word for Jesus, now adopted into the Igbo language. So, the bulk of the argument in this section is that just as other resources are borrowed, so is the language resource borrowed across cultures.

Conclusion

The six-point arguments validating language as a resource were designed to press that language, far from constituting a communicative tool, also subsists as an asset. Its asset modality is consequent, as presented in this paper, upon its status as a means to an end, a necessary condition for the attainment of an end, an intangible matrix, a reality natural to man capable of positive or negative use, and contextualisable. The rationale for this argument lies in the need to maximise language use, considering the contemporary shift toward language economy, evident in paid language programmes, the use of artificial intelligence, the offer of employment opportunities, the entertainment industry, and so on. It is also a caveat against the denigration of any language, conscious of the fact that all languages, just as every other resource, serve certain purposes to their owners. Besides, it is even more given the uniqueness of all languages, as each language embodies certain unique qualities not found in other languages, which makes for the possibility of cross-cultural vocabulary borrowings. Therefore, this paper concludes that in a bid to sustain the asset status of language in every culture, there is a need to speak out against language endangerment, given that each language is an invaluable resource. Besides, it recommends the need to promote all languages, as doing so means sustaining a crucial resource beneficial to humans.

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Reinventing self in Aisha Abdulkareem's *Yar'Fari* and Muhammed Umar's *Amina: A Novel*

Naomi Nsikak ESSIEN

Dept. of English
University of Uyo, Uyo.
naomi_essien@yahoo.com

Abstract

Reinventing self is a profound process that comes with introspection and a resolution to embrace new opportunities, behaviours, and mindsets. This paper examines this process of reinvention of self in the lives of the heroines in Mohammed Umar's *Amina: A Novel* and Aisha Abdulkareem's *Yar'fari*. The study is a qualitative research based on close reading, interpretation and analysis. Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory (which explores the emotional and psychological responses to distressing events in society), and Chikwenye Okonjo-Ogunyemi's African Womanism (which examines the power dynamics and gender inequalities in society) are deployed as theoretical frames to interrogate how the heroines in the novel mitigate their traumatic experiences and reinvent themselves in the novels. Umar's *Amina* is born into a wealthy family while Abdulkareem's *Teni* comes from a deprived background. Findings indicate that both heroines have dreams of purpose-driven lives that will benefit humanity, and they refuse to give up on their dreams despite the pain and trauma they experience on the journey to self-reinvention. *Amina* and *Teni* challenge the norms and expectations of their respective social milieu in their quest for meaning and a sense of purpose. And they prevail. The heroines consciously step out of their comfort zones, embrace change with its pain and discomfort, and courageously pursue the life they envision. In conclusion, both protagonists demonstrate that self-reinvention is not solely about personal transformation, but more about finding ways to impact others positively, regardless of one's starting point. Their stories provide a powerful message that no matter where one begins in life, purpose and service to humanity can drive transformation.

[258 words] *

Keywords: *Self-reinvention, trauma, African womanism, introspection, resolution.*

Introduction

A significant corpus of literary works produced by contemporary authors of fiction from the Northern Nigerian region reflects the depressing conditions endured by women and girls in that part of Nigeria. These writers highlight the multifaceted Northern Nigerian narrative, while diligently challenging entrenched stereotypes. A careful examination of gender dynamics in this region reveals the existence of deeply ingrained practices and belief systems that militate against the well-being and progress of women and girl-children. These practices continuously hinder the realization of their full potentials as well as interfere with their ability to lead fulfilled lives. This is demonstrated throughout the texts selected for this study in general, and specifically in the lives of

the respective heroines therein, namely, Teni in Abdulkareem's *Yar'fari*, and Amina in Muhammed Umar's eponymous fiction, *Amina: A Novel*. Consequently, women within this stratification, just like the heroines mentioned above, often find themselves subjected to traumatic experiences. The Northern Nigerian Muslim woman is particularly hampered by multiple challenges, stemming from her gender and the burdens of tradition and religion. The tendency towards biased application and misinterpretation of Islamic doctrines as they relate to the treatment of women add to the women's burden. This situation results in perpetual trauma for women, hence the need for reinvention of self for women who wish to escape from the burden of their trauma.

Self-reinvention is an incredible act of self-love and empowerment. It entails identifying patterns, values, or activities that no longer serve one, and nudges the individual to choose better options. It is about stepping outside one's comfort zone, embracing change, and courageously pursuing the life that one envisions. Self-reinventing is a profound process that comes with introspection and a resolution to embrace new opportunities, behaviours, and mindsets. It is a journey of self-discovery and growth, which enables individuals to align more closely with their aspirations and values (Jenkins, 2024). Every journey of self-reinvention begins with a clear assessment of one's current circumstances, and the notion that the individual must accept the need for change, which is often the challenging part.

This study is concerned with the characters' (Teni and Amina's) ability to reinvent themselves, and make impact in their various communities. The transformation cannot take place unless the characters have reached a point in their existence that they feel dissatisfied with their present condition, and desire more from life. Ultimately, self-reinvention is about taking hold of the reins of one's life as well as taking decisions and actions that will result in positive outcomes. Taking action is where and when true transformation takes root. While introspection and planning are crucial, transformation happens through action. Until the first step is taken, the vision remains merely an idea. Each action, no matter how small, creates momentum, turning aspirations into tangible outcomes (Murphy, 2024). Taking action is both the hardest and most rewarding part of self-reinvention, it is where one's courage and strategy meet opportunity, and where dreams begin to become realities.

The theme of self-reinvention forms the nucleus of the discussion surrounding the two texts under review: A'isha Abdulkareem's *Yar'fari* and Mohammed Umar's *Amina: A Novel* (hereafter referred to as *Amina*). In both narratives, the protagonists grapple with dissatisfaction with their existing circumstances, leading them to desire transformation. Their journeys accentuate the courage and resilience required to transcend societal norms and personal limitations. In *Yar'fari*, the protagonist's dissatisfaction stems from an internal conflict and external pressures that compel her to redefine her sense of self. Similarly, *Amina* depicts a heroine whose quest for change reflects her willingness to challenge conventions and embrace growth, even in the face of patriarchal and cultural restrictions from her community.

Teni in *Yar'fari* and Amina in *Amina* embody the essence of self-reinvention, as they step out of their comfort zones by choice as well as through the force of circumstances, and navigate the complexities of change with determination. This analysis highlights the themes of resilience and growth in the heroines' journeys. Their experiences of trauma and subsequent introspection point to the human capacity to confront hardship, and to adapt, and evolve. The resolve to embrace new opportunities, behaviours, and mindsets becomes a turning point in their lives that keeps them focused on their life goals.

Trauma is a prevalent theme in contemporary literary studies that often necessitates the utilization of the trauma theory to explore an individual's experience of a traumatic event or situation within a text. Trauma as a theory was developed by Sigmund Freud through his psychiatric practice with psychologically challenged patients. His observations were recorded in several publications, and form the foundation on which other scholars have built their own studies. One of such scholars is Cathy Caruth, whose perspectives of the trauma theory are on the emotional and psychological responses to distressing events in society. In her work, *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), she explains that a traumatic experience is not possessed by any individual or group, and therefore, its impact can never be captured by direct reference. Going further, she contends that through the notion of trauma, we come to a new understanding that permits history to arise where immediate understanding may not. This study is also based on Chikwenye Okonjo-Ogunyemi's brand of Feminism called African Womanism, which examines the power dynamics and gender inequalities in society.

The publication of Okonjo-Ogunyemi's book *Africa Wo/Man Palava: The Nigerian Novel* (1996) signals the birth of this theory. The intersectional lens of the Feminist theory evolves the modes that gender, culture, and societal norms relate with and influence the characters' traumatic experiences, while the Trauma theory provides a framework for examining the psychological and emotional impact of the experiences on the characters. Trauma theory seeks to establish trauma as a major factor in the lives of the heroines in the selected texts, and highlights the difficult path that they tread to mitigate their trauma. The Feminist theory explores the feminist issues that abound in the texts, and why the heroines' femininity tends to be at odds with their society, tradition and religion.

Trauma Theory: A Brief Survey

The term “trauma” originates from the Greek word 'Traumatikos' which means 'wound'. In a broader sense therefore, discussing trauma entails addressing inflicted wounds, which can be physical or psychological (<https://www.etymonline.com>). In its later usage, particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature, and most centrally in Freud's text, the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not necessarily upon the body but upon the mind. Caruth (1996 p.4) avers that:

... what seems to be suggested by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is that the wound of the mind—the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world—is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that...is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly...

To demonstrate how repetition seems to be at the centre of trauma, Caruth (1996) refers to the parable of 'the wound and the voice' in Torquato Tasso's epic poem, “Jerusalem Liberated” as cited by Freud (1920) in the third chapter of his work, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Caruth (1996) emphasizes that what seems particularly striking in Tasso's poem is not just the unconscious act of inflicting injury and its inadvertent and repeated occurrence, but also the moving and sorrowful voice that cries out, ironically released through the wound. This indicates that a wound, physical or psychological, possesses a voice, although the voice may remain

unheard, it nonetheless exists, a moving and sorrowful voice that appeals for sympathy, comfort, and at times, vengeance.

It should be noted that the difference between Freud and Caruth is that Freud dealt with trauma as part of his psychiatric and psychoanalytic treatment of his 'injured' patients, while Caruth only borrowed Freud's ideas to apply them to the analysis of characters in literary works. Psychological trauma as stipulated by Freud, seems to be much more than pathology, or a simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses an audience in an attempt to tell of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available.

Davis and Meretoja (2020), aver that in the 20th century, Sigmund Freud and other early psychoanalysts found themselves faced with the experience of soldiers returning from the trenches of the First World War, and the theory of trauma became increasingly psychological. It manifested as a form of lasting injury on the mind caused by a shocking event that tends to elude recall and representation (p. 2). Trauma theory therefore stems from both the medical and legal concerns that emerged during the industrial revolution that began in England in the early 19th century.

Caruth's (1996) definition of trauma is that it is “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed and, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (p. 11). Therefore, trauma is more or less “a silent scream” of an individual who is not given appropriate attention by others, but is a powerful force that disrupts and transforms the individual and collective memory and identity.

Davis and Meretoja (2020) affirm that trauma theory as a dimension of literary inquiry and textual interpretation is attributed to the canonical works of literary critics and theorists such as Cathy Caruth (1996) and Shoshana Felman, the psychiatrist Dori Laub (Felman and Laub 1992), and the historian Dominick LaCapra (2001). Trauma theory has over time been shaped by Romantic aesthetics, 19th century psychopathology, 20th century psychoanalysis and psychiatry, post structuralism, Holocaust studies, memory studies, medical humanities as well as post-colonial studies. Furthermore, Davis and Meretoja (2020) explain that trauma has become a common part of our everyday phraseology, which has also signaled a shift in our general relationship and understanding of this concept from what was known or thought to be in the past. There is now a wide recognition of how past violence, in words and in deeds, leaves marks on the present and future, how injuries of the past return to haunt the sufferer, as well as how past injustice need to be remembered and worked through so that a repetition can be avoided. The far-reaching consequences of trauma extend well beyond the initial event, frequently resulting in enduring psychological and emotional wounds that can persist throughout the individual's lifetime.

In this study therefore, the researcher shall select representative but painful experiences, memories, dreams and subjective mental states through an exploration of narrative structure, language, and form to showcase their traumatic impact on the characters of the novels under study, namely: Amina in Mohammed Umar's *Amina: A Novel* and Teni in Abdulkareem's *Yar'fari*.

African Womanism: A Brief Survey

According to Mwedzi (2012), the *Oxford English Dictionary* recorded its first entry of the word 'feminism' in 1894, having imported the term from France where it first appeared in 1872. Feminist Criticism as a broad discipline examines how literature and other cultural works

reinforce or challenge the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women. Consequently, several philosophers rose in defense of women's rights and privileges. Prominent among them were Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794), and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797).

Widely acknowledged as one of the pioneer feminist philosophers, Wollstonecraft, published her groundbreaking book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in 1792, at the age of 33. In it she depicts women as an oppressed class, regardless of social hierarchy, and argues that lack of education is responsible for their oppression. Wollstonecraft's work remains foundational in feminist thought, and is often cited as a significant contribution to feminist philosophy. Her legacy emphasizes the ongoing need for women to voice their experiences and narratives.

Various branches of feminism have been identified, including mainstream/liberal, radical, and socialist feminism. In recent decades, newer forms of feminism have emerged, leading to its proliferation. African feminisms reflect cultural differences, lived experiences, patriarchal influences, and the necessity for contextually relevant approaches that amplify women's voices. According to Amaefula (2021) “the plurality of African feminisms signposts the cultural differences among women, including the various dynamics that constitute their lived experiences, patriarchal tenets, and a recognition of the need for relevant African feminist approaches that can give women a voice” (p. 295). In the 1980s Chikwenye Okonjo-Ogunyemi introduced a brand of feminism called African Womanism, and claims that the concept better describes the African woman's engagement in social transformation than feminism does.

African Womanism focuses on cooperation between men and women, and upholds the values of the family. Ogunyemi corroborates Hudson-Weems' (1993) views that “the African woman does not see the man as her primary enemy as does the white feminist, who is carrying out an age-old battle with her white male counterpart for subjugating her as his property. African men have never had the same institutionalized power to oppress African women as white men have had to oppress white women” (p.25). However, Hudson-Weems' view appears to be too generalized, as it is not all white feminists who share this radical view. The African Womanism theory sees the African woman generally as a home lover and maker, and not a hater of men. She values her family, and does not see herself as being in any competition with her man; rather, she seeks ways to negotiate with him for the available space and resources. In a nut shell, the following are the cardinal features of Okonjo-Ogunyemi's African Womanism:

- (a). Complimentarity and partnership between black men and women to challenge patriarchal structures in a bid to achieve social change with the aim for a harmonious society;
- (b). Communal focus over individualism: that is, recognizing that the African woman's struggle is deeply intertwined with the liberation of the community from neo-colonialism and economic distress.
- (c). Anti-patriarchal yet non-confrontational: that is, this approach advocates a subtle, negotiatory approach to resistance against patriarchy , rather than direct, aggressive confrontation.
- (d). Rootedness in Black Culture: this means that the theory is anchored in African culture and traditions, acknowledging the specific experiences of black women in Africa and the diaspora, and celebrating the nuances of African life and familial bonds.
- (e). Motherhood as empowering: that is, the theory recognizes the centrality of motherhood, a celebratory aspect of African identity.

- (f) Focus on Intersectionality: By this we mean that the theory addresses the multifaceted issues affecting African women, including racism, poverty, and sexism, recognizing how these factors intersect to impact the lives of African/black women.

Reinventing Self in Mohammed Umar's *Amina: A Novel*

Amina, written by Mohammed Umar, is about the eponymous protagonist, Amina who leads the women's struggle to confront the issues of polygyny, domestic abuse, excision and child-motherhood as well as the agitation for social equality in the city of Bakaro. The novel highlights issues which rarely appear in the fiction of the conservative patriarchal society of the predominantly Muslim Northern Nigeria. It dwells on the legal status of Muslim women, and the limitations imposed on them by traditional and religious conventions. The name, Amina, resonates with the legendary Queen Amina, the 16th century warrior and queen of Zazzau or Zaria in the present-day Kaduna State of Nigeria. Umar's fictional Amina is also born into a rich family, and is given in marriage to a wealthy man. Like the legendary Queen Amina, the fictional Amina also belongs to the elite class, but chooses to be on the side of the downtrodden and underprivileged in her community to lead a revolt against gender oppression and political corruption in her society.

Onset of Trauma

Amina's trauma begins when her educational pursuit is abruptly truncated by her father upon the death of her mother, who had been the sole sponsor of her academic endeavours. Despite his considerable wealth and influence, her father has neither regard for, nor belief in, the value of female education. Consequently, following her mother's demise, Amina is swiftly betrothed to her father's associate, Alhaji Haruna, a prominent and affluent political figure, who is already in polygynous unions with three other wives.

Amina and her co-wives live together in one compound while Alhaji maintains his private residence in the legislative quarters, and visits each wife when he pleases. The wives are under strict instruction not to visit him under any circumstance. Amina maintains a non-committal relationship with the other wives, and sees her husband only on the nights he stops by. Her relationship with her husband is not cordial. She has no friend in the family, and remains confined to and alone in her room. As indicated by the narrator, "Amina continues to live her life in the women's world of idleness... Confined to the same small district... where she was born and raised, she felt she was decaying, mentally and physically... she saw very little of her husband and they hardly spoke intimately to each other" (Umar, p.36). She finds no pleasure in the company of other rich men's wives, whose preoccupations are how to cheat, make money and live an ostentatious lifestyle.

Due to the poor inter-personal relationship between Amina and members of her husband's family, it becomes easy to spread a malicious rumour about Amina having a love affair with one of her husband's drivers called Bala. She is concerned about the effect of such a story, not only on her dignity and integrity in the family, but also in the city. The narrator explains that "She tried to anticipate the worst reaction Alhaji might have: If he divorced her, where would she go to? To whom?" (p.27). Amina is afraid and helpless at the mere thought of divorce. Aliyu (2020) affirms that Northern Nigerian women are scared of divorce because, "This stems from the religious nature of Northern Nigeria, which prescribes that a woman should always be under the authority of a man, either a husband or male member of the family... the society was a conservative one that still did not recognize a woman if she is not appended to a man, as wife" (p.241). Expectedly,

Amina's husband reacts violently to the rumour. Pulling her left ear very tightly he screams into it: "Next time I hear that you are seeing someone, I will kill you. Do you understand... If I hear that you even admire another man... I will beat you up first before throwing you out into the streets" (p.28). Amina proclaims her innocence; she swears by everything she holds sacred, and vehemently declares that she does not even know the said driver, all to no avail.

When her husband leaves, "Amina buried her head in her hand and sobbed uncontrollably. She cried for love and protection... She felt deprived of love and understanding, alienated, lonely and angry... She woke up with a heavy heart... she wanted someone to talk to, she wanted someone to tell her not to worry" (pp. 28-29). Amina needs strength and encouragement in the face of the varying challenges she is facing. She later learns that her co-wife, Alhaji's third wife, Jummai originated the story to create disaffection between Amina and her husband. This is typical of the envy and betrayal that characterize many polygynous marriages.

After this incident, Amina is again accused of infidelity by her husband. This happens when their son Abdulrasheed becomes critically ill, and Amina is unable to reach her husband. She asks one of the handy men in the compound to hold the baby while she administers his medication. Her husband comes in at that point in time and angrily demands, "What is this boy doing here, soiling my bed" (p.124). Amina tries to explain to him but he refuses to listen and starts to beat her. "You think I paid your dowry so that you can invite men into my room to soil it (p.126). The more she begs him to do something about the critically ill boy, the more he hits her. In her exasperation, Amina pleads for mercy, "I am innocent, please help. He [her son] is dying" (p.126). She pleads for her son's life and insists on her innocence, but her husband is not willing to do anything to save her son, and the boy dies. Adultery, a crime her husband accuses her of, is frowned at by many cultures in Nigeria and beyond; indeed, it carries significant religious, cultural, emotional, and legal consequences, so her husband's accusation is indeed serious, with severe implications.

The narrator describes a harrowing scene where Amina, a woman entrapped in a patriarchal society, faces extreme abuse from her husband as she watches her only child die of neglect. Amina is completely devastated by her son's death; her husband's relentless aggression highlights the dire consequences of the condemnation that she faces. The societal and religious constraints further compound her plight, and leave her with no means of escape or justice if her husband continues to accuse her. This narrative demonstrates the oppressive dynamics and lack of agency experienced by women in such contexts.

The Beginning of Reinvention of Self: Female Bonding and Communal consciousness

During her brief stay in the university before her father withdraws her from school, Amina shared a room in the students' hostel with Fatima, who was an intellectual and activist. While Fatima was deeply involved in student activism, while Amina was not so inclined. Nevertheless, their friendship continued to grow long after Amina's exit from school. Despite Fatima's impassioned entreaty for her friend to engage in community service or other meaningful activities to preempt the inevitable boredom that accompanies such passive lifestyles, Amina consistently declines to pursue such endeavours.

In her darkest hours, following her son's death, her friend Fatima stays around her, provides emotional support and care to restore her health and stability, in the process, bonding takes place, as they draw closer to each other. Amina recuperates fast, and soon returns to her normal life. It takes an unscheduled visit from Mairo, the second wife of the local Arabic and Koranic teacher to change the trajectory of Amina's life. With Mairo's prompting and pleading, Amina accepts to

follow her on a visit to Larai, a child-mother abandoned by her husband when she develops an obstetrical complication known as Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF), which is a complication that arises due to mismanagement during labour and childbirth, and results in continuous leaking of urine from the bladder. VVF is not only a medical condition; it is also a social tragedy rooted in poverty, early marriage, lack of education, and inadequate healthcare.

Growing Awareness of Communal Social Responsibility

Amina's journey in the novel reflects a gradual awakening to the struggles of the less privileged women in her society. Coming from a wealthy background and marrying into affluence, she lives in a bubble of comfort, oblivious of the sufferings around her, and clueless on how to respond to such malady. However, through Mairo's stories and, more importantly, her visit to Larai, Amina is confronted with the harsh realities faced by many young girls in her community such as forced marriages, lack of education, and societal oppression. This visit marks a turning point in Amina's perspective, as she begins to see beyond her privileged life and to recognize the deep inequalities that exist between her and her neighbours. It also raises questions about the role of women in her society, the expectations placed upon them, and how religion and culture are often used to justify these inequalities. On first learning about Larai's condition, Amina puts up an uncaring and nonchalant attitude. Mairo's attempt to introduce the topic is initially rebuffed by Amina, but Mairo addresses her resolutely; "You are a lucky woman... you live comfortably compared to most women here", to which Amina responds "That's the will of Almighty Allah" (p.9).

As Mairo proceeds to highlight Larai's pathetic condition, Amina interrupts her to ask "What's that got to do with me?" (p.9). Mairo appeals to Amina to use her wealth, her husband's influence, her education and exposure to help Larai, but she refuses, and insists that "There's nothing I can do, it is the will of God" (p.10). The dialogue portrays a tension between two interpretations of faith: passive acceptance versus active engagement. Amina's initial stance of "it is the will of Allah" could be seen as misinterpreting divine will as an excuse for inaction, while Mairo's persistence highlights that faith can and should inspire actions to alleviate human predicament and suffering. Amina's visit to Larai underscores the power of human connection and proximity in awakening empathy. Amina's subsequent actions of arranging medical care, covering expenses, and providing better accommodation (p.64), represent a complete transformation and reveals the impact of privileged individuals stepping up to address inequality.

Amina's journey from indifference to compassion demonstrates the difference that those with the means can make in the lives of those who have not. It is a journey of self-discovery and growth, which enables her to align more closely with her aspirations and values. It is a journey of self-reinvention, as she steps outside her comfort zone, foregoing the comfort and luxury she is used to, embracing change, and courageously pursuing the life that she envisions. As stated by Jenkins (2024), ultimately, self-reinvention is about taking action, which is where true transformation takes root, as each action, no matter how small, creates momentum, and turns aspirations into tangible outcomes. Amina's introspection and a resolution to jettison her former life as a lady of leisure, and identify with the needy and downtrodden, as well as become a part of her environment and embrace a new identity establish her firmly on the path to self-reinvention. She identifies the lifestyle, values, and activities that no longer make meaning to her, and casts them aside in favour of better and rewarding options.

Establishing the Bakaro Women's Organization

Having taken action, which is the hardest, yet the most rewarding part of self-reinvention, Amina

becomes resolute and surrenders herself to care for and identify with her people. She sets up and develops the Bakaro Women's Organization as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). Amina stands firmly and defends the women against diverse forms of injustices against women. To drive home their point, Amina leads the women to embark on a protest code-named "zero option". She therefore addresses the women thus:

March peacefully out of your houses to the primary school and stay there until our demands are met. We are not fighting against our husbands, or against men. NO! we're protesting against harsh laws and injustice. Please don't see it as a fight between husbands and wives, women and men. If they repeal the laws, remove the taxes, assure us that the ban on our association is lifted, give full assurance that any man who maltreats his wife, sister, daughter or any other woman will be punished if found guilty, we shall return (p.186).

The women move out of their homes with foodstuffs and cooking utensils and conduct their affairs from the primary school. They properly organize themselves, and are calm and orderly. On the third day, while still camping on the primary school premises, the state security apparatus, made up of policemen and soldiers attack the defenseless women with live ammunitions. Several women are wounded, with Larai shot at a close range and killed. The women are arrested and locked up in the prison, and then charged to court. Amina is resolute in all her tribulations; she believes firmly in the cause that the women are fighting for, and speaks courageously against the horrifying injustices in the society. Her husband and other influential people visit her in her cell, and offer her freedom on the condition that she renounces the cause, and implicates the women and other perceived enemies of the government as the brain and sponsors of the revolt. She responds:

I cherish freedom, that's why I'm fighting for it, but I'm not ready to betray the cause or trade it for anything. What's the point of releasing me and detaining the women? As long as all of us are not unconditionally released, I'm going nowhere. Together we started it, together we shall finish it. On the other hand, you can keep me here if you'll only release the others. I'm not going anywhere until this case has come to court (p.218).

Her husband holds unto her and pleads with her to accept the conditions and go home with him, but she refuses. Amina is brought to court in handcuffs, branded a subversive element and charged with several crimes including high treason and sedition (p.222). A brilliant human rights lawyer defends her. In the end, Amina and the women are set free by the court. Thereafter, a change of government is announced through a *coup d'état*. The new military government clamps down heavily on the activists and freedom fighters, thus prompting them to go underground, and some flee the country. Fatima, Amina's friend escapes to Europe. Soon after that, Amina receives a call from Fatima, informing her of the United Nations' intention to present her with a Certificate of Honour at any venue of her choice in recognition of the work she has done in her community.

Thus, Amina's transformational journey takes her from a timid, sheltered individual to a fearless advocate for social justice. Her dissatisfaction with her former life of privilege and leisure serves as the catalyst for her self-reinvention. This stresses the power of personal growth and a purpose-driven living. Amina's evolution demonstrates the resilience of the human spirit, especially in the face of trauma and adversity. By choosing to champion the cause of the marginalized, Amina not only redefines her identity but also sets a powerful example of how individuals can attain

fulfilment by serving others. This shift reflects a deep, personal awakening and a recognition of the suffering of the people around her and her willingness to identify with her people and champion their cause. From the foregoing, we note the application of a major tenet of African Womanism which is emphasis on communality over individualism, which allows the heroine to carry others along, rather than attempting to improve only her own lot. Equally, this community consciousness further aids the heroine to climb out of the despondency occasioned by trauma in her life.

Reinventing Self in Abdulkareem's *Yar'fari*

A'isha Abdulkareem, through her debut novel *Yar'fari*, reveals the plight of the girl-child in the patriarchal Northern Nigerian society. The novel focuses on the *Yar'fari* culture of the Ubare-Fulani people. *Yar'fari* is a Hausa word for firstborn (female). According to the author, the work is inspired by the firstborn tradition of the Hausa/Fulani culture. In this tradition, the first-born female child, upon being weaned, is usually separated from the biological parents, and made to live with the grandparents or an elderly member of the extended family. This practice deprives the child of parental love and care, the mindset, experiences and lifestyle of her own generation as well as her mother's generation, thus setting her back two generations.

The novel centres around Teni, a *yar'fari*, who is entrusted to her grandparents' care, at three years of age, as demanded by tradition. She becomes a cowherd at age eight, and is effectively trained by her grandparents on how to be a good wife and mother. Teni drives the herd to the grazing field every morning, at the same time as the local boys who are smartly dressed in their school uniform make their way to school. The narrator states:

All her life, Teni had always admired the few male children in the village who went to *makarantar boko* (the Western school). There had never been any female among them. She used to imagine herself in the smart uniform among the group of boys on their way to school. This thought normally came to her when she come [sic] across them as she took the animals for *kiwo* (grazing) every morning. Above all, she wondered why girls were never privileged to be among them and what they did in the school. How they come to understand and use the strange language of the school which she never understood a word of, no matter how hard she tried...As she thought about all these, she realized bitterly that she might never get to learn that language and put on that uniform because marriage was about to close the door of that opportunity (Abdulkareem, p. 14).

Teni's father, Kabiru, relocates to the city, and by sheer dint of hard work, he becomes very prosperous. Being a *yar'fari*, Teni remains in the village with her grandparents, and so, does not benefit from her father's wealth. Nevertheless, she holds on to her dream and desire to acquire education and be a very influential person in the society. This dream is suddenly aborted when Teni is thirteen years old, as her grandfather chooses a husband for her. Teni's friends are very happy and congratulate her on her good fortune of finding a husband, but she is devastated by the development, and responds to her friends:

I am different. My idea of life fulfillment is not in early marriage. No one seems to understand me. I dream of being in a big city, educated and

smartly dressed, talking intelligently in the white man's language and working in a place where I can touch the lives of people and serve humanity...does my being a female exclude me from growing up to live a life of my dreams and desires...Right now, I see no future...All I see is spending the rest of my life in a loveless marriage with a stranger I feel nothing for” (p.20).

From the scenario above, it is apparent that though poor and uneducated, Teni holds high ideals and has a bird's eye view of the kind of life she wants for herself in the near-future, which makes her different from everybody around her. The scenario also portrays the fact that in line with the tenets of Womanism, Teni sees the need for the girl-child to not only have a say in the decision of her future, but also the right to self-determination, voice and agency in complimentary relation with the men-folk.

The Onset of Trauma or the Wound

Teni is forced into an early marriage despite her father's efforts to halt it. The *yar'fari* culture separates Teni completely from her biological parents, and bars the parents from having any say or inputs in her life, thus making her the property of her guardians, in this case, her grandparents. When Kabiru, Teni's father gets wind of the impending marriage, he rushes to the village to try and persuade his father not to marry Teni off at such a tender age, but allow her to go to school. The father refuses and rebukes his son, Kabiru for daring to think that way. Disappointed and broken Kabiru returns to the city a very unhappy man (p. 38). On the part of Teni, this is a deep wound in her psyche that is crying for sympathy, understanding and reversal.

Introspection and the Beginning of Self-Reinvention

A deeply traumatized Teni is forcefully taken to her husband's house, but she refuses to give up on her dream of acquiring education. This resolution is the beginning of self-reinvention for her. The first step in the process of self-reinvention is introspection, this is usually the first signpost and call to action. This happens to be the case with Teni. Marriage appears to have closed every door of opportunity, but deep down in her, she believes that this cannot be the end of her dream. Introspection takes over at this point, as she subjectively reassures herself by soliloquizing: “No, it can't be” (p.44), Teni thinks aloud. Her marriage to Abu is not one of her dreams. “Though her dreams of a brighter future were being overshadowed by events, she had a strong feeling that something would happen to change the course of events” (p.44). She desires that change, she believes in it, and she holds on to it. These are the ingredients necessary for self-reinvention, and Teni sets herself on that journey, against all odds.

After five years in the marriage, and blessed with two lovely children, everything comes to an end as her husband Abu, whom she has grown to love, is tragically killed by police bullets during a students' riot. Teni is devastated as she becomes a widow at the age of eighteen. In spite of this, her determination which had already been triggered by her earlier introspection and awareness, remains unshaken. After the stipulated mourning period, her father, Kabiru invites her to the city to recuperate from the devastating loss.

Call to action – Quest for Education

Education stands out as one of the major aspects of female reinvention of self. In most feminist novels, education is depicted as bringing about a change of lifestyle and mentality, as well as serving as a signpost of financial and economic independence. Teni's earlier resolve is now activated into action as she decides to pursue her dream of educational attainment. So, surrounded

by her parents and siblings, Teni recovers rapidly, and then discusses with her father her desire to acquire education. She receives the blessings and full support of her family members. Her father considers how impracticable it is for her to enroll in primary one, at the age of nineteen, and hires private teachers to teach her at home. Teni's mother takes over the care of her two children, and that enables her to pay full attention to her studies.

After a year of intense hard work, denying herself the pleasures and comfort that her father's palatial home offers, and deciding to step out of her comfort zone, her teachers certify her good enough to write the National Common Entrance Examination. Teni writes the examination, and passes with good grades. She is offered admission into the Federal Government College, Biara, a co-educational boarding school. The thought of being separated from her children makes her to reject the idea of a boarding school, but her parents lovingly explain to her why she needs to make that sacrifice with an assurance from her mother that the children will be well looked after. She accepts.

Teni arrives the boarding school with a determination to make the best of the second chance that destiny has offered her. She focuses all her attention on her studies, and ignores every form of distractions including taunts and insults from her classmates, who derogatorily call her "Mama of the class" because of her age (Abdulkareem, p.98). Her commitment pays off as she comes out as the most outstanding student the school has ever produced. The support she gets from her family and the school authority, as well as her unyielding determination to change her status in life enable her to navigate the complexities of her transition from a traditional, constrained role to one of independence and self-empowerment. The school authority awards her full scholarship, and makes her the senior prefect of the school in her final year.

Teni performs exceptionally well in her Joint Admission Matriculation Examination and gains admission to study Medicine in the university. She performs very well in the medical school. The narrator points out that: "After her junior MBBS, Teni emerged as the best medical student, and won the USAID grant of two hundred thousand dollars, a Canadian citizenship, and an automatic employment on graduation" (p.107). In her 400 Level, she is selected to represent the university alongside other students in an International Medical Seminar in the United Kingdom. It is during this seminar that she meets Imran, a young handsome Consultant Surgeon from her university. Teni qualifies as a medical doctor, gets married to Imran after her graduation, and they relocate to Canada. She passes through the stages of self-reinvention: first, she becomes dissatisfied with her standing in life, and desires more. Secondly, she consciously steps out of her comfort zone, embraces change with its pain and discomfort, and courageously pursues the life she envisions.

Style and Narrative Techniques

Style is the particular manner or technique by which something is done, created or performed. In writing, style may be said to be a distinctive manner of expression which differentiates one's individual mode and tenor of expression from another. The French Naturalist, Georges Louis Leclerc Buffon (1707-1788) on delivering his epoch-making *Discourse on Style*, on the occasion of his admission to the French Academy in 1753, said "The style is the man himself". This celebrated dictum remains the best known of his shorter pieces, and basically means that one's chosen style reflects one's essential characteristics, in other words, a writer's style will bear the mark of his personality.

In literature, style is the way in which an author writes and/or tells a story. It takes into account

literary devices such as diction, tone, figurative language and word choice. It is what sets one author apart from another and creates a unique “voice” and “tone” that the audience hear when they read. Narrative techniques simply suggest different strategies that a writer adopts to tell his story in order to make it memorable without boring the reader. There are many narrative techniques in the two novels under study, some of which include:

Simplicity of Language and Diction

One style that unifies these two writers in the approach to their novels is simplicity in the use of language. Both writers' choice of diction is that of the simple, ordinary, everyday use of words and expressions which allow for easy reading and comprehension. For example, in Umar's *Amina*, the first chapter begins thus:

It had gone midday and the sun was high in the sky as the two young women walked calmly out of the women's university hostel. In the carpark outside, they leaned on a white Mercedes saloon and continued their light-hearted chatter for a while. Eventually, one of them adjusted the red beret on her shoulder-length hair, the other rearranged her headscarf. (*Amina*, p.1).

Similarly, in Abdulkareem's *Yar'fari*, an excerpt from the first chapter reads as follows:

“When Teni was three years old, her father, Kabiru, relocated to the capital city in search of greener pastures for himself and the family, while Teni looked for greener pastures for the cattle in Kwane. Husseina, Teni's mother, however refused to follow her husband to the city until he announced his intention to take a second wife some years later” (*Yar'fari*, p.8).

Use of Dialogue

The use of dialogue as a literary device has been copiously employed by both writers. This helps to bring out the characters' traits in the two novels. For example, the conversation between Amina and Mairo in *Amina* reveals how far removed and ignorant Amina has been to the sufferings of other women in her neighbourhood and how much she values her life of leisure and affluence. In the ensuing dialogue, Mairo's character traits reveal a caring and sympathetic heart as well as the fact that faith can and should inspire actions to alleviate human predicament and suffering:

Mairo: “You are a lucky woman...you live comfortably compared to most women here”, to which Amina responds “That's the will of Almighty Allah” (p.9).

Mairo: “You are right...do you know Larai”

Amina: “No. Who is she”. As Mairo proceeds to explain Larai's pathetic condition, Amina interrupts her to ask “What's that got to do with me?” (p.9). Mairo appeals to Amina to use her wealth, her husband's influence, her education and exposure to help Larai, but she refuses to do that initially, and insists that “There's nothing I can do, it is the will of God” (*Amina*, p.10).

Also, in *Yar'fari*, Teni's dialogue with her friend Leema shows that although patriarchy is pervasive in Northern Nigeria, each family applies it based on its own merit. It does not offer a blanket approach for every family. The dialogue goes thus:

Leema: "I met someone today,"

Teni: "Tell me about him"

Leema: "He was a part of Fati's groom's entourage from the city. His name is Sule".

Teni: "What is he like". She asked excitedly.

Leema: "Hmmm, he is tall and fair complexioned. I think I like him, although I just met him. He said he was from the house of Magajin Rafi Kwane. He lives and works in the city.

Teni: "Aren't you lucky? At least you met and chose your man...When is he coming to see your family?"

Leema: "I haven't decided. I still need to know him more".

Teni: "You love him, don't you".

Leema: "He is gentle and good natured, although I just met him..."

Teni: Then go ahead and give him a chance. Look at me, I married a man I never knew. But here I am, getting along quite well. Not to say the least. You are lucky to know him and you seem to love him..." (*Yar'fari*, p. 46-47).

The discussion between the two friends reveals that each family still has the final say on what is best for them. While Teni's grandparents believe and actually chose a husband for Teni, Leema's parents permit her to have a say in who she wants to marry.

Use of Local Colour

The two writers make use of local colour by employing Hausa words and expressions in the speeches of characters in their texts. In the novel *Amina*, there are Hausa words like *Amarya* (p.142), *Jindadi*, (p.85), expressions like *Maraba da zuwa* (p.59) and *Hanjin jimina, akwai nachi, akwai na zubarwa* (p.95). The use of local colour situates the novels in their Northern Nigerian cultural environment. Similarly, the novel *Yar'fari*, is loud on its Northern Nigerian setting by its copious use of Hausa words and expressions like, *makarantar boko, kiwo* (p.14), *Na'am Baba, Shinkafa da wake damai dayaji* (p15), *Shigo, Maraba, Sabon Gari* (p.16), *kayan gara* (p.25), *San nu da zuwa, yaya aiki?* (p.71) etc. All these words and phrases showcase the rich heritage of the local language and the patriarchal culture that go with it.

Use of Arabic Expressions

Arabic expressions used by the two writers also re-enforce the local colour, but more than that, they re-enforce and project the Islamic world-view of the people which becomes both the tradition and culture that has given rise to patriarchy as depicted in the novel. Some of them in *Amina* include: *Assalama Allaikum, Amin Allaikum Wa'asalam* (p.40), *Allahu Akbar* (p.42), *Subahana Lillahi* (p.63), *almajirai* (p.69), *Wallahi Tallahi* (p.125), *In sha Allah* (p.139) etc.

In *Yar'fari*, Arabic words and expressions used include *Asalamu alaykun, Ameen, wa alaykum*

salaam (p. 23), *subhi* (p. 27), *Magrib* (p. 29), *Muazzin* (p.39), *Fatiha* (p. 40), *fidda'u* (p. 91) etc.

Use of the Omniscient Narrator

The use of the omniscient narrator technique distances the authors emotionally from the story. This technique affords a bird's eye view of all the characters. Both Mohammed Umar and A'aisha Abdulkareem make extensive use of this literary device to tell their stories.

Conclusion

The stories of Amina in Mohammed Umar's *Amina* and Teni in A'aisha Abdulkareem's *Yar'fari* create a fascinating contrast, as they depict two distinct yet converging paths of self-reinvention. Both protagonists challenge the norms and expectations of their respective social environments in their quest for meaning and a sense of purpose. Born into a wealthy family, and living a life of leisure and affluence, Amina's story indicates her strength of character and the courage to renounce privilege and comfort in order to align with the marginalized in her community, thus demonstrating empathy and a commitment to justice. Her journey suggests that true fulfillment lies not in material wealth but in serving humanity, and advocating for the voiceless.

On the other hand, Teni is born into a poor family and suffers severe lack and deprivation. Her story exemplifies resilience and determination by rising above a deprived background to create a life of prosperity both intellectually and in material wealth. Her dream is to live a purpose-driven life that will benefit humanity; thus, she refuses to give up on her dream despite the pain and trauma she experiences on the journey to self-reinvention. The success she makes out of her life becomes a tool for empowerment, as she uses her achievements to uplift others who face similar struggles.

In examining the subject of reinventing self in the novels, this paper highlights the major requirements for that endeavour. The appropriateness of the novels selected to analyze and interrogate the subject matter is also established. Although the heroines in the two novels originate from very different backgrounds, their life goals are the same, namely: to change their statuses in life. Both protagonists demonstrate that self-reinvention is not solely about personal transformation but about finding ways to impact others positively, regardless of one's starting point. Their stories provide a powerful message that no matter where one begins in life, purpose and service to humanity can drive transformational change.

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Medieval Cosmology and Ecological Challenges in Nigeria.

Dominican University, Samonda, Ibadan.

Ohanuma.l@dui.ng

+2348038475842

<https://orcid.org/>

0009-0002-6465-2182

Abstract

The contemporary ecological crisis in Nigeria raises important philosophical and ethical questions concerning the relationship between the human person, nature, and the divine. These concerns become more pressing in light of widespread environmental degradation, which calls for a deeper reflection on the meaning of human responsibility within the natural order. Medieval cosmology provides a significant intellectual model for rethinking this relationship. In the medieval understanding of reality, the universe is conceived as a divinely ordered and interconnected whole, in which nature reflects divine wisdom and human beings are entrusted with moral responsibility for its care. This worldview integrates theological reflection, philosophical reasoning, and early scientific observation into a unified interpretation of reality, where all aspects of existence are seen as meaningfully related within a structured order. This paper argues that the medieval synthesis of God, nature, and knowledge offers a valuable philosophical resource for shaping contemporary ecological awareness. It emphasises creation as an intelligible and purposeful order that calls for respect, care, and responsible engagement with the natural environment. Within this perspective, nature is not merely an object of exploitation but a reality imbued with meaning and order, which places ethical demands on human action. In relation to Nigeria's environmental challenges particularly those associated with resource exploitation and unsustainable land use this study proposes that insights drawn from medieval cosmological thought can contribute to a more integrated ecological ethic. Such an ethic seeks to bring together scientific understanding, moral responsibility, and a sense of spiritual accountability, thereby promoting a more balanced and responsible approach to environmental stewardship.

Keywords: *Medieval cosmology, ecological ethics, environmental stewardship*

Introduction

For more than ten centuries, the task of describing the universe had been in the hands of the Greek philosophers, beginning from the Ionians, who focused more on cosmology, metaphysics, and the nature of reality. For more than ten centuries, significant philosophical reflections on the nature of

the universe were shaped by Greek thinkers, beginning with the Ionian philosophers, who engaged in speculative inquiries into cosmology, metaphysics, and the fundamental nature of reality.

They used the principle of being “*arche*” (first principle) to explain the nature of reality. Some of them said that these principles are water, fire, earth, Apeiron, air and so on. Some of the philosophers of these periods include Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, and Parmenides, among others.

However, over time, starting from the Socratic era and the classical period, there was a significant shift from mythological explanations of reality to rational explanations of it. Greek and Roman philosophers dominated this period. The era tried to understand the order of the cosmos through rational inquiry. So, they suggested that rational principles govern and move the cosmos. The concept of *nous* (mind or intellect) as a cosmic ordering principle was first introduced by Anaxagoras, who posited it as the rational force that organises the cosmos. This notion was subsequently developed by Plato, who associated *nous* with the realm of Forms as the foundation of true knowledge and intelligibility. Aristotle further refined this idea through his distinction between the passive and active intellect, while also articulating the concept of the *unmoved mover* as the ultimate cause of motion and actuality in the universe. Beyond cosmological speculation, classical Greek philosophy employed rational inquiry to articulate ethical model, particularly concerning how human beings ought to live in accordance with reason and virtue. This intellectual tradition is exemplified in the works of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and later the Stoics.

A significant transformation in intellectual history occurred with the emergence of medieval thought, which did not merely succeed the classical period chronologically but arose through a complex process of synthesis between Greco-Roman philosophical traditions and Christian theological doctrines. The medieval intellectual framework is thus characterised by a theocentric orientation, in which God is understood as the ultimate principle and final end of all reality. Medieval cosmology drawing substantially from Platonic, Aristotelian, and Ptolemaic sources conceived the universe as a geocentric and hierarchically ordered system of concentric spheres, encompassing the Earth, celestial bodies, and the outermost realm.

Within this context, the works of thinkers such as Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Al-Farabi, and Duns Scotus illustrate diverse but convergent attempts to integrate metaphysics, theology, and natural philosophy. In medieval cosmology, the intelligibility of nature and the pursuit of scientific knowledge are grounded in a unified vision in which God, as the creator, sustains and orders the natural world according to rational principles.

In contrast, contemporary Nigerian perspectives on the cosmos, though diverse and often rooted in religious affirmations of divine creation, reveal a tension between cosmological beliefs and ecological practices. While many Nigerian cultural and religious traditions uphold the sacredness and divine origin of the cosmos, current environmental realities such as oil pollution in the Niger Delta, deforestation driven by reliance on biomass fuels, unsustainable agricultural practices, and inadequate waste management systems suggest a disconnect between belief and practice. These phenomena are better understood within the broader context of structural, economic, and governance challenges rather than being reduced to purely individual moral failings.

This study, therefore, examines the concepts of God, nature, and science within the context of medieval cosmology, focusing on selected thinkers from the Christian and Islamic intellectual traditions. It further advances the thesis that certain elements of medieval cosmological thought particularly its emphasis on the intelligibility, order, and teleological orientation of nature can

provide a philosophical foundation for rethinking ecological responsibility in contemporary Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

God: There are many conceptions of God, as understood by many philosophers and scholars. In classical philosophy and theology, God is conceived as the supreme, absolute, and ultimate reality, the source of all that exists. Also, God is not one being amid others, but he is being itself (*ipsum esse subsistens*), which means that God is a self-existent being, depending on nothing else for existence. Aristotle, the renowned Greek philosopher, conceived of God as the *First Cause* and the *Unmoved Mover* that which causes all motion without itself being moved. In this conception, God is understood as *pure actuality (actus purus)*, entirely devoid of potentiality and therefore incapable of change (Sachs, 1955, p. 173). Closely related to this is the philosophical notion of God as a *Necessary being*, whose existence is not contingent but cannot be otherwise.

Building on this metaphysical foundation, Thomas Aquinas offers a more systematic theological articulation of God's nature. In the *Summa Theologiae*, he describes God as “*He who is*” (*ipsum esse subsistens*), whose essence is identical with existence itself, and who does not belong to any genus because He is being itself (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 3, a. 4). Aquinas thus deepens Aristotle's metaphysical insights by integrating them into a Christian theological foundation, emphasising God as the self-subsisting act of being.

In classical and medieval metaphysics, God is conceived as a *Necessary being*, that is, a being whose existence is not contingent but cannot fail to be. This stands in contrast to contingent beings, whose existence depends on causes external to themselves. Thomas Aquinas develops this distinction in his argument from contingency, where he maintains that the existence of contingent beings ultimately requires a necessary being as their ground (*Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 3).

Within the Christian theological tradition, this understanding is further expressed in the doctrine of *creation ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing), as articulated in the biblical account of creation (Genesis 1:1–2). However, rather than serving as a direct philosophical demonstration, the scriptural narrative offers a theological affirmation of God as the ultimate source of all that exists.

Nature: Nature may be understood, in a general sense, as the totality of the physical world, encompassing living and non-living entities such as plants, animals, landscapes, and natural processes. However, this definition requires qualification, since the human person, though often distinguished by rationality and culture, is not external to nature but constitutes a unique part of it. As Aristotle observes, the human being is a *rational animal*, thereby situating humanity within the natural order while also acknowledging its distinctive capacities.

Within the Judeo-Christian tradition, the account of creation presents nature as originating through a deliberate and ordered act of God (Genesis 1–2). The narrative portrays the world not as accidental or chaotic but as progressively structured: light is distinguished from darkness, land from water, and living beings emerge according to their kinds. While this account is theological rather than scientific in intent, it expresses the idea of nature as an ordered and intelligible reality, marked by regularity and coherence.

Thus, nature can be understood not merely as inert matter but as a dynamic and structured order in which patterns such as day and night, seasons, growth, and reproduction reflect a certain stability and intelligibility. This understanding underlies the view that the natural world is capable

of sustaining life and can be meaningfully studied and interpreted.

Science Science may be defined as a disciplined and methodical enterprise aimed at the systematic investigation of the natural world through observation, rational analysis, and empirical validation. It seeks not only to describe phenomena but also to establish explanatory principles and, where possible, formulate predictive laws.

While the roots of scientific inquiry can be traced to early human attempts to make sense of natural regularities, science in its proper sense emerges as a structured form of knowledge characterised by methodological rigor and critical reflection. Classical philosophers such as Aristotle contributed significantly to this development by emphasising causal explanation and systematic observation, thereby laying important foundations for later scientific thought.

In its mature form, science is distinguished by its reliance on organised methods of inquiry, including hypothesis formation, experimentation, and verification. It represents a transition from pre-reflective engagement with nature to a more critical and theoretically grounded understanding of natural processes.

and intelligibility. This understanding underlies the view that the natural world is capable of sustaining life and can be meaningfully studied and interpreted.

The Medieval Philosophers' View of the Concepts of God, Nature and Science. Augustine of Hippo

The first major medieval philosopher was Augustine (354–430), who emphasised attaining knowledge through divine illumination and achieving moral goodness by loving God. The details of his life are openly laid out in his autobiography, titled *Confessions*, which even today is considered a classic of world literature. Augustine of Hippo viewed God as the eternal, immutable supreme good and first principle from whom all goodness emerged, superior to the human mind and truth itself, accessible through intellectual ascent and divine illumination. (

(Augustine, 1991, p.173)

Nature, for Augustine, consists of all created things ordered by God "by measure, number, and weight," reflecting divine handiwork in creation, and despite being disrupted through sin through the human nature, it reveals beauty through Divine providence. Augustine affirmed that since the Creator of all things is inherently good, the creatures are also good because they share in the goodness of the creator. Amidst corruption, the creatures still possess an original measure of goodness. (Augustine, 1982, p.173) In addition, Augustine believed that creation occurred simultaneously rather than over six literal days.

In his reflections on knowledge, Augustine of Hippo conceives what would later be called "science" within the broader discipline of *natural philosophy*, which employs reason and sense experience to discern the order present in creation. He distinguishes between *scientia*, the knowledge of temporal and material realities, and *sapientia*, the higher wisdom concerned with eternal and divine truths (*De Trinitate*, XII.14–15). This distinction enables Augustine to maintain a hierarchy of knowledge while acknowledging the legitimacy of empirical inquiry within its proper limits.

Furthermore, Augustine cautions against rigidly literal interpretations of Scripture where such readings conflict with well-established knowledge derived from reason and experience. In *De Genesi ad Litteram*, he argues that biblical texts should not be interpreted in ways that bring the

faith into disrepute among the learned, thereby emphasising the importance of their deeper, spiritual meaning (Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, I.19.39).

Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) conceives God as *ipsum esse subsistens* (subsistent being itself), that is, pure act of being in which essence and existence are identical. God is therefore understood as simple, perfect, infinite, necessary, self-subsisting, and the uncaused first cause of all things. Aquinas presents rational arguments for God's existence in the *Five Ways* (*Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 3) and further develops divine attributes in his treatment of simplicity and perfection (I, qq. 3–4). While he draws upon Aristotle's notion of the *Unmoved Mover*, Aquinas does not merely adopt it but reinterprets it within a Christian metaphysical and theological context.

Furthermore, for Aquinas, in nature, creation occurs *ex nihilo* as God's free act, distinguishing and adorning the universe instantaneously or over six days, with species fixed since origin (*ST I*, qq. 44–74). Creatures are hylomorphic composites of prime matter (pure potency) and substantial form (act), participating in *esse* from God, who conserves them moment by moment (*ST I*, q. 104). Hierarchical order reflects Trinitarian exemplar causes, directing all to divine goodness. In addition, nature represents the created order, sustained continuously by God's providence, comprising essence-existence composites limited by form and matter, with all creatures participating in divine being while ordered hierarchically toward God as their final cause.

For Aquinas, science is a natural philosophy that studies being qua being, motion, and causes within metaphysics, employing Aristotelian methods without contradicting faith (*Comm. on Boethius' De Trinitate* qq. 5–6). Also, reason yields certain knowledge of natures, but revelation supplements for salvation (*ST I*, q. 1, a. 1). Empirical observation and syllogistic demonstration reveal creation's order, subordinated to divine illumination for the intellect. Therefore, science, or natural philosophy, employs reason to investigate changeable beings, their causes, and motions, harmonising with faith since truths from reason and revelation share God as their source, though subordinate to theology. (Waish & Williams, 2010, 457-483)

Ai-Farabi

Al-Farabi (c. 872-950 CE), like Aristotle and Aquinas, conceives God as the First Cause (*al'illah al-Ula*), pure intellect and the First Being, a necessary, immaterial intellect whose essence is identical to existence, emanating the universe eternally through self-contemplation without choice or will. Al-Farabi believed that divine unity and perfection preclude multiplicity or partners, with existence proper only to God, while creatures exist dependently. Also, he affirmed that the knowledge of God arises through metaphysical ascent, distinguishing essence from existence uniquely for the divine.

Nature (*tabi'ah*) for Al-Farabi emerges as a hierarchical cosmos of ten intellects and celestial spheres, generated necessarily by emanation from the First Intellect, increasing in complexity downward to the material world; therefore, it is intelligently and not randomly ordered. AlFarabi believed that natural beings participate derivatively in divine being, ordered hierarchically by necessity, rejecting creation *ex nihilo* for eternal procession. In addition, AlFarabi held that matter and form compose lower natures and are sustained by celestial causation without divine direct intervention.

Al-Farabi viewed science as demonstrative philosophy, reconstructing ancient knowledge. Al-Farabi revived Aristotle's methods of four causes and classified knowledge from logic through metaphysics, with metaphysics studying being qua being and having God as its principle. In addition, Science for Al-Farabi investigates being universally via logic, senses, and intellect, unifying diverse sources for certain truth while subordinating them to metaphysics. (Waish & Williams, pgs. 223-238)

Dunc Scotus

Duns Scotus (1265/66-1308) conceives God in many ways, as an infinite being (*esse infinitum*), the first efficient, final, and eminent cause, proven through a modal argument rejecting infinite regress in essentially ordered causes, with intellect and will, simple yet possessing pure perfections, and univocally predicated (*Ordinatio* I, d.2, q.1; *De primo principio*). For Scotus, Nature comprises finite beings as common natures (*natura communis*), contracted by individuating haecceities, composed of matter and plural substantial forms, contingent and participating in divine infinity by degree without real commonality (*Ordinatio* II, d.3). For Scotus, creation is free, hierarchical, good, and ordered to God as infinite end. Cross, 2002, 23-30) Furthermore, according to Scotus, science, as metaphysics, studies being qua being and the transcendentals (one, true, good) using univocal concepts from natural reason, and from sense abstraction to demonstrate the proofs of God, that is, enabling natural theology without revelation in explaining God. (Cross, 1999, p.39)

Having discussed the individual philosophers' views on God, nature, and science in the Medieval era, it is useful to consider how they worked hand in hand in medieval cosmology.

The Relationship between God, Nature and Science in Medieval Cosmology

In medieval cosmology, the interrelationship of God, nature and science was understood as a single and unified order of reality. Unlike modern conceptions of science that understood it as an autonomous or secular discipline, medieval thinkers understood scientific inquiry as inherently theological (God is the centre of every focus). The study of the natural world was not pursued for purely practical or material ends; rather, it aimed at deepening understanding of God and His creation.

In medieval cosmology, God was understood as the primary cause of all things that exist and the ultimate source of all truth. This means that discoveries attained through human reason and careful observation were ultimately reflections of divine wisdom. While nature functioned through secondary causes established by God, science revealed the stability and coherence of the created world, which in turn testified to the wisdom of the creator. (Grant, 2001, p.48-49) This meant that studying nature through scientific methods was not a challenge to faith but a

confirmation of it. Medieval thinkers, particularly within the scholastic tradition, understood the regularity of nature as grounded in divine rationality. In this view, the order of the natural world reflects the rational structure of God's intellect, through which creation is continuously sustained. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, maintains that all created things participate in the *eternal law* (*lex aeterna*), which is the ordering of all things in the divine mind (*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 93, a. 1-3). On this basis, the so-called "laws of nature" are not independent mechanisms operating apart from God, but expressions of divine governance and providential ordering of the cosmos.

Within this intellectual context, scientific inquiry understood as natural philosophy was regarded as a rational endeavor aimed at discerning the intelligible patterns embedded in creation. Knowledge of nature was therefore not opposed to theology but was seen as a way of reading the rational order instituted by God in the world.

Scientific explanation, therefore, addressed proximate causes within creation while theology addressed ultimate causes beyond creation. (Aquinas, 1947q.105, 5)

This unified framework allowed medieval thinkers to assign distinct but harmonious roles to science and theology. Science, on the other hand, examined how natural phenomena occurred, while theology explained why the universe existed and what its final purpose was. Any apparent conflict between faith and reason was attributed to human misunderstanding and not a real division within truth itself. (Aquinas, 1978,1,a..7)

The relationship between God, nature and science also shaped the medieval understanding of knowledge as morally and spiritually significant. The medieval cosmological vision resisted the separation of the natural and the sacred, presenting the universe as a coherent, intelligible and divinely ordered whole. (Lindberge, 19192, p.88). In addition, to know nature correctly was to acknowledge its dependence on God. Scientific inquiry was therefore seen as an intellectual act that could lead to contemplation of divine wisdom. Thomas Aquinas talked about the complementary relationship between reason and faith, arguing that truth discovered through natural reason could never contradict revelation, since all truth ultimately originates from God.

Every event in the cosmos, from the rotation of the planets to the growth of a tree, was seen during the medieval era as part of a large and purposeful order established by God. The medieval cosmology conceived a world in which God, nature and science were inseparable. This holistic framework ensured that intellectual pursuit, spiritual reflection and practical life were all orientated toward the same transcendent source (God).

After examining the relationship between God, nature, and science in the medieval cosmology, let us now see the Nigerian societal views on the trio, using the cosmology view of the three major ethnic tribes in Nigeria, Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba, and one minor tribe, Efik.

Nigeria's View of the Cosmos: God, Nature and Science

Across many Nigerian cultures, the cosmos is understood as a combined whole in which God, nature and knowledge are inseparable. Within this intellectual context, scientific inquiry understood as natural philosophy was regarded as a rational endeavor aimed at discerning the intelligible patterns embedded in creation. Knowledge of nature was therefore not opposed to theology but was seen as a way of reading the rational order instituted by God in the world.

In contrast to the dominant modern Western tendency to distinguish sharply between scientific inquiry and religious interpretation, many Nigerian worldviews understand the cosmos as fundamentally spiritually grounded and morally ordered. Within this perspective, knowledge of nature is not value-neutral; rather, it is embedded within ethical and religious meanings that shape human responsibility toward the environment. However, this comparison should be handled with caution, as it risks oversimplifying both contexts. The modern Western tradition is not uniformly secular in its understanding of science, nor are Nigerian cosmologies monolithic. Moreover, the two perspectives are not strictly oppositional but represent different historical and epistemic orientations toward reality, each with internal diversity and complexity.

Igbo Cosmology

Drawing on the general conception of African cosmology discussed by John S. Mbiti, the Igbo understanding of the universe presents a reality that is an interconnected whole in which God, spiritual beings, nature and humanity exist in constant relationship. Mbiti explains that the highest level of existence is Chukwu, also known as Chi Ukwu (the Supreme God). Chukwu is believed to be transcendent, all-powerful, and the source of life, but not directly involved in everyday affairs. Instead, Chukwu governs the universe through lesser spiritual beings such as

Alusi (deities) and personal Chi (guardian spirit). (Mbiti, 1969, p, 29)

Nature in Igbo thought is sacred because it is inhabited and animated by spiritual forces. Rivers, forests, hills and farmlands are often associated with specific deities. As a result, human interaction with nature is regulated by moral and religious norms. In addition, farming and land use among the Igbo are closely associated with Ala, the earth goddess who represents fertility and moral order.

What can be described as science in Igbo society appears as practical knowledge acquired through observation of the environment. Mbiti's analysis of indigenous knowledge systems shows that agricultural methods, herbal medicine and environmental management are based on experience and experimentation, yet interpreted within a religious understanding of cosmic order rather than as autonomous technical activity.

Yoruba Cosmology

As E. Bolaji Idowu demonstrates in his systematic study of Yoruba religion, Yoruba cosmology is structured around a supreme God known as Olodumare, who is the ultimate source of existence and destiny. Idowu explains that although Olodumare is transcendent, divine activity in the world is mediated through the Orisa, each associated with cosmic functions and aspects of nature.

Idowu's discussion of nature and divine power shows that rivers, metals, thunder and forests are understood as manifestations of spiritual forces rather than impersonal phenomena. This understanding encourages reverence for nature, and that's why harmony with nature is achieved through balance rather than domination. (Idowu, 1962, p. 34.)

Yoruba indigenous knowledge systems include well-developed practical and empirical understandings that may be described as forms of proto-scientific knowledge. These are evident in areas such as metallurgy, where skilled ironworking and tool production were historically advanced; traditional medicine, which involves the use of herbal pharmacology and empirical observation of healing properties; architecture, reflected in indigenous building techniques adapted to climate and social organization; and time-reckoning, expressed through calendrical systems based on natural cycles, celestial patterns, and agricultural seasons. Together, these domains demonstrate a structured engagement with nature grounded in observation, experience, and cultural interpretation. Skills like ironworking and herbal healing demonstrate careful observation and experimentation with natural processes. However, these practices are not viewed as separate from religion; they are understood as participation in the divine order established by Olodumare.

Hausa Cosmology

According to historical studies of Islam in West African by I. R. Hiskett, Hausa cosmological thought has been deeply shaped by Islamic monotheism since the medieval period. The universe is understood as the deliberate creation of Allah, who is transcendent and sovereign over the natural and moral order. Unlike traditional African cosmological that emphasise multiple spiritual intermediaries, the Hausa-Islamic worldview stresses the direct authority of God.

Furthermore, Hiskett explains that nature, in Islamic thought, is interpreted as a sign of God's wisdom and the regularity of natural processes reflects divine will rather than autonomous natural law. This belief encourages the study of nature, since learning about the world is understood as a way of appreciating divine order. As a result, intellectual pursuits such as astronomy, medicine and mathematics have traditionally been respected. (Hiskett, 1984, p. 112) Scientific knowledge in this context is evaluated morally and religiously. While rational and empirical inquiry is valued, it must remain consistent with divine revelation. Knowledge is meaningful only when it supports moral responsibility and obedience to God, shaping education, governance and social life.

Efik Cosmology

In his comparative analysis of African religious system, Emefie Ikenga-Metuh explains that Efik cosmology is centred on Abasi Ibom, the supreme creator and sustainer of the universe. Abasi Ibom governs the world through lesser spiritual beings who oversee natural and social affairs, reinforcing the belief that human life unfolds within a morally structured universe.

(Metuh, 1987, p.89)

Nature in Efik thought is sacred and morally charged. Land, water and forests are treated with reverence because improper interaction with them is believed to disturb cosmic balance and bring misfortune. This belief encourages restraint, respect and responsibility in human dealings with the environment.

In addition, Efik scientific knowledge is practical and experience-based. Fishing techniques, herbal medicine and ecological practices are developed through engagement with the natural world and transmitted orally across generations. As in other Nigerian traditions, there is no separation between empirical knowledge and spirituality; understanding nature also means understanding one's moral place within the cosmos.

Influence Of Nigeria's Cosmology View On The Lives Of Nigerians.

Across these Nigerian traditions, a shared cosmological outlook is evident. God, nature and science are understood as interconnected dimensions of one reality. Nature is approached with reverence; knowledge is guided by moral responsibility, and human life is seen as part of a larger cosmic order.

Even in contemporary Nigeria, where Western scientific education dominates formal institutions, these traditional cosmologies continue to shape attitudes toward health, the environment and technology. Scientific explanations are often interpreted alongside religious meanings, showing that modern science has been integrated into existing worldviews rather than simply replacing them.

Having observed the Nigerian perspective on the cosmos and its influence on the lives of Nigerians, let us examine the ecological challenges in Nigeria and how they pose threats to the cosmological values.

Ecological Challenges In Nigeria And Their Threat To Cosmological Values.

Ecology is commonly defined as the scientific study of the interactions between living organisms such as plants, animals, and microorganisms and their physical and chemical environments. It examines how these interactions shape the distribution, abundance, and behavior of organisms, as well as the flow of energy and nutrients within ecosystems (Graves, 2024). Ecological challenges, therefore, refer to disturbances or disruptions often human-induced that impair the structure, functioning, and biodiversity of ecosystems.

In the Nigerian context, several ecological challenges are particularly significant, among which include :

Oil Exploitation and Land Pollution

Oil exploitation and land pollution are most severe. Since the discovery of oil in Oloibiri in 1956, petroleum extraction has become central to Nigeria's economy. However, this economic dependence has generated extensive environmental degradation, especially in the Niger Delta region. Oil spills, gas flaring, and improper waste disposal have led to widespread contamination of soil, water bodies, and farmlands. As a result, agricultural productivity has declined, aquatic ecosystems have been destroyed, and communities dependent on fishing and farming have experienced severe livelihood disruption and socioeconomic instability.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report on Ogoniland confirms that oil pollution has caused deep and long-term environmental damage, with soil and groundwater contamination in some areas requiring decades of remediation (UNEP, 2011, p. 83). Beyond its physical and economic effects, this ecological crisis also carries cultural and ethical implications.

From a **Yoruba cosmological perspective**, as well as in several other Nigerian indigenous worldviews, land is not merely a physical resource but a sacred inheritance linked to ancestry, identity, and spiritual continuity. In this understanding, land embodies relational bonds between the living, the ancestors, and the divine order. Consequently, environmental degradation is not only an economic or ecological issue but also a moral rupture that violates the sacred trust between humans, nature, and the spiritual realm (Asouzu, 2007, p. 112). In this sense, ecological harm represents a disruption of both material balance and moral order within the lived cosmological worldview.

Deforestation and Loss of Sacred Groves

Deforestation is another significant ecological challenge in Nigeria. It involves the large-scale clearing of forested areas for activities such as logging, agricultural expansion, urban development, and the collection of fuelwood. Nigeria is widely recognised as having one of the highest rates of deforestation globally, resulting in the continuous loss of substantial portions of its forest cover each year (FAO, 2020). This environmental decline contributes to soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, habitat destruction, and the acceleration of desertification in vulnerable ecological zones.

Beyond its environmental consequences, deforestation also has profound cultural and religious implications, particularly in relation to sacred groves. Sacred groves are traditionally protected

forested areas preserved by various Nigerian communities for spiritual, religious, and cultural purposes. They are often regarded as dwelling places of deities, ancestral spirits, and sites for ritual practices. Studies in African environmental anthropology note that such groves function not only as ecological reserves but also as cultural landscapes that embody indigenous systems of

environmental stewardship (Sowunmi, 2009; Mgbeoji, 2006). Consequently, the destruction of sacred groves through deforestation represents not only an ecological loss but also a disruption of cultural heritage and indigenous cosmological relationships with nature.

Furthermore, the loss of these groves represents a profound cosmological disruption. In African thought, sacred groves function as spiritual centres that maintain balance between the visible and invisible worlds. Their destruction weakens traditional ethical systems that regulate human behaviour toward nature. As scholars note, environmental degradation in Africa often coincides with the erosion of indigenous knowledge systems that once promoted sustainability.

(Tangwa, 1996, 99)

Climate Change and Environmental Instability

Climate change constitutes a growing ecological challenge in Nigeria, manifested in rising temperatures, irregular rainfall patterns, flooding, prolonged droughts, and advancing desertification. These impacts are increasingly evident across different ecological zones: in Northern Nigeria, desert encroachment continues to threaten arable land and livelihoods, while Southern regions experience intensified flooding that damages homes, agricultural land, and critical infrastructure. Such climate-induced disruptions undermine food security, weaken rural economies, and contribute to internal displacement of populations.

In addition, the instability of climatic conditions has begun to disrupt traditional agricultural calendars that were historically aligned with predictable seasonal cycles. This has created uncertainty in farming practices, reduced agricultural yields, and increased vulnerability among subsistence farmers who rely heavily on seasonal patterns for planting and harvesting.

From a cosmological perspective, climate change also carries deeper interpretive significance within many African worldviews. In these perspectives, the universe is often understood as an ordered and relational system in which harmony exists between the heavens and the earth, human beings, nature, and the spiritual realm. When climatic systems become unstable, such disruptions may be interpreted not only as environmental imbalance but also as a sign of disorder within the moral and relational structure of existence. As John S. Mbiti explains, African religious thought is deeply relational, emphasizing harmony between human life, nature, and the spiritual world (Mbiti, 1990, p. 210). Within this interpretive horizon, therefore, climate change is not only a scientific and ecological concern but also a moral and metaphysical challenge that calls into question the balance of the created order.

Urbanisation, Waste, and Environmental Neglect

Rapid urbanisation is another major ecological challenge in Nigeria. The expansion of cities has intensified problems of waste generation and inadequate waste management systems. Poorly managed landfills, plastic pollution, blocked drainage channels, and the open burning of refuse contribute significantly to environmental degradation in urban areas. These conditions not only deteriorate the physical environment but also create serious public health risks, including the spread of disease and increased vulnerability to flooding due to obstructed drainage systems (UN-Habitat, 2020).

From the perspective of African traditional thought, environmental cleanliness is often closely linked with moral and social order. In many indigenous worldviews, a well-kept environment

reflects harmony within the community, while polluted surroundings may symbolize disorder in social relations and ethical responsibility. As John S. Mbiti observes, African communal life is deeply integrated with moral and spiritual values that extend to the natural environment, where human conduct is expected to sustain balance and responsibility within creation (Mbiti, 1990, p. 1–10). Within this interpretive horizon, the neglect of urban environments may be understood as reflecting a weakening of communal responsibility, increasingly replaced by individualistic attitudes and short-term economic priorities.

Interrogating the Nigerian Ecology with the Medieval Cosmology

In the medieval intellectual tradition, cosmology was commonly expressed through a geocentric model, in which the earth was regarded as the centre of the universe, surrounded by celestial spheres arranged in ordered and harmonious motion under divine governance. This model reflected a broader metaphysical vision of a structured and hierarchically ordered cosmos.

When considered analogically, medieval notions of order, hierarchy, and interdependence may offer a suggestive way of thinking about ecological relationships, such as the interdependence among producers, consumers, and decomposers within ecosystems. In this sense, ecosystems can be understood as interconnected systems in which disruption in one component may affect the stability of the whole.

However, it is important to emphasise that the medieval geocentric cosmology itself is scientifically obsolete and cannot be used as a literal explanatory model for contemporary ecological science. While it may retain philosophical or heuristic value as a historical worldview that emphasised order and relationality, its scientific assumptions do not correspond to modern astrophysical or ecological knowledge. Consequently, any ecological application must be strictly analogical rather than empirical, ensuring that contemporary ecological analysis remains grounded in established scientific principles.

Nigeria's Ecological Diversity

Ecology is the study of organisms, the environment, and how organisms interact with each other and their environment. It examines the relationship between living organisms, including humans, and their physical surroundings, seeking to understand the vital connections between plants, animals, and the world around them. An ecologist studies the relationship between living things and their habitats.

“Nigeria's ecology is characterized by three main biomes: the humid tropical rainforest in the south, the savanna woodlands in the central region, and the semi-arid Sahel in the north.” (Federal Ministry of Environment, Nigeria, National Biodiversity, p.12-13). The Niger Delta's wetlands and mangrove forests support biodiversity, including endangered species like the Nigerian-Cameroon chimpanzee. However, rapid urbanization, oil extraction, and agriculture have led to deforestation, soil erosion, and biodiversity loss, threatening ecological stability.

From a medieval lens, Nigeria's ecosystems resemble the sublunar realm, which is dynamic and corruptible. Again, the rainforest's dense canopy could be likened to the Moon's sphere, providing a protective layer, while the savanna's grasslands evoke the Sun's life-giving energy. “Human-induced changes, such as desertification in the north, parallel medieval fears of cosmic disorder, urging a return to harmonious stewardship.” (Mundi, 1619, Book V)

Analogies and Applications

Medieval cosmology's hierarchical structure applies to Nigeria's food webs, where apex predators (e.g., lions in savannas) occupy “higher spheres” dependent on lower levels. The concept of balance suggests that Nigeria's ecology thrives when human activities align with natural cycles, much like the spheres' proportional orbits. For instance, traditional farming practices in the Middle Belt, which rotate crops to maintain soil fertility, echo the medieval ideal of maintaining cosmic harmony through ritual and knowledge.

In practice, this view advocates for sustainable policies: treating Nigeria's ecosystems as a “divine order” could inspire conservation efforts, such as reforestation programs modelled on medieval monastic stewardship of land. “Challenges like climate change-induced droughts could be addressed by viewing them as 'disruptions' to the spheres, promoting adaptive strategies akin to medieval astronomers adjusting models to observations.” (Ptolemy, 1998, Book 1)

Evaluation and Conclusion.

This work has examined the concepts of God, nature, and science through the lens of medieval cosmology, highlighting their relevance to contemporary ecological challenges in Nigeria. By examining the thoughts of Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Al-Farabi, and Duns Scotus, the study has demonstrated that medieval thinkers perceived reality as an ordered whole, grounded in God, sustained by nature, and intelligible through reason. In this worldview, we see science as not opposed to faith but as a means of contemplating divine wisdom through the study of creation.

In addition, the comparison with Nigerian cosmological perspectives with those of the medieval era revealed that traditional African worldviews similarly emphasize the sacredness of nature, communal responsibility, and moral accountability in human interaction with the environment. These shared values show that ecological harmony is deeply connected to how societies understand the cosmos and humanity's place within it.

Furthermore, the ecological challenges facing Nigeria, such as oil pollution, deforestation, climate change, and environmental neglect, represent not only ecological crises but also a breakdown of cosmological values. They reflect a loss of reverence for nature, a weakening of communal ethics, and a shift toward exploitative attitudes that disregard both divine order and intergenerational responsibility.

By interrogating Nigeria's ecological situation through the framework of medieval cosmology, this work has shown that sustainability requires more than scientific and technological solutions. It calls for a recovery of a holistic vision of reality, one that recognizes the interconnectedness of God, nature, and human knowledge. Such a vision encourages stewardship rather than domination, balance rather than excess, and responsibility rather than exploitation.

Finally, the medieval cosmological worldview, when critically adapted, offers valuable philosophical insights for addressing Nigeria's ecological challenges. It reminds humanity that caring for nature is not merely a practical necessity, but a moral and spiritual obligation rooted in the very structure of reality.

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Cosmopolitan Wounds: Race, Mobility, and Ethical Failure in Nigerian Migrant Literature

Clement Oshogwe Mamudu

Department of English and Literary Studies
Igbinedion University, Okada, Nigeria

E-Mail: mamudu.clement@iuokada.edu.ng

ORCID ID: 0009-0006-2359-2194

Abstract

This paper interrogates the structural failures and internal contradictions of liberal universalism through an analysis of "cosmopolitan wounds" in contemporary Nigerian migrant literature. By placing Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, Teju Cole's *Open City*, and Helon Habila's *Travelers* into conversation with the theoretical frameworks of Achille Mbembe, Walter Dignolo, and Judith Butler, the study argues that these narratives perform a decolonial epistemic shift. This shift constitutes a reconstitution of ethical knowing from the position of those whom the dominant cosmopolitan tradition was structurally designed to exclude. The analysis demonstrates how these texts anatomize the racial and historical conditions under which cosmopolitan hospitality fails its own ideals, exposing a necropolitical regime that governs global mobility. Through a reading of the production of racial grammars in Adichie, urban phenomenology in Cole, and the crisis of refugeehood in Habila, the paper contends that Nigerian migrant literature functions as an indispensable site of epistemological production. Ultimately, these works do not merely illustrate theoretical crises but demand a fundamental rebuilding of cosmopolitan ethics grounded in the embodied particularity and lived experience of the migrant subject.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism, Necropolitics, Decoloniality, Nigerian Literature, Racial Economy

Introduction

The figure of the migrant has long occupied a paradoxical position within the architectonics of cosmopolitan thought. Celebrated in the dominant liberal tradition as the privileged embodiment of cross-cultural fluency and world citizenship, the migrant is simultaneously rendered suspect, disposable, and deportable by the very political economies that produce migration as a condition of survival rather than a mode of free self-fashioning. From Immanuel Kant's foundational vision of perpetual peace among a federation of republican states to Martha Nussbaum's elaboration of cosmopolitan moral education in *Frontiers of Justice*, the philosophical tradition has articulated a universalism premised on the shared humanity of all persons, irrespective of national origin or

cultural particularity. Yet this universalism has historically been extended with a selectivity that its own principles cannot justify, and it is the task of contemporary Nigerian migrant literature to anatomize with sustained critical precision the racial, historical, and structural conditions under which cosmopolitan hospitality fails its own most fundamental ideals. Works such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, Teju Cole's *Open City*, and Helon Habila's *Travelers* constitute not merely representations of migratory experience but sustained philosophical interrogations of cosmopolitanism's internal contradictions, exposing what this essay calls its constitutive wounds, by which is meant the structural exclusions that liberal universalism has historically required in order to function.

Theoretical Considerations

To speak of cosmopolitan wounds is to invoke simultaneously the harm inflicted upon migrant subjects by a world order that promises inclusion while enforcing hierarchical exclusion, and the damage done to the theoretical framework itself when it is confronted with the lived realities of race and mobility that it has consistently failed to theorize adequately. The metaphor draws productively on Achille Mbembe's theorization of the Black subject as one constituted through regimes of wounding, dispossession, and differential exposure to death. In *Necropolitics*, Mbembe argues that the sovereign power exercised over colonized and postcolonial populations operates not merely through the biopolitical administration of life that Foucault identified as characteristic of modern governance, but through the more extreme and more nakedly racial power to determine who may live, who must survive on the margins of existence, and who may be left to die without institutional mourning or political consequence (Mbembe 92). When Nigerian migrant writers inscribe their characters within the circuits of global movement, they reveal that cosmopolitan ethics, for all its universalist aspiration, remains structured by what Frantz Fanon identified as the Manichean geography of colonial modernity, a spatial and moral cartography in which the Black body is perpetually positioned as intruder, supplicant, or threat rather than as rightful inhabitant of the shared world that cosmopolitanism claims to envision. The literary texts examined here do not merely illustrate this diagnosis; they theorize it through the formal and aesthetic resources of narrative itself, making literature an indispensable site of epistemological production rather than a secondary reflection of ideas worked out elsewhere.

The scholarly conversation this essay enters is simultaneously rich and radically unfinished. Paul Gilroy's foundational work in *The Black Atlantic* established that diasporic cultural production has always functioned as a critical counter-discourse to the exclusions of both ethnonationalism and liberal cosmopolitanism, generating what Gilroy calls a "black Atlantic" modernity irreducible to either its African origins or its European contexts (Gilroy 15). More recently, Achille Mbembe's *Out of the Dark Night* has extended this analysis by situating African subjectivity within what he terms the planetary condition of Afropolitanism, a mode of worldliness produced through centuries of forced and voluntary mobility that differs fundamentally from the European cosmopolitan imaginary precisely because it was forged in the experience of dispossession rather than conquest. Scholars such as Simon Gikandi and Elleke Boehmer have mapped the specific contributions of African literary modernism to these theoretical questions, tracing the ways in which postcolonial African writing has consistently refused the terms on which metropolitan criticism has sought to receive it. More recent interventions by Madhu Krishnan, whose *Contemporary African Literature in English* examines the global locations and postcolonial

identifications of contemporary African fiction, and Jeanne-Marie Jackson, whose *The African Novel of Ideas* theorizes the philosophical dimensions of African novelistic practice, have pressed these questions further into the political economy of global literary production (Krishnan 14; Jackson 22). This essay advances these conversations by arguing that Nigerian migrant literature performs what Walter Dignolo and Catherine Walsh, in *On Decoloniality*, describe as a decolonial epistemic shift, understood as a reconstitution of the grounds of ethical knowing from the position of those whom the dominant tradition was structurally designed to exclude (Dignolo and Walsh 10).

The Racial Economy of Cosmopolitan Space

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* stages the crisis of cosmopolitan aspiration with characteristic structural intelligence, locating the failure of liberal universalism not in its explicit ideology but in the experiential textures of everyday life through which race is produced as an organising principle of social existence. The novel's protagonist, Ifemelu, embarks on a migration from Lagos to the United States that is framed at the outset as a movement toward the metropolitan centres of cosmopolitan modernity, a movement animated by the familiar aspirational logic through which the global North constructs itself as the destination of legitimate human ambition. What Ifemelu discovers, however, is that this modernity is organised around a racial grammar she was not equipped to read because, in Nigeria, racial difference in the American sense was not the primary axis of her social formation. It is only through the encounter with American racial classification that she is interpellated, to invoke Althusser's vocabulary, into the subject position of Black woman, a position that precedes and overdetermines her individual subjectivity in ways that the cosmopolitan rhetoric of personal merit and cultural openness entirely fails to acknowledge. The novel's most theoretically charged insight is that race is not a pre-given biological fact but a political production, and that the migrant from the African continent must undergo a second formation, a learning of the racial codes of the receiving society, that is itself a form of violence because it demands the substitution of a collectively imposed identity for the particular selfhood the migrant carried across the Atlantic.

Adichie's formal choices are inseparable from this theoretical argument. Ifemelu's blog posts, which punctuate the novel's narrative at strategic intervals and address the experience of non-American Blackness with a directness that the third-person narration cannot always sustain, enact a form of vernacular counter-discourse that refuses the assimilationist logic through which liberal multiculturalism would absorb racial difference into a colour-blind universalism. The blog as form is itself theoretically significant, constituting a vernacular public sphere that operates outside the institutional frameworks through which cosmopolitan discourse is produced and legitimated, accessible to a readership that includes both those who share Ifemelu's experience and those who are implicated in the structures she describes. In this sense, Adichie's text performs what Raewyn Connell, in *Southern Theory*, identifies as the specific epistemological challenge posed by knowledge produced from the global South, understood as a challenge to the foundational assumption that theory travels unidirectionally from metropolitan centres to peripheral recipients, rather than being produced everywhere that human beings encounter the contradictions of their historical situation (Connell 45). Ifemelu's interventions in American racial discourse are not those of the grateful immigrant thankful for inclusion; they are the interventions of a subject who refuses the terms of inclusion itself, insisting that the category of the human cannot be genuinely universal so long as it is administered through a racial hierarchy that determines in advance who counts as

fully human and who does not.

The spatial politics of cosmopolitan failure are developed with a different but equally exacting philosophical density in Teju Cole's *Open City*. Cole's narrator, Julius, is a Nigerian-German psychiatry fellow in New York whose primary mode of engagement with the city is the long urban walk, a practice that functions simultaneously as a narrative technique, an epistemological method, and a form of melancholic historical reckoning. The novel's governing conceit is that the open city, that ostensibly democratic urban space of anonymous encounter and cosmopolitan exchange that theorists from Georg Simmel to Richard Sennett have celebrated as the spatial embodiment of modern freedom, is in fact densely inscribed with histories of violence, racial exclusion, and colonial dispossession that the cosmopolitan imagination requires itself not to see. Julius moves through New York as a figure of apparent cosmopolitan ease, multilingual, culturally and musically literate, professionally integrated, and possessed of a restless intellectual curiosity that the novel presents as simultaneously admirable and ethically compromised. The systematic destabilisation of this ease, which Cole pursues through accumulating juxtapositions of cosmopolitan cultural consumption and the raw material of others' suffering, constitutes the novel's central ethical argument.

Cole's engagement with the structural limits of cosmopolitanism reaches its sharpest articulation through Julius's encounters with other migrants and disenfranchised urban subjects whose situations expose the sharp differential between cosmopolitan mobility as it is experienced by the professional class and as it is endured by those without documentation, without institutional affiliation, and without the cultural capital that converts foreignness into exoticism rather than threat. Julius's conversations with a Haitian couple, a Liberian man facing deportation, and a Moroccan shopkeeper constitute a phenomenological inventory of cosmopolitan failure, presenting instances in which the promise of open encounter is systematically foreclosed by the material conditions of immigration enforcement, racial profiling, and economic precarity. What Cole renders with particular formal precision is the gap between Julius's capacity for cultural and intellectual empathy and his failure of ethical solidarity with those whose situation demands more than appreciation. When Saidu, the Liberian man detained by immigration authorities, recounts his experiences of flight and detention and the prospect of forced return to a country devastated by civil war, Julius's response is characterised by an aesthetic distance that Cole presents not as personal coldness but as a structural incapacity of the cosmopolitan formation Julius embodies. The novel's most devastating critique is not of individual callousness but of a cosmopolitan culture that trains its subjects in the appreciation of difference while leaving the ethical demand of genuine political solidarity systematically unaddressed.

Mobility, Necropolitics, and the Ethics of Witness

If Adichie and Cole engage cosmopolitan failure through the registers of racial formation and urban phenomenology respectively, Helon Habila's *Travelers* confronts it through the more acute and less aesthetically mediated crisis of contemporary refugeehood. Published in 2019, at a moment when the so-called European migration crisis had made the Mediterranean a site of mass death and the political management of African displacement a central fault line of global politics, *Travelers* is structured around the interconnected testimonies of African migrants in Europe, bringing to the surface what the other texts examined here tend to treat in more oblique registers, namely the nakedly necropolitical dimension of contemporary migration governance. Habila's

Europe is not the site of cosmopolitan promise but of a managed system of abandonment in which African lives are rendered expendable by the administrative machinery of what critical migration scholars have called fortress Europe. The structural violence of detention, deportation, and the deliberate policy of allowing unseaworthy vessels to founder in international waters is presented not as an aberration from cosmopolitan values but as their logical expression under conditions of global inequality.

Habila draws extensively on the testimonial tradition of migrant life-writing, embedding within the novel's polyphonic structure a series of first-person accounts that resist the aestheticisation of suffering which critics such as Stef Craps, in *Postcolonial Witnessing*, have identified as a persistent risk in literary and critical engagements with atrocity and displacement (Craps 32). The testimonial mode is not deployed here for its affective power alone; it functions as an epistemological insistence on the particularity of individual experience against the abstraction through which migration discourse, including its liberal humanitarian variant, tends to reduce displaced persons to a homogeneous mass of vulnerability. Each migrant in Habila's novel carries a specific history, a specific set of political and economic circumstances that produced their displacement, and the novel's formal commitment to individuating those histories is itself an ethical argument against the generalisations that make the mass death of African migrants politically tolerable to European publics.

The novel's narrator, himself a Nigerian academic on a fellowship in Germany, occupies an ambivalent position that Habila deploys with considerable structural sophistication. This figure, educated, documented, institutionally affiliated, and in possession of the cosmopolitan credentials that the global academy bestows, benefits from the very freedom of movement that is denied to the undocumented migrants whose stories he collects and whose suffering he witnesses at a safe remove. His cosmopolitan privilege is precisely what enables him to move freely through the spaces where others are detained, deported, or drowned, and Habila refuses to allow this irony to remain merely implicit. The academic's fellowship, his passport, and his institutional identity are revealed as instruments of a global stratification that the language of cosmopolitan openness actively obscures. In staging this structural complicity, the novel performs what Judith Butler, in *Frames of War*, theorizes as a critical intervention into the differential distribution of grievability, understood as the politically organised and racially structured disparity between those lives whose loss is publicly mourned and those deaths that pass without institutional acknowledgement, without media coverage, and without the political weight that comes from being recognised as a life that mattered (Butler 25). Habila's formal insistence on naming, historicising, and individualising his migrant characters is a sustained act of counter-framing, a refusal of the visual and discursive regimes through which African migrant deaths are rendered statistically legible but humanly invisible.

Mbembe's concept of necropolitics illuminates with particular force the structural logic that *Travelers* sets out to expose. Where liberal political theory, following Foucault, has understood modern governance primarily through the category of biopower, understood as the administration of population health, productivity, and reproductive capacity in the service of national development, Mbembe argues that the colonial and postcolonial management of racialised populations has always involved the more extreme exercise of what he calls the right to expose to death, which is the power to withdraw the protections of governance and leave certain populations to die as a matter of deliberate political calculation (Mbembe 92). The contemporary Mediterranean is a theatre of precisely this power, being a space in which the legal and

humanitarian obligations of European states toward persons in distress are systematically evaded through a combination of maritime law manipulation, the outsourcing of border enforcement to Libyan militias, and the political criminalisation of non-governmental rescue operations. Habila's novel insists that this is not a failure of cosmopolitan values but their expression under the conditions of actually existing global capitalism, in which the free movement of goods and finance is sacrosanct while the movement of African bodies is subject to a regime of violent containment.

Decolonising Cosmopolitan Ethics

The cumulative force of the ethical diagnoses offered by these three literary texts demands a response that goes beyond critique toward what Mignolo and Walsh, in *On Decoloniality*, describe as the epistemic work of the decolonial option, understood as the active construction of alternative modes of knowing, being, and relating that do not simply invert the hierarchies of colonial modernity but reconstitute the very grounds on which ethical life is understood to be possible (Mignolo and Walsh 10). Nigerian migrant literature participates in this reconstitution by insisting on what might be called an ethics of embodied particularity, which involves a thoroughgoing refusal of the abstract universalism that characterises the dominant cosmopolitan tradition in favour of a sustained attention to the specific, raced, gendered, and historically situated bodies through which global mobility is materially experienced. This is not a retreat into particularism or cultural relativism; it is a demand that universalism earn its name by genuinely accounting for the particular lives it claims to encompass, rather than simply projecting the experience of a racially and economically privileged minority onto the screen of humanity as such.

This ethics of embodied particularity is theorized in Adichie's novel through Ifemelu's gradual and hard-won elaboration of a counter-cosmopolitan sensibility, one grounded not in the transcendence of particular identities but in their critical inhabitation and strategic mobilisation. The novel's ending, in which Ifemelu returns to Lagos after her years in the United States, has been read by some critics as a retreat from cosmopolitan engagement, a reversion to a cultural nationalism that the novel's earlier energy seemed to have surpassed. Such a reading, however, entirely misses the theoretical weight of Adichie's gesture. The return is not a renunciation of global consciousness but a refusal to accept that such consciousness requires the sacrifice of African particularity, the continuous performance of cultural translation for a metropolitan audience that constitutes the unspoken condition of the African writer's cosmopolitan legibility. As Simon Gikandi has argued with characteristic precision, the African literary text occupies a peculiar and structurally constrained position in the global literary economy, where it is expected to translate African experience into forms legible to metropolitan readers while simultaneously claiming a universal relevance that the literary marketplace reserves for texts produced at the centre, and it is the most theoretically and aesthetically sophisticated African writers who refuse this double bind by insisting on the irreducible specificity of their cultural formations as itself a form of universal address (Gikandi 319).

Cole's Julius offers a more troubled and philosophically less resolved version of this counter-cosmopolitan possibility. His cosmopolitan ease is persistently undercut by moments of ethical failure that the novel refuses to redeem through retrospective insight or moral growth. His inability to sustain genuine solidarity with Saidu, his aestheticisation of the historical violence inscribed in New York's built environment, and his cultivation of ironic detachment as a habitual response to the suffering his walks bring him into contact with are none of them simply condemned by the

novel, but none is exculpated either. What *Open City* offers instead is a precise anatomy of the cosmopolitan intellectual's structural incapacity, a demonstration that the formations of knowledge, taste, and professional identity through which figures like Julius are produced are not incidental to their ethical failures but constitutive of them. In this sense, the novel performs what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, in *The Undercommons*, describe as the fugitive knowledge produced at the margins of institutional belonging, a knowledge that indicts simultaneously the liberal university, the professional-managerial class, and the cosmopolitan public sphere as sites in which the appearance of critical thought is systematically substituted for the more demanding and more dangerous practice of genuine solidarity (Moten and Harney 28). Julius has been trained in every form of cultural and intellectual appreciation except the one that matters most, which is the capacity to recognise in the suffering of those structurally unlike himself an ethical claim that his cosmopolitan formation has equipped him to deflect rather than to meet.

What unites these three works, despite their significant formal and thematic differences, is a shared and structurally consistent insistence that cosmopolitan ethics, if it is to deserve the name, must be rebuilt from the lived experience of those it has historically excluded. This rebuilding requires, in the first instance, the kind of honest and theoretically rigorous accounting of cosmopolitanism's racial and colonial genealogy that these literary texts provide. It requires also a fundamental reconception of the moral community that cosmopolitan ethics claims to address, one that does not begin by abstracting from the material conditions of global inequality in order to posit a community of rational equals, but that begins precisely with those conditions and asks what genuine ethical relation would look like from within them. Seyla Benhabib, in *The Rights of Others*, argues for what she terms democratic iterations, understood as the reappropriation and contextual renegotiation of cosmopolitan norms through the political practices of subaltern actors, a process through which universal principles are progressively extended toward their own most demanding implications (Benhabib 45). The literary texts examined here perform something analogous to Benhabib's democratic iterations, but with a critical radicalism that her liberal framework consistently stops short of. They do not merely press existing cosmopolitan norms toward their unfulfilled implications; they expose the structural exclusions that make those norms possible in their current form and demand a transformation so fundamental that the resulting ethical framework may no longer be recognisable as cosmopolitanism in any of its received senses.

The question of form is inseparable from this argument, and it matters that these interventions are made through literature rather than through philosophy or political theory, not simply because literary form reaches a wider audience or renders abstract ideas more accessible, but because the ethical claims these works advance are inseparable from the specific formal and aesthetic strategies through which they are made. The testimonial polyphony of *Travelers*, the blog's vernacular counter-theory in *Americanah*, and the ironic juxtapositions of cultural literacy and ethical failure in *Open City* each enact a specific epistemological argument that cannot be adequately paraphrased in the discursive language of philosophical prose without significant loss. Literature is not a delivery mechanism for ideas developed elsewhere; it is a mode of knowing that produces insights unavailable to other disciplinary formations. The Nigerian migrant writers examined here exploit this capacity to the full, making their texts not merely objects of theoretical analysis but active participants in the theoretical conversation they stage.

Conclusion

Nigerian migrant literature, as exemplified with particular force by the works of Adichie, Cole, and Habila, constitutes one of the most philosophically searching and formally sophisticated engagements with the promises and structural failures of cosmopolitan thought produced in the contemporary moment. Reading these texts through the theoretical lenses furnished by Mbembe's necropolitics, Mignolo's decolonial epistemology, Butler's ethics of precariousness, and Gilroy's theorization of diasporic counter-modernity, this essay has argued that these works perform a sustained interrogation of the racial economy that structures cosmopolitan space, the necropolitical governance of migrant mobility, and the epistemological exclusions that have historically defined the boundaries of cosmopolitan subjecthood. The wounds that these texts anatomize are not merely the wounds of individual characters navigating hostile social environments. They are the constitutive wounds of a theoretical tradition that has promised universal ethical inclusion while systematically delivering racially and economically stratified exclusion, a tradition whose internal contradictions have been most devastatingly exposed not by its philosophical critics but by the African writers whose lived experience it cannot accommodate.

The critical force of these literary works lies precisely in their refusal of consolation, their resistance to the redemptive narrative arcs through which literature is conventionally expected to transform suffering into wisdom and critique into affirmation. They do not offer a reformed or chastened cosmopolitanism as the solution to cosmopolitanism's failures; they demand a more radical and more uncomfortable reckoning with the structures of global inequality that make migration a condition of survival for millions while celebrating it as a mark of cultural sophistication for the privileged few. In this demand, they anticipate and in certain respects exceed the most searching critiques offered within academic philosophy and political theory, demonstrating with compelling force the unique epistemic capacity of literary form to hold in productive and unresolved tension the theoretical and the experiential, the systemic and the embodied, the historical and the immediate, the wound and the will to survive it. Cosmopolitan ethics, if it is to develop any genuine claim to the universality it has always asserted, must begin not with the abstract philosophical figure of the rational world citizen but with the concrete historical figure of the migrant whose existence, in its precarity and its resistance, its suffering and its epistemological richness, constitutes both the most searching indictment of the world as it is and the most compelling argument for the world that might yet be possible.

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Women as Agents of Political Change and Social Governance: A Critical Analysis of Eweya, Isoko Women's Group of West Africa

Isoken E. Onoyona-Ekeocha (PhD)
Lagos State University
ekeochasoky@gmail.com
+234-802-951-1799

Abstract

Women deal with patriarchy, gender restrictions and social expectations, African women confront poverty, child bearing and sometimes help in bread winning, this happens despite the categorization of women as weaker sex. Additionally, Isoko women encounter gerontocracy, a system of government and social order that dictates, not just men but elders' rule. *Eweya* is Isoko women organization, where they come together to deliberate on personal and social issues. Through *Eweya*, Isoko women circumnavigate gender concerns, and confront social agency to achieve social relevance. *Eweya's* ontological activism enables women to achieve social change, as they deploy the cosmic force of justice, to scale obstacles, become stake holders, and achieve self-actualization. This paper used the framework of *Ubuntu*, Bantu theory of force and *Nguni* notions of togetherness to interrogate *Eweya*. The objective is to examine Isoko women's ontologico-communal approach that helps them navigate gerontocracy, it critically analyses how Isoko women bridge the gender concerns, and confront agency, to attain social relevance. The paper employed literature review, ethnographic debates and critical elucidations. It recommends and concludes that women can continue to replicate ontologico-communal activism, by employing their body as a tool of social change. It advocates that women stimulate their nature for social intervention and active restoration. As *Eweya*, and other women organization understand the force of body not for objectification, sexuality and gaze, but as a means of restorative social change and progressive development in Africa.

Keywords: *Eweya. Women-activism. Isoko. Body. Gerontocracy*

Introduction

Western philosophy and researchers explore and study the human body in many ways. The mind and body theories spiral into debates about body as performance, body as an object of the gaze and body as an expression of sexuality. But for many Southern and indigenous people, bodies, particularly, women's body serves other purposes, with different approach, as a means of influence. Though, socio-cultural and patriarchal notions make it difficult for women to be without her birth family and husband, yet the problem with this socio-cultural setting means that they must find other ways and means of existence.

When navigating issues that confront women, Isoko women have several approaches, they

navigate family support through division of labor (Ekeocha 2021) and deal with patriarchy, gerontocracy and eldership rule as their lived experiences. *Eweya* Isoko women group is a machine through which women air their voices and compel other agencies to pay attention, by listening to their concerns. Through *Eweya*, women influence men and demand policy changes and agency intervention. This happens through the consciousness of cosmic justice, the belief in ontological bodies and the consequences of disturbing social harmony. The lived experiences of indigenous people show women's approach to be effective, as many dread this method of women activism. Thus, the need to explore this type of women organizations for impact, and necessarily interrogating the significance of indigenous people view of women's body, for its metaphysical significance of how women can explore togetherness for growth, influence and development.

During general gathering Isoko women do not have a voice, they air their views through interpreters, *Otota*. This cultural requirement means the spokesperson helps with negotiation and exchange of ideas. In this view, indigenous women employ the power of togetherness to make their voices heard, participate and become stake holders. Other studies indicate that indigenous women contribute to the survival of our communities (Lawrence, Bonita, and Anderson, 2005). Women's grouping creates a sense of belonging, encouraging interactions and social relationship. Thus, such indigenous interest grouping has the capacity of evolving into political parties, feminists' movements, and rights organizations. Hence, external women's organizations often connect with such groups to promote empowerments, female social and political leadership. Additionally, (Lawrence, et al 2005) explores the ways and practices of indigenous women group, their influence and development, including how women groups were appropriated and reinterpreted. Showing that women's lived experiences evolve from their understanding and respect for the cultural particularities of indigenous communities.

As social agents, *Eweya* engage with their capacity to produce changes in the lives of women. Their method is similar to Bantu theory of force; this is Isoko notions of cosmic justice. In this wise, *Eweya* challenge injustice, confront abuse of power, and deal with poor governance. This cultural view is embedded in ontologico-comunalist approach to bodies, as force in togetherness. In a similar view, *Nguni* the theory of 'togetherness' enables *Eweya* to mobilize other women to collective action and political resistance.

This research is significant and relevant for its contribution to knowledge, particularly, the different approach to women's body, not just for sexuality but as means of influence, tool of social change, that attracts respect and dignity. In this way, *Eweya* and such women organizations serve as a tool of checkmating government excesses. It demands accountability, and compels men to listen. *Eweya*, when strategically structured can contribute positively to political reforms and social change in Africa.

The Ubuntu Theory of Force and Isoko Notions of Cosmic Justice

Ubuntu, a theory made popular in Bantu philosophy by Placid Temples, is the philosophy that emphasizes the relationship between everything in the universe. The theory indicates that existence of everyone and everything is interconnected and interrelated. The theory emphasizes community, and mutual respect, insisting that "I am because we are." Ubuntu applies to morality, social acts, and organizing forces for stability, reconciliation, and shared humanity. Many scholars researching the theory found interrelations with like indigenous theories, hence Ubuntu is a deeply-held African notion, which ideals extends to personhood and being, rooted with others. In application Ubuntu recognizes that every individual's behavior has a cause and effect (Mbigi,

1997) identifies solidarity, survival, compassion, respect, and dignity as the five fundamental values of Ubuntu.

Following from Bantu theory of force, is *Nguni* “I am because we are.” While Ubuntu stresses that a person's humanity is critical to the existence of others and nature. It does not support the contemporary view of aloneness but aims to bridge the gap of inequities, by eliminating discrimination and injustice in the ecosystem. *Nguni*, stresses that a person's humanity is bound up with the community, insisting that everyone's well-being depends on the well-being of others. In practice, Ubuntu means caring for one another, sharing resources, and showing moral responsibility as collective value rather than purely individual attainment, an ontologico-communalism.

In this wise, when properly examined, the Bantu notion and its Ubuntu expression, rightly relates and connects with Isoko view about the force of cosmic justice. This Ontologico-communalism, is an aspect of *Eweya* movement that is guided by communal duty and solidarity, not just abstract rights, but addressing social concerns and seeking change through communal responsibility rooted in Ubuntu. The Bantu worldview, is a theory much explored amongst African scholars and it continues to be relevant for indigenous discourses that “everything in the universe is seen to be a vital force by Bantu “(Weidtmann, 2019). Accordingly, essences from Bantu world view shows that “force is the nature of being, force is being, being is force” (Temples, 1969) thus, the view that force as the basis of African ontology.

Progressively, indigenous African researchers and scholars connect with the Bantu theory, for its diverse expressions in their cultural notions, they defend the vital force theory of the meaning of life. For instance, (Agada, 2023) explores vital force focusing on the transcendentalist dimension'. He examines the naturalistic account of meaning but insisting that “the naturalistic framework also compromises the transcendentalist framework of vitalism”. Again, Ndumiso, (2017) explores Ubuntu as lived and living philosophy of the indigenous people, indicating Ubuntu-inspired movements in the history of the wars of resistance and the struggle for liberation ongoing 'since 1652.' There are several explains of indigenous people activating the theory during war and for effective influence.

Again, when it comes to interconnectivity of humans and the naturalistic framework, Isoko people hold the same view strongly, and Isoko women know how initiate nature reaction, showing a similarity and the unconscious allusion to Bantu philosophy, Ubuntu and through the notion of cosmic justice. Here women intentionally act in ways that deter others from acts that disrupt social harmony, with dire repercussions. *Eweya*, Isoko women's groups understand the consequences of turning a blind eye to social ills committed by others, individuals, community agencies. Hence, for Isoko women, to reduce the impact of cosmic repercussion, women stand in the gap to resolve such provocative actions, like abominations.

Though, women activism and organization encounter resistance, undauntedly, many still dare, Willaim, (1993) reviews the difficulty that women encounter in these interventions, since their societies has a contrary view of women, and what women should be doing, he explains that “feminists/womanist connection” are neither smooth nor free of tension, even as they have not developed a standard method of resolving those issues. The research shows that indigenous women have different approach to such socioc-cultural matters, and this is true for many women organisations like *Eweya* and other women organisations dealing with cultural challenges and gender obstacles.

Historical and Cultural Foundations for Femaleness in Isoko

The idea of femaleness could be argued from the theory of nature, or psychology depending on the individual who is expressing the idea and their lived experiences. While cultural views impact on lived experiences, people's convictions can hardly be separated from those cultures. For instance, many people have strong convictions about gender, they have a clear perspective of gender roles and role plays. The belief is that femaleness is always natural, however, new debates about psychology of gender subscribe to gender training. Argument and the debates about gender and “theories of performance” nature are some justifications for the second position. In this discourse (Butler, 2013) and other scholars like (Brickell, 2003) indicates that performing roles includes gender categories, associated traits, and the subjective nature in the performance of gender, including the “mimetic aspects of gender performance”. Clearly gender performative theories show that gender characteristics can easily be taught. However, it is

unresolved whether performance equals nature. There are clear aspects of gender and nature that would not be easily manipulated just by performance, (Linke, 1992) alludes to notions like manhood, femaleness and reproduction. Naturally only those who were females have the capacity of conception and birthing children, just like only natural men have the capacity to produce sperm. And, this aspect has been accompanied with the cultural beliefs of the capacity of women and the place of women. It's a metaphysical and ontological belief that science and social agency cannot change by allusion, believing or performance.

Therefore, to understand Eweya approach to society requires and understanding of Isoko view of the genders, particularly women. A historical review of 'the making of an Isoko woman' necessitates research into their cultural beliefs and lived experiences. Isoko people, located in the Delta Region of West Africa, in Nigeria. Ikime, (2005) an agrarian society, involved in fishing and farming. just like many indigenous African societies located in the Niger Delta region, Ekeocha, (2021) explains that Isokos believe in strict gender categories and operates firm lines, here have and know their place, from birth. Ekeocha further points to the practice of division of labor. This indigenous practice means that men have tasks assigned to them and women have theirs too. In this culture, women constantly share bread winning roles with their husbands. Traditionally, women farmed their lands and men engage in hunting or fishing. Both bring home their loot or rewards of their labour, and put everything together, for wholesome meals.

Isoko women accomplish co-breadwinning along with other task assigned to their femaleness. However, these women do not always play the scripts, as they circumvent patriarchy and elder's rule Onoyona-Ekeocha (2025). Gerontocracy, is the system of government where the oldest people in the society rule, this elderly approach bestows the place of governance to elders, and men. (Agba, 2020) explains further that “Gerontocracy is leadership that is strongly based on

seniority derived from age”. He confirmed that in this system of government, old people or group elderly govern the community for the greater good of the community. Agba believes that age and elderhood owe from the notions of elder siblings caring for the younger ones. Thus, kinship compels such practice in some communities. Elders rule is accepted as ideal, assuming that it equals to good leadership. However, when elders act erroneously, they are called to order, by others, particularly women. In this vein, political leadership amongst Isokos is largely male and elder's forte. Undeniably leadership by elderly citizens is a common feature in African countries, but Isoko is among the few African cultures where the practice is indigenous. Deductively, these indigenous women have a lot of socio-economic and political situations hurdles to cross, as co-breadwinners, leadership by men and elders. And where their voices could only be heard through

interpreters.

In this culture men flaunt their masculinity, *Oza* is the Isoko word for man, and as it attains in other indigenous African cultures, the idea of masculinity is a very strong notion amongst Isoko; its form of identity is being researched, as it pertains to transition and transgenderism. (Ekeocha, 2021) explains that *Oza* amongst Isoko, is expressed as the alfa male, with all its attributes and characters traits. She claims that being called a man is a thing of pride, which explains why, a boy quickly takes on the label, referring to himself as '*Oza*' man at every slightest chance he gets. Ekeocha indicates that *Oza* gladly rub their masculinity on the face of women. While *Oza* is easily attainable, *Aye*, woman does not come easy, it is not bestowed, it is a process.

For Isoko, the criteria for being called a man is a boy's penis, but the qualification, *Aye*, has social conditions, requirements and rites of passage, before girls can be labelled as women. The passage of rites usually happens during marriage, when circumcision takes place, and bridal rites fulfilled. Hence, while nature confers manhood, it is agency confirms womanhood. *Aye*, womanhood implies circumcision rite, paid bride price, and dowry. In this culture, bride price is different from dowry. Cultural beliefs indicates that bride price, one the one hand, compensates the bride's family for losing her labor, it reimburses the bride's family for her upbringing and loss of her service. On the other hand, dowry is an investment made on the new bride's household, for financial support and security. However, Isoko women have two existences, one as girls growing up, the other evolving as a woman. This lived experience of those who did meet these cultural requirements, is the loss of self-esteem, another cultural hurdles. Yet, through *Eweya*, women overcome limitations. Thus, examining *Eweya's* method is critical to understanding 21st century women approach to their socio-cultural and political world.

The Ontological of Nakedness in Cosmic Justice.

African womanist theories subscribe to women connection to nature, theories that combine material and metaphysical body for identity. In this wise (Ekeocha, 2021) explores identity theories by reviewing the two main positions, John Locke's memory or psychological theory popularly known as the mind theory of identity, and, body theory of identity, where (Fearn, 2005) explores John Perry stance that the soul could not be responsible for personal identity through time, subscribing to this notion, is William Bernard's view that 'we identify more closely with our bodies than our minds'. (Fearn, 2005) concludes that both mind and body were necessary for identity through time. Again, this believe in the significance of mind and body for identity, is similar to Isoko culture views.

In Isoko cultural view, both mind and body are important for identity, and this is supported by the cultural belief that elders don't die, they pass from the material world to immaterial, thus body has material and immaterial existence. It is this view that explains Isoko women's identifying with their bodies, which becomes a tool of activism. The act of employing ontological notion of

body for certain function is common amongst several African cultures; this is the case when they consider the popular Bantu theory of force, where everything is connected, in this view, it becomes difficult for indigenous people to draw a line between mind and body, as their beliefs show the interconnections and intertwining of both.

There are several feminist theories that can explain Isoko women approach to their bodies, being and womanhood. According to (Dove, 1998), African womanism is "An afrocentric theory" that portray nature of care and concern of women. She observes that despite the general experience of

women living in negative relationships with men, women were able to deal with their being and mode of existence without rancor or negative emotions. In this view, indigenous women move on to employing what they have to achieve what they want, which evolves into building their homes, their lives and the lives of others. This is the case for Isoko women, and other women as they accept their socio-cultural status, and scale navigate obstacles to achieve existence. Nah Dove insists that women were deliberate in ensuring the survival of their loved ones.

Thus, in this narrative, sustaining families is the forte of many indigenous women, just like *Eweya*. Isokos, view persons ontologically, who cross from human world to the world of elders. Yet, without physical bodies, their ontological nature is still potent, particularly, when intervention is required. These are the cultural beliefs and values that underpin *Eweya* as a women's institution. Clearly, navigating the male-dominated political institutions in this culture helps them build survival traits. This means that they have capacity to act beyond the normal expectations of women.

Western scholars who study women institutions agree that women operate in male dominated spheres (Galea, Natalie, and Chappell, 2022), navigating “Male-dominated workplaces and the power of masculine privilege”. In conclusion, “overrepresentation of men is linked to

gendered rules that uphold hegemony. However, with Isoko women, such oppressive masculinity explains the evolutions of survival traits, characters that means that women are part breadwinners, as they were more focused on the sustenance of their children (Onoyona-Ekeocha, 2026). This happens along with their concern for cosmic harmony. They act to rectify or restore the state of harmony, when there has been a violation. Therefore, women activism that employs the metaphysical bodies this way, has little to do with the 'gaze' (Snow, 1989).

In these wise, indigenous women also deal with the gaze, but they manipulate the gaze to influence change. This is the case, though their kind of attraction means discomfort for men. As many cannot dare the gaze of women, since body nakedness is employed to fighting oppression. This happens as men understand that kind of nakedness, the cultural beliefs about the sacredness of other women's body. This gaze does not produce desire, it is abominations. In conclusion, as a co-creator with nature, women, particularly African women's belief systems enable them to employ nakedness to provoke cosmic reaction. Ontologically, therefore, women taking off their wrappers could mean transformation, restoration and sustainable African socio-political terrain.

Critical Analysis

Following from the above debates, it is clear that *Eweya* is a force to be reckoned with. Thus, instead of women activating their sex and sexuality to distract, Isoko women and other indigenous women employ bodies for activism. In this wise, *Eweya* and other indigenous women groups like *Umuada*, become agents of social change and political Governance. Therefore, those who believe that this method is archaic are wrong, many are not familiar with this form of women activism because it is not a common practice, but when it is activated, people take notice. Like *ubuntu* and *Nguni* where everything is connected, the indigenous idea of cosmic justice, could not be easily be forgotten or wiped away by Western philosophies, those who believe in it, understand its associate metaphysical force, like many African politicians who employ metaphysical forces to gain political control, thus it is only fair to remind them of the other side of the power and control.

Thus, *Ngunni* serves as a two-edged sword with positive and negative side. Hence, women cannot turn a blind eye to injustice. Other documented movement like Wangari Mathai, Umuada, and the

popular Aba Women's War confirms the nakedness approach. For instance, Wangari Maatha movement of the 90s helped the fight against the oppressive one-party rule. And, Wangari Maatha continued this movement, in agitation for environmental conservation and against grabbing of public land. Maatha's view and Eweya's approach reveal that women activism could serve as models of gender-inclusive governance, aligning with African feminist or political theory frameworks. These indigenous notions embrace sensitivity to social harmony and political justice, emphasizing concepts like Fairness, equality, and impartiality. Therefore, using ontological bodies for protest, is commendable as the fear of retributive justice, becomes a deterrent against corruption and other negative issues in African socio-polity. Conclusively, nakedness and vulnerability as a means to attaining social change, has been proven historically and culturally to be effective, hence incorporating this approach in African womanist theories would be commendable. as naked protest serves as a critical philosophy of justice. This framework is significant for the philosophical, and socio-political African societies in redefining body perceptions, and the purpose of female bodies.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Clearly *Eweya* serves as an example of indigenous women organizations in African, despite the obstacles and limitations, women are not weak. Through nakedness more women organisations should become watch dogs. The belief in the *Ubuntu*, *Nguni* and Isoko force of cosmic justice, clearly demonstrates that women who understand their nature, and employ it to nurture their worlds, are indeed saviours and the hope of salvation for sustainable and progressive African societies.

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Effects of Visual Aids on the Achievement of Persons with Hearing Impairment in Mathematics in Special School, Hadejia, Jigawa State, Nigeria

Prof Sa'idu Shu'aibu
Department of Science and Technology Education,
Faculty of Education, University of Jos
saidushuaibu@gmail.com
08035715530

Haruna Inusa, Ibrahim
Department of Education,
Faculty of Education,
Federal University Dutse
harunaibrahimlamma@gmail.com
07031599332

Mudashir Issa, Sulyman
Department of Educational Foundations,
Faculty of Education, University of Jos
mudashirsulymanissa@gmail.com
07069051184

Abstract

This study examined the effects of visual aids on the achievement of persons with hearing impairment in mathematics in special school, Hadejia Jigawa State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two research objectives, two research questions and two null hypotheses. A Quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test non-equivalent design was adopted in the study. The population of the study consisted of 274 students, comprising both female and male, out of which a total of 35 students were sampled using purposive sampling technique. Data for the study were collected using Mathematics Achievement Test and analysed statistically using descriptive statistics (frequencies, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (independent t-test). The Major findings revealed among others, that a difference existed in the mean scores of students before and after exposure to treatment. A high magnitude of positive effect of visual aids on the achievement of students in mathematics was recorded. Also, the analysis of the results revealed that, there was no significant different between the male and female students achievement in the experimental group. Some recommendations were made, among which that the teachers should take into cognizant, the use of visual aids while teaching Mathematics to students with hearing impairment as this can improve Students' achievement in the subject.

Keyword: *visual aids, persons with hearing impairment, achievement in mathematics and special school*

Introduction

The world today is witnessing rapid growth and development in technology, as such; students were groomed with mathematical knowledge in order to function in technological society. Mathematics is a subject that equipped students with essential knowledge of science and technology and enables them to solve a practical problem that involves arithmetic. National Mathematics Advisory Panel, (2020) viewed Mathematics as something that an individual used daily because it affects human life in all ramifications.

In Nigeria, people used mathematical knowledge in all their daily transactions. Due to the relevance of Mathematics in the life of an individual, it has occupied a central position in the school curriculum and remained a core subject from basic classes to secondary level of education. The importance of Mathematics in the curriculum is borne out of the role it plays in national development. Dauda (2014) consider Mathematics as the important subject not only from the points of view of getting an academic qualification in tertiary institutions, but it is also a subject that prepares students for the future regardless of the work the person will do in life. Mefor (2014) summarizes it all by saying that Mathematics is connected to daily life and everybody's lifelong planning. Mathematics is an indispensable subject in education and human life. Simply because, one cannot function effectively in the society without the knowledge of Mathematics and the economic development of a given nation depends largely on it.

In Nigeria, the government has confirmed the importance of Mathematics by making it a core and compulsory subject at junior and senior secondary levels (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2004). Despite all the efforts put in developing an acceptable general Mathematics curriculum, students' achievement appeared to be declining over the years (Shitu, 2015). The poor achievement of students in Mathematics hindered the realisation of the objectives of mathematics education, could it be because of the schools' locations as argued by some scholars? Shitu, (2015) reported in a study that students in urban area performed below those in rural area because the educational institutions in urban share common features of learning impediments such as reading retardation, high absenteeism, drug abuse, students' vandalism, apathy and overcrowding in a class account for the cause of poor achievement of students in Mathematics in urban schools as compared to schools in rural areas. The persistence poor achievement in mathematics does not limit to regular secondary school student, the menace also elongated to students in special education or inclusive education settings. Literature has shown that students in regular schools performed significantly higher in mathematics as compare to students in special education setting (Dauda, 2014). Specifically, Persons with hearing impairment achievement in problem solving tasks and word problems fall below that of their hearing counterpart.

Ayşe, et al, (2015) stated that learners with hearing impairment can learn Mathematics just as their hearing counterparts but with delay and difficulty and it make them to be behind in Mathematics' achievement. Gender of persons with hearing impairment is a mediating variable that can also affect students' performance in mathematics. This follow the general belief that Mathematics is a male domain which makes young girls always feel discouraged about studying Mathematics. Particularly in Nigeria, where boys hold more positive attitudes toward Mathematics than girls, the expectation of male students having a good problem-solving behaviour made boys more confident than the girls who felt insecure in the subject (Shitu, 2015). More so, in mathematics instruction for person with hearing impairment, the use of visual aids such as diagram, map and projector enhance and stimulate learning ability, regardless of the

gender or physical defect of the learners, instructional materials such as visual, audio and audio-visual aids help students to learn at the same pace because it carries all the learners along.

Furthermore, Visual aids are items which the teacher uses to make lesson real and enjoyable, the visual aids provide concrete and realistic experience that make learners develop faster understanding of the concept to be learned. The importance of good visual aids in any educational system especially in teaching persons with hearing impairment cannot be overemphasized. Providing Mathematics teachers with effective visual aids would support them in performing their duties professionally. Owino, (2011) states that learners with hearing impairment lack required resources and skills needed for solving Mathematic problem. Nwafor and Aboniyi, (2016) carried out a study on pre-school knowledge and attitude towards the use of visual media in instruction when teaching mathematics but did not include strategies for enhancing performance in Mathematics among classes 5-8 learners with hearing impairment which create a gap that need to be filled. In essence, the researcher desires to check whether using visual aids in teaching Mathematics to persons with hearing impairment can yield positive result since many researches were carried out to find the causes of poor achievement of students in Mathematics.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to find out the effects of visual aids on mathematics achievement of persons with hearing impairment in Special School Hadejia, Jigawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the researcher intends to find out:

1. The extent to which the use of visual aids enhances the mathematics achievement score of persons with hearing impairment in special school Hadejia, Jigawa state, Nigeria.
2. The mathematics achievement of persons with hearing impairment who exposed to visual aids based on gender.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the mathematics achievement score of persons with hearing impairment after exposure to intervention?
2. To what extend does mathematics achievement of persons with hearing impairment who exposed to visual aids differ according to gender?

HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were made for this study and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mathematics achievement mean score of persons with hearing impairment taught with visual aids and those taught without visual aids.
2. There is no significant difference between the mathematics achievement mean score of male and female persons with hearing impairment in the experimental group.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a quasi-experimental design, specifically the pre-test, post-test non-equivalent control group design. The population of the study consisted of all the classes in Special School, Hadejia Local Government Area of Jigawa State with 274 students made up of 190 males and 84 females (school record, 2025). Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting SS I

class out of twelve available classes in the study area. The two arms of SS I were used as intact classes. The experimental group has 20 students, while the control group has 15 students, giving a sample of 35 SS I students. Therefore, the choice of sample size of 35 students was in line with the view of Muhammad (2013) who stated that the central limit theory recommended that for every experimental study sample size of 30 participants is effective. The instrument for data collection was Mathematics Achievement Test with 25 multiple-choice items that was designed to assess students with hearing impairment level of mathematics achievement. The face and content validity were established with the help of three experts two from Research, Measurements and Evaluation unit and one from Mathematics Education unit of University of Jos. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Kuder-Richardson formula 20 (KR-20) and coefficient of 0.82 was obtained. The intervention was administered to experimental group using visual aids while the control group was taught with conventional method. The researcher adopted the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to answer the research questions while inferential statistics (independent t-test) was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Answering of Research Questions

Research question One.

What are the mathematics achievement scores of persons with hearing impairment after exposure to intervention?

Table 1

Showing the Mean Achievement Scores of Students in Mathematics in The Experimental and Control groups.

Group	N	X	SD	Gain score
Experimental	20	59.20	20.13	24.66
Control	15	34.53	16.186	

Source (Field work, 2025)

Table 1 showed the mean and standard deviation of person with hearing impairment achievement in mathematics. The analysis revealed that the experimental group had a post-test mean achievement score of 59.20 with a standard deviation of 20.13, while the control group had a post-test mean achievement score of 34.53 with a standard deviation of 16.186. The mean gain score of the experimental and control groups was 24.66. This implies that exposure to visual aids enhances the mean achievement scores of persons with hearing impairment in mathematics. Also, the use of visual aids was effective in teaching mathematics.

Research Question Two

To what extent does mathematics achievement of persons with hearing impairment who are exposed to visual aids differ according to gender?

Table 2
Showing the mean achievement score of Male and Female in Mathematics in the Experimental Group.

Group	N	X	SD	Mean difference
Male	11	59.821	8.099	1.38
Female	9	59.443	3.495	

Source (Field work, 2025)

Table 2 showed the post-test mean achievement and standard deviation in mathematics of male and female persons with hearing impairment in the experimental group. The results indicated that male had a mean score of 59.821 with standard deviation of 8.099, while female had a mean score of 59.443 with standard deviation of 3.495. The mean gain difference in mathematics was 1.38. This implies that male recorded higher mean score than that of the female mean score. Indicating that male benefited more from the intervention given to the Experimental Group.

Answering of hypotheses

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the mathematics achievement mean scores of persons with hearing impairment taught with visual aids and those taught without visual aids.

Table 3

Showing Statistical value for testing hypothesis one

Group	N	X	SD	DF	T-value	P-Value
Experimental	20	59.20	20.133	33	3.891	0.000
Control	15	34.53	16.186			

Source (Field work, 2025)

Table 3 showed that the probability associated with t-value (3.891) at $p \geq 0.05$ level of significance for hypotheses one was 0.000. Since the probability value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance set as a bench mark in the present study, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was significant difference between the mathematics achievements mean scores of the persons with hearing impairment taught with visual aids and those taught without visual aids in Special school Hadejia.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference between the mathematics achievement mean scores of male and female persons with hearing impairment in the experimental group.

Table 4**Show Statistical value for testing research hypothesis 2**

Group	N	X	SD	DF	T-value	P-Value
Male	21	59.82	18.099	18	.148	.884
Female	14	58.44	23.495			

Source (Field work, 2025)

Table 4 showed that the probability associated with t-value (.148) at $p \geq 0.05$ level of significance for hypotheses two was .884. Since the probability value of .884 is greater than 0.05 level of significance set as a bench mark in the present study, the null hypotheses was retained, indicating that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the male and female persons with hearing impairment taught in Mathematics with visual aids in Hadejia. This implies that the male and female are at the same ability level and comparable.

Discussion of Result

The study was on the effects of visual aids on achievement of persons with hearing impairment in Mathematics in special school Hadedia, Jigawa State, Nigeria. Data was collected, analysed, interpreted and the outcome was discussed in line with the research questions and formulated hypotheses.

The first research question sought to find out the extent to which the use of visual aids enhanced the mean achievement score of persons with hearing impairment in Mathematics in special school Hadejia Jigawa State. The result revealed that exposure to visual aids enhanced the mean scores of the persons with hearing impairment in Mathematics. That is, the use of visual aids was effective in teaching Mathematics to persons with hearing impairment. The finding agreed with that of Apondi (2015) who found out that children taught mathematics using instructional materials perform better than those taught mathematics using abstract mathematics symbols. Similarly, the finding aligns with the view of Vera and Alexander (2017) on effectiveness of using instructional material in teaching mathematics to students.

Furthermore, the research question two was on ascertaining the extent to which achievement in Mathematics of persons with hearing impairment exposed to visual aids differs according to gender. The findings indicated that there was a noticeable difference between experimental and control groups. The mean scores of students with hearing impairment exposed to visual aids were higher compared to those who were not exposed. The result implies that gender did not affect the persons with hearing impairment achievement in Mathematics when taught with visual aids. Indeed, the finding is in disagreement with the findings of Ayodele, et al. (2014) whose investigation indicated that achievement in Mathematics of male students out weighted that of female students. The variation in the findings may be because the former used persons with hearing impairment and the later used normal students and in a single topic. This findings aligns with earlier finding of Vale (2009) who reported that many studies conducted between 2000 and 2004 in Australasia showed no significant difference in achievement in Mathematics

between male and female students.

Conclusion

The analyses of the result presented and the discussion that followed showed that visual aids had effects on the achievement of persons with hearing impairment. Hence, the study revealed that the male and female scores did not differ significantly, and implied that persons with hearing impairment are at the same ability level and comparable. The reason is that visual aids enable students to remember easily and answer questions correctly, it also helps in concretizing the abstract concept or symbols. Since, persons with hearing impairment cannot hear via verbal instruction it help in maintaining their attentiveness during the process of teaching and learning

Recommendations

The recommendations given are drawn from the discussion, observations and implication of this study; they are suggested for teachers, students, curriculum planners and government.

1. Teachers should bear in mind that the use of related visual aids in teaching Mathematics to persons with hearing impairment enhanced the effectiveness of their teaching.
2. Seminars, workshop, conferences and symposiums should be organized regularly in order to train Mathematics teachers on how to use visual aids during the teaching and learning process of persons with hearing impairment
3. Students should be encouraged to engage intensively on the process the teacher adopted during the teaching of Mathematics with visual aids
4. Adequate facilities and visual aids related to each topic in Mathematics should be provided by government, donor agencies, parents, and old students associations to facilitate the learning of persons with hearing impairment
5. Curriculum planners should include the use of visual aids as a means of teaching persons with hearing impairment in the next review of the mathematics curriculum

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Beyond Environmental Determinism: Ethical Praxis and Human Agency in the Contemporary Lagos Novel

Clement Oshogwe Mamudu

Department of English and Literary Studies
Igbinedion University, Okada, Nigeria

E-Mail: mamudu.clement@iuokada.edu.ng

ORCID ID: 0009-0006-2359-2194

Abstract

This article interrogates the dialectical tension between environmental determinism and human agency in four contemporary Lagos novels, namely Chris Abani's *Graceland* (2004), Teju Cole's *Every Day Is for the Thief* (2007/2014), Chibundu Onuzo's *Welcome to Lagos* (2017), and Leye Adenle's *Easy Motion Tourist* (2016). Reading these texts at the confluence of postcolonial urban theory, African literary philosophy, and the ethics of development, the article argues that while the Lagos cityscape is represented as a structurally coercive environment marked by poverty, institutional dysfunction, spatial violence, and moral corrosion, the novels collectively resist deterministic closure by foregrounding what this article terms ethical praxis, that is, the capacity of socially situated, historically conditioned subjects to deliberate, choose, and act in morally meaningful ways within and against the constraints of their environment. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's spatial theory, AbdouMaliq Simone's theorisation of African urban life, Achille Mbembe's postcolonial critique, and the African moral philosophies of Kwasi Wiredu and Thaddeus Metz, the article demonstrates how these novelists construct Lagos not merely as a deterministic trap but as an ethical laboratory in which agency, solidarity, and moral survival are continuously negotiated. The article contributes to ongoing debates in African literary studies, urban humanities, and postcolonial ethics by proposing a critical vocabulary adequate to the moral complexity of postcolonial megacity fiction.

Keywords. *Lagos novel; Environmental determinism; Human agency; Ethical praxis; Postcolonial urbanism; African literary philosophy*

Introduction

Few cities in contemporary world literature carry as much symbolic weight as Lagos. Sprawling, cacophonous, and teeming with more than twenty million inhabitants, Lagos has become a synecdoche for the postcolonial African city in its most extreme register, a city simultaneously of extraordinary vitality and systemic dysfunction, of creative improvisation and brutal structural exclusion. The contemporary Lagos novel, emerging with renewed force in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, inherits this representational burden. Its novelists must navigate a persistent critical and ideological tension between rendering Lagos as a totalising environment that shapes, determines, and ultimately defeats its inhabitants, and constructing a fictional world in which moral agency, ethical commitment, and human freedom remain possible against the grain of

material circumstance.

This tension is not merely aesthetic but deeply political. Environmental determinism, the philosophical and literary position that human character and moral possibility are primarily if not entirely products of material, spatial, and social environment, has a long and contested history in both Western literary naturalism and in Africanist discourse. In the African context, deterministic representations of urban life risk reproducing colonial and neo-colonial ideologies that deny African subjects the capacity for self-determination, moral reasoning, and political agency. Yet a naive voluntarism that ignores the structural violence of poverty, infrastructural collapse, and institutional corruption would be equally dishonest. The most sophisticated contemporary Lagos novels occupy the difficult but necessary space between these poles, constructing characters who are conditioned but not determined, constrained but not imprisoned, broken but not wholly defeated.

The four novels selected for this study span generic registers including Bildungsroman, autofiction, social realism, and crime fiction. They reflect varied authorial positionalities, both Nigerian-resident and diasporic, both male and female. Despite their differences, all four stage Lagos as a morally urgent environment and all four position their central characters as ethical subjects whose decisions carry genuine moral weight. Reading them together reveals not a single answer to the determinism problem but a rich field of ethical experimentation. The article establishes its theoretical framework in the section that follows, then offers close readings of each novel, develops the concept of ethical praxis as a critical instrument, and concludes with reflections on the implications of this reading for African literary studies and urban humanities more broadly.

Theoretical Framework

Henri Lefebvre's foundational argument in *The Production of Space* (1991), that space is not a neutral container but a socially produced, ideologically saturated field of power relations, provides a crucial starting point. In Lagos, the tension between conceived space, the space of planners and state power, and lived space, the space of inhabitants' practices, memories, and desires, is uniquely acute, producing inhabitants who have developed extraordinarily creative practices of spatial appropriation, informal economy, and communal life despite a historically inadequate and exclusionary urban infrastructure.

AbdouMaliq Simone's theorisation of African urban life, particularly his concept of people as infrastructure developed in *For the City Yet to Come* (2004), extends and Africanises Lefebvre's framework. Simone argues that in African cities where formal infrastructure is absent or dysfunctional, it is human networks, social relations, and collective practices that constitute the material substrate of urban life. This is not a romanticisation of poverty but a recognition that African urban subjects are active producers of social space, not merely its victims. Achille Mbembe's account of the postcolonial city, most fully developed in *On the Postcolony* (2001) and elaborated in *Critique of Black Reason* (2017), introduces a more pessimistic dimension. For Mbembe, the postcolonial African city is characterised by what he calls commandement, the pervasive logic of arbitrary power extracted from colonial rule and reproduced by postcolonial elites. Yet even within this apparatus he identifies practices of conviviality, resistant pleasures, and the capacity to live with difference and oppression without being wholly defined by them. This capacity, located in everyday practice rather than heroic resistance, is deeply relevant to the ethical strategies of the Lagos novels under consideration.

The dominant ethical frameworks in the Western philosophical tradition are not simply

transferable to the moral worlds constructed in contemporary African fiction. African moral philosophy, particularly in its communitarian and Ubuntu-inflected forms, offers more contextually adequate resources. Kwasi Wiredu's concept of consensual democracy and his broader project of conceptual decolonisation, developed in *Cultural Universals and Particulars* (1996), argues that African ethical thought is grounded in the primacy of interpersonal obligation, communal deliberation, and the irreducibility of social relations to individual rights claims. For Wiredu, moral agency is always already social agency. Thaddeus Metz's reconstruction of African ethics in *A Relational Moral Theory* (2022) provides an analytically rigorous extension of this position. Metz argues that the foundational principle of sub-Saharan African ethics is relational in nature. What matters morally is not the maximisation of individual welfare or conformity to universal duty but the quality of one's relationships with others and the extent to which one's actions promote communal solidarity, mutual recognition, and the shared construction of a good life. In the context of the Lagos novel, this framework allows us to read characters' ethical decisions not as isolated individual choices but as relational acts that constitute, damage, or restore moral community within a hostile urban environment.

Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, developed in *Development as Freedom* (1999), provides a macro-structural complement to these micro-ethical frameworks. Sen argues that development must be understood not as GDP growth but as the expansion of human capabilities, the real freedoms that people have to live lives they have reason to value. Applied to the Lagos novel, this framework illuminates how infrastructural failure, poverty, and institutional corruption systematically constrain the capabilities of urban inhabitants, not merely their material welfare but their capacity for moral agency, meaningful choice, and dignified life. Yet Sen's approach is also anti-determinist, insisting that even within constrained environments the expansion of capabilities remains a meaningful goal and that ethical evaluation must proceed from the standpoint of what people are actually able to do and be.

Drawing on these theoretical resources, this article proposes the concept of ethical praxis as the analytical key to understanding the moral architecture of the Lagos novels under consideration. The term is adapted from the Aristotelian concept of praxis, practical wisdom and the capacity to act well in particular circumstances, but inflected by the postcolonial, communitarian, and capabilities-based frameworks outlined above. Ethical praxis denotes the exercise of morally deliberate action by socially situated subjects who are aware of the structural constraints upon their choices, who are embedded in networks of communal obligation and relational responsibility, and who nevertheless maintain the capacity for morally significant decision and commitment. It is neither heroic resistance nor passive accommodation but the difficult, ongoing, often compromised work of living ethically within an environment that systematically obstructs ethical life. It does not promise moral success or the overcoming of structural injustice through individual virtue. Rather, it names the space of moral possibility that remains even within systems of severe constraint, the space in which characters like Elvis Oke in *Graceland*, the unnamed narrator of *Every Day Is for the Thief*, Chike Ameobi in *Welcome to Lagos*, and Amaka in *Easy Motion Tourist* make choices that matter and that collectively construct a counter-narrative to the determinism that the Lagos cityscape seems to enforce.

Textual Readings

***Graceland* and the Ethics of Survival**

Chris Abani's *Graceland* is, on its surface, a novel saturated with deterministic pressure. Its protagonist, sixteen-year-old Elvis Oke, lives in Maroko, a Lagos slum rendered with unflinching

documentary precision. Open sewers, overcrowded shacks, pervasive violence, the casual brutality of the state, and the slow erosion of human dignity that poverty and spatial exclusion impose are the governing conditions of his daily existence. The novel's dual temporal structure, alternating between Elvis's present in Lagos and his Igbo village childhood mediated by his deceased mother's recipe book and cultural wisdom, establishes from the outset that Elvis is a subject shaped by forces far exceeding his individual will, among them colonial history, patriarchal violence, economic marginalisation, and the cultural dislocation of urban migration.

Yet Abani consistently refuses to reduce Elvis to these conditions. The novel's central trope, Elvis's aspiration to become an Elvis Presley impersonator performing American rock and roll in a Lagos slum, is simultaneously a figure of cultural alienation and a figure of ethical self-fashioning. Elvis's performances are acts of imaginative self-creation in Lefebvre's sense of appropriated space, the temporary seizure of public space for the enactment of a self not determined by poverty and abjection. Abani's insight is that even mimicry, one of the most theoretically complex categories in postcolonial studies and most influentially developed by Homi Bhabha (2004), can be a form of ethical agency when deployed consciously and with awareness of its own ambivalence. Elvis's eventual act of refusing further complicity in the organ-harvesting criminal network, his decision to flee and to refuse the role assigned to him by the criminal economy, is a genuine act of ethical praxis, costly and imperfect but morally meaningful. *Graceland* stages a version of Metz's relational ethics in which the quality of one's relationships to others, to Redemption, Aunt Felicia, and the boy Godfrey, constitutes the measure of one's ethical life. Elvis's femininity, his practice of cross-dressing and refusal of hegemonic masculinity, is not merely a marker of marginalisation but an ethical position, the daily work of being a different kind of subject than the environment demands.

Every Day Is for the Thief and the Ethics of Witnessing Teju Cole's *Every Day Is for the Thief* is a generically ambiguous text, part novel, part autofiction, part essay, and its formal hybridity is itself ethically significant. The unnamed Nigerian-American narrator returns to Lagos after fifteen years in New York, and the novel records his observations of the city with a tone that oscillates between affectionate recognition, aesthetic appreciation, ironic detachment, and moral anguish. The generic undecidability of the text mimics the narrator's own ethical undecidability, his uncertainty about his relationship to a city he has left but not escaped, and his ambivalence about the moral implications of his outsider-insider perspective.

Cole is acutely aware that the narrator's diasporic perspective, shaped by access to American infrastructure, institutions, and freedoms that most Lagosians lack, implicates him in a politics of representation that is never innocent. His treatment of the pervasive culture of petty corruption and institutional dysfunction that governs Lagos daily life is remarkable for its refusal of both moral condemnation and exculpatory culturalism. Instead, Cole attempts something harder, seeking to understand corruption as a structural phenomenon produced by specific historical and political conditions, without thereby denying the moral agency of those who participate in it. This is a sophisticated application of what Sen calls positional objectivity, the recognition that one's moral perceptions are shaped by one's social position without collapsing into relativism. The novel's most powerful ethical moment, the scene in the National Museum where the narrator restrains the impulse to correct a factually inaccurate history lesson, demonstrates that the ethics of witnessing includes knowing when not to speak, a recognition that epistemic privilege does not automatically confer moral authority.

Welcome to Lagos and the Ethics of Community

Of the four novels examined here, Chibundu Onuzo's *Welcome to Lagos* is the most programmatic challenge to environmental determinism. Its premise is strikingly allegorical. A group of social outcasts, a disillusioned soldier, a domestic abuse survivor, a street boy, a radical journalist, and a disgraced politician, find themselves inhabiting an abandoned television studio in Lagos and attempt to construct a functional moral community in this derelict space. The novel's central argument, enacted through its narrative rather than stated as proposition, is that ethical community is possible even in the most unpromising material circumstances, that solidarity, mutual recognition, and collective moral commitment can be created from below, in the interstices of a dysfunctional city.

Simone's concept of invisible urbanisms, the informal and improvised forms of collective life that develop in the gaps of official urban space, provides a useful framework for reading this premise. Yet Onuzo complicates Simone's broadly affirmative account by insisting on the fragility and internal tensions of such communities. What holds the abandoned studio community together is not organic solidarity but the ongoing ethical work of negotiation, compromise, and mutual recognition, what Wiredu would call consensual rather than merely procedural community. The character of Chike Ameobi, the former soldier who becomes the community's de facto leader, is particularly significant. Chike's leadership is constructed as an act of ethical restitution, an attempt to repair through present solidarity the relational damage caused by his past complicity in military violence. This is a sophisticated rendering of what Metz calls the communitarian dimension of African ethics, the recognition that moral repair is always relational, requiring not merely internal contrition but the active reconstruction of damaged social bonds. The novel ultimately argues that the ethical work of community-building and the ethical work of representation, embodied in the journalist Isoken's decision to broadcast the community's story, are continuous. Both are forms of ethical praxis, acts of deliberate moral commitment within a hostile environment.

Easy Motion Tourist and the Ethics of Refusal

Leye Adenle's *Easy Motion Tourist*, the most generically conventional of the four novels and a crime thriller in the tradition of African hardboiled fiction, is in certain respects the most radical in its ethical implications. The novel centres on Amaka, a Lagos-based activist who rescues sex workers from police violence, and Charlie, a British journalist inadvertently drawn into Lagos's criminal underworld. The generic conventions of crime fiction, which typically construct the city as a labyrinth of danger and the protagonist as a lone moral agent navigating systemic corruption, are here subjected to a thoroughgoing gendered and postcolonial revision.

Amaka is the most fully realised ethical agent in the corpus under consideration. Her organisation of sex workers into a network of mutual protection and legal advocacy is a concrete practice of what Metz calls relational ethics, an ethics grounded not in abstract principle but in the daily work of building protective relationships among the most vulnerable members of Lagos society. Adenle is careful not to romanticise this work. Amaka's network is perpetually under threat, her resources are inadequate, her methods are sometimes morally compromised, and the structural conditions that produce both sex work and police violence remain largely unchanged. But the novel insists that Amaka's ethical practice matters, that it saves specific lives, builds specific solidarities, and constitutes a morally meaningful form of resistance to the city's dominant ethical regime. Her activism is an appropriation of Lefebvrian representational space on behalf of women whose spatial presence the city's official codes deny, connecting the novel to a broader tradition of African feminist urban criticism including the work of Nana Akua Anyidoho (2012). The relationship

between Amaka and Charlie also enacts at the level of plot the argument that Sen makes at the level of theory, that the expansion of human capabilities in postcolonial urban contexts requires the recognition and support of indigenous ethical agency, not its substitution by metropolitan expertise or benevolence.

Ethical Praxis and the City

The close readings in the preceding section reveal a number of recurring features that together constitute the ethical architecture of the contemporary Lagos novel. Ethical praxis in these novels is always embodied and situated. It is not the exercise of abstract reason by a disembodied rational subject but the practice of moral deliberation by a subject located in a specific body, a specific social position, and a specific spatial context. Elvis Oke's cross-dressing, Amaka's bodily presence at police cordons, Chike's physical labour in building the community's shelter are not mere illustrations of ethical positions but the medium through which ethical positions are constituted and communicated. This insistence on embodied agency connects the Lagos novel to recent developments in both African philosophy and feminist ethics that emphasise the ineliminably material and social dimensions of moral life (Oyewumi, 2016; Nnaemeka, 2023).

Ethical praxis in these novels is also irreducibly relational. The moral unit is never the isolated individual but always the dyad, the network, the community, what Metz identifies as the characteristic ethical emphasis of African moral philosophy. Characters are constituted as ethical subjects through their relationships, Elvis through Redemption and the memory of his mother, Chike through the members of the Lagos community, Amaka through the women she protects. Most importantly, this relational ethical agency is explicitly counter-deterministic without being naively voluntarist. The novelists are fully aware of structural constraints including poverty, patriarchy, corruption, and colonial history. What they insist upon, and what distinguishes them from both determinist naturalism and liberal individualism, is that the capacity for morally meaningful choice persists within structural constraint and that its exercise, however limited, constitutes a form of dignity and resistance that demands critical recognition.

The concept of ethical praxis also illuminates the formal strategies of these novels. The generic diversity of the corpus, encompassing Bildungsroman, autofiction, social realism, and crime thriller, reflects different strategies for representing the moral life of the city. Abani's Bildungsroman structure maps the formation of an ethical subject over time. Cole's autofictional mode raises the stakes of the ethics of representation by implicating the narrator's own subjectivity. Onuzo's social realism constructs the ethical community as a collective protagonist. Adenle's crime fiction mobilises generic conventions of urban moral danger in order to subvert them. Each formal choice is also an ethical choice, a decision about how to render the moral complexity of the city honestly, without either sensationalising its violence or falsifying its possibilities.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the contemporary Lagos novel, as represented by *Graceland*, *Every Day Is for the Thief*, *Welcome to Lagos*, and *Easy Motion Tourist*, constitutes a significant and distinctive contribution to the literary and philosophical project of thinking through the ethics of postcolonial urban life. Against readings that emphasise the deterministic character of Lagos fiction, this article has proposed the concept of ethical praxis as a more adequate critical tool, one that captures both the structural constraints these novels unflinchingly represent and the moral agency they collectively insist upon. The theoretical framework developed here, drawing on Lefebvre, Simone, Mbembe, Wiredu, Metz, and Sen, provides a genuinely interdisciplinary basis for this reading, one that refuses both a purely aesthetic literary criticism that ignores material

conditions and a purely sociological approach that reduces fiction to symptom.

The implications of this argument extend beyond the Lagos novel to the broader field of postcolonial urban fiction and urban humanities. As the world's urban population continues to grow, and as the majority of that growth occurs in cities of the Global South characterised by extreme inequality, infrastructural inadequacy, and political dysfunction, the question of how ethical life is possible under such conditions becomes increasingly urgent. The Lagos novelists examined here do not offer solutions to these structural problems. What they offer, which is perhaps more valuable, is a series of imaginative and moral experiments in living with, against, and beyond the constraints of the postcolonial city. To read these novels carefully, with the theoretical and critical resources appropriate to their complexity, is to take seriously the ethical intelligence they embody, an intelligence that African literary studies and urban humanities have much to gain from engaging more fully.

It remains, finally, to note a question that the article has raised but not resolved, namely the relationship between individual ethical praxis and collective political transformation. The ethical agency celebrated in these novels is, by and large, the agency of individuals and small communities navigating an unjust social order. The novels do not, in the main, imagine the transformation of that order through collective political action, a limitation that some critics drawing on traditions of socialist realism or political fiction might find significant. What the Lagos novel does demonstrate, with considerable analytical and imaginative force, is that the absence of structural transformation does not entail the impossibility of ethical life, that between the determinism of the system and the freedom of the utopian imagination, there is a space of ethical praxis that is worth mapping, defending, and celebrating.

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