

Ori in Yorùbá Thought System: A Humean Critique

by

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Abstract

In this paper the epistemic stance of David Hume is employed to dislodge a rational belief in *Ori*, and argue that the concept is first and foremost anthropocentric with negative implications for the human species. Secondly, that pre-natal existence and the creation process surrounding *Ori* are closer to mythology than reality. Hence, it is shown that the contradiction among the Yorùbá that destiny cannot be altered, on the one hand and the strife to alter it through consultations with *Orunmila*, on the other hand is a carry-over from the false cause fallacy. Next, it suggests that *Orunmila* is not knowledgeable of everything about the human person and that with the recent medical breakthrough in head transplant, the belief in *Ori* depreciates as it becomes embedded in personal identity problems. Therefore, the word *Ori* in Yorùbá signifies nothing other than the literal meaning, the physical head, and any attempt to go beyond this, inevitable and irreversibly leads to naïve optimism.

Keywords: David Hume, Ori, Yorùbá, Destiny, Orunmila

Introduction

I will argue, utilizing David Hume's epistemology in this research that the notion of *Ori* in traditional Yorùbá thought is flawed. To realize this feat, this essay has five parts, the first being this introduction. The second divide gives a terse exposition of the meaning and substance of *Ori*. The third split of this essay exposes the important aspects of David Hume's philosophic thoughts. In the section that follows, I employ David Hume's epistemology to show that the notion of *Ori* fails to be mustered as the basis for human actions and aspirations. The fifth part concludes this essay.

It would be prudent nonetheless, to commence with random comments about some agents and circumstances that instigated contemporaneous research on African themes. Scholars researching within what has come to be termed ‘African philosophy’ had to react mostly to the claims of Eurocentrism. Some Western scholars passed disparaging comments on the rational abilities of “the man of colour” (Fanon, 2008). Homer, Thomas Hobbes, Baron de Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Jefferson, to name a few (see Oluwole, 2006:10-1), are some of the Western intellectual giants in question. In this connection, Obenga (2004:32), reacting against Hegel, opines: “As we know, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), who was not a historian, but a great philosopher, stated in his lectures delivered in the winter of 1830–1 on the philosophical history of the world: “Africa is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit. . . . Egypt . . . does not belong to the African Spirit” (Hegel, 1956: 99)”. Theophile Obenga continues: “This view of the Hegelian philosophy of history has become almost a common opinion and an academic paradigm in Western historiography. It has been regarded as canon that a great culture or civilization cannot be produced by African (Black) people. This also implies that Africans have never made any kind of contribution to world history” (Obenga, 2004:33).

Torrent of scholars, both of African and non-African roots have, in my opinion successful argued that Eurocentrism is an error in reasoning. I shall not concern with their arguments here due to space-time limitation. However, it should be stated that toward the end of the 20th century, late Kenyan erudite scholar Henry Oruka (1990) identified some trends under what has come to be labeled as ‘African Philosophy’. By the early periods of the 21st century, Barry Hallen announces: “African philosophy, as an autochthonous and important area of research in its own right, definitely has arrived, and it deserves far more attention from the international academy than it is presently receiving” (Hallen, 2002:48). Ethnophilosophy is one of the trends cited by Oruka (1990). To my mind, it accommodates the Yorùbá thought system, which this essay concerns with as a form of African Philosophy. Taking the challenge of Barry Hallen as axiomatic, I engage the theme of *Ori* in traditional Yorùbá thought system.

The Concepts of *Ori* in Traditional Yorùbá Thought

There are several concepts of *Ori* in traditional Yorùbá thought system. I shall attempt to give an account of the aggregate canonical account of all. Literally, *Ori* in the Yorùbá language means head, the physical head upon which hair grows. However, when the Yorùbá s speak metaphysically, the concept enters the fray as one of the entities that make up a human person. Erudite scholar Segun Gbadegesin, the doyen of the *Ori* discourse expatiates:

It refers to the physical head, which is considered vital to the physical status of a person. It is, for instance, the seat of the brain. But when a typical Yorùbá talks about *ori*, she is, more often than not, referring to a non-physical component of her person. For there is a widely received conception of an *Ori* as the bearer of a person's destiny as well as the determinant of one's personality (Gbadegesin, 2004:314).

The view expressed by Segun Gbadegesin has been corroborated by others (see Idowu, 1962; Ekanola, 2006; Abimbola, 1976; Balogun, 2007). For the Yorùbá s, a human is composed of *ara* (body), *emi* (life-force or soul) and *Ori* (Ekanola, 2006:46; Gbadegesin, 2004:314). However, there are other spiritual elements tied to the overall constitution of the human person. *Owo* (spiritual hand) and *Ese* (spiritual leg) have been added as the elements that make up the complete Yorùbá view of the person (Abimbola, 2006; Balogun, 2007; Ekanola, 2006). However, *Ori*, the spiritual head has come to be synonymous with destiny, as Gbadegesin (2004:314) conveys in that excerpt. In other words, *Ori* is usually typified as the carrier of the destiny of a human being. How can this be the case? A perusal of the creation myth would be helpful at this juncture.

According to consensus, *Obatala* or *Orishanla* (one of the primordial divinities in the Yorùbá world-view fond of drinking palm wine) fashions a human body (*ara*) out of clay or sand. It is not said whether or not there is a witness to the creative process of *Orishanla*. This has a far-reaching implication! One, which had hitherto been a matter of negligence. I shall return to this in the third part of this discourse. Meanwhile, *Olodumare* (the Supreme Deity) gives life-force or soul (*emi*) to the 'craft' of *Orishanla*. The animated *ara* then proceeds to *Ajala's* put (another primordial divinity who makes *Ori*) to make a choice of *Ori*. It is in this sense that *Ori* passes muster as destiny. It refers to the experiences and life course that a human would encounter on Earth. The selection process of an *Ori* has three important aspects. Firstly, freedom to choose an *Ori* is assumed. Secondly, "the *Ori* selected determines, finally and irreversible, the life course and personality of its possessor on Earth. Third, each individual is unaware of the content or quality of the chosen *Ori*, that is, the person making the choice does not know if the destiny embedded in an *Ori* is good or bad" (Ekanola, 2006:41). These points are expressed in the works of other scholars such as Wande Abimbola (1976); Morakinyo (1983). Destiny, *Ori* may be acquired through any of the following ways: *Akunleyan* (that which is *chosen* while kneeling); *Akunlegba* (that which is *received* while kneeling); *Ayanmo* (that is which is *affixed* to oneself); *Ipin-Ori* (allotment); and *Adayeba* (that which is *encountered in the world*) (see Gbadegesin, 2004; Ekanola, 2006; Balogun, 2007; Idowu, 1962). To my mind, the variant ways of acquiring the required destiny have been thus articulated because there was a witness. This witness is forever present when humans acquire a destiny. This personality is another primordial divinity, *Orunmila*. According to Oladele Balogun:

In all these myths, *Orunmila* (arch-divinity), the founder of *ifa* (oracle) system of divination, is noted to be a witness of man's choice of destiny. Little wonder he is referred to as *Eleri-Ipin* (the witness of destiny) and the only one competent to reveal the type and content of 'ori' chosen by each person (Balogun, 2007:122).

With the notion of *Ori* abruptly exposed here some issues of serious epistemic substance flies in the face of a critic. I shall deflect the critic momentarily as an exposition of Hume's philosophy is pertinent at this occasion.

An Overview of the Philosophy of David Hume

David Hume is one of the greatest scholars in the History of Philosophy. His ideas signify a major turning point in Philosophy such that it roused the German intellectual giant, Immanuel Kant "...from his dogmatic slumbers" (Kenny, 2006). I shall try as much to touch the very important and sensitive aspects of Hume's entire philosophy before relating them to the subject of *Ori*.

David Hume was a Scottish philosopher born on the 26th of April, 1711. His parents were very close to royalty. Hume occupied several political offices but had no academic appointment. He was a lawyer, historian and even a philosopher. A very humble but stern man who in the opening lines of his autobiography states:

[1] It is difficult for a man to speak long of himself without vanity; therefore, I shall be short. It may be thought an instance of vanity that I pretend at all to write my life; but this Narrative shall contain little more than the History of my Writings; as, indeed, almost all my life has been spent in literary pursuits and occupations. The first success of most of my writings was not such as to be an object of vanity (Hume, 2007:App V).

Hume's ideas penetrate almost every area of cognition. With regards to perception, Hume takes an approach termed "indirect realism" (Huemer, 2002:27). He seems to hold that we are never directly in perception of objects but their images in our minds which he termed as impressions. In his own words: "[t]he existences, which we consider, when we say *this house* and *that tree*, are nothing but perceptions or representations in the mind, and fleeting copies or representations of other existences, which remain uniform and independent" (Hume, 1886: 48).

On causation, David Hume debunks the tendency to think one event or entity causes another. This is because of our assumption that the future will resemble the past, he argues. This is habitual thinking and must not be taken seriously, Hume maintains. Moore and Bruder (2011:134) expatiate in this regard with the balloon instance. If a balloon pops by the touch of a pin, what would Hume say? Hume would maintain “that all he saw was just (1) the pin contacting the balloon and (2) the balloon popping. He did not see the pin *making* the balloon pop”. This idea is latent in his skepticism on inferences. In his section on “Skepticism with Regard to Reason,” he is especially concerned with inductive inference and defends the specific thesis that all our inferences (“reasonings”) “*concerning causes and effects are deriv’d from nothing but custom*” (Hume, 1886:272). He refers to customary transitions of thought, as opposed to formal reasoning that is deductively valid or invalid. He leaves much open regarding the psychology of inference, but seems not to be positing even a dispositional belief of any principle governing inductive inferences (Audi, 2002:12). Hume amplifies his argument further in his *Enquiry* thus:

These two propositions are far from being the same, *I have found that such an object has always been attended with such an effect, and I foresee, that other objects, which are, in appearance, similar, will be attended with similar effects.* I shall allow, if you please, that the one proposition may be justly inferred from the other . . . it always is inferred. But if you insist that the inference is made by a chain of reasoning, I desire you to produce that reasoning. The connection between these propositions is not intuitive (Hume, 2007:303).

David Hume castigates any belief in miracles. For him, “no miracle in history has in fact been sufficiently well attested by sufficiently many reliable witnesses” (Hume, 2007: 116). “Secondly, the pleasant passion of surprise and wonder makes miracle stories particularly prone to invention and fantasy, all the more so if they are propagated to promote religion” (Hume, 2007:117-9). As the history of forged miracles amply demonstrates, a religious person may lie ‘for the sake of promoting so holy a cause’, or out of vanity, or he may be gullible or swayed by eloquence (since many renounce their reason in questions of religion)”. “Thirdly, miracle stories almost all ‘abound amongst ignorant and barbarous nations’, suggesting that they are indeed products of imagination rather than provable fact (Hume, 2007: 119-121)”. “Finally, if a miracle is supposed to establish the religion (or sect) to which it is attributed, and since the various religions are incompatible, it follows that the evidence for any miracle will be opposed by the evidence in favour of the far greater number of miracles reported in other religions”. He harps further:

That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavours to establish: And even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force, which remains, after deducting the inferior.”* When any one tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority, which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous, than the event which he relates; then, and not till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion (Hume, 2007:116).

It is obvious from the synopsis of the position of David Hume on the subject matter that miracles could be chimerical (Hajek, 2007).

On the immortality of the human soul, Hume commits to show that one cannot substantiate such belief with any serious evidence. This is a carry-over of his dose in the Section VI “Of Probability” in his *Enquiry*. There he announces:

A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence. . . . All probability, then, supposes an opposition of experiments and observations, where the one side is found to overbalance the other, and to produce a degree of evidence, proportioned to the superiority (Hume, 2007:xlix).

Hume argues against the metaphysical topics, the moral and physical argument customarily employed to justify belief in the immortality of the human soul. As Hume’s ideas in this mould have far-reaching implications for the subject of *Ori*, I shall give it a little more focus. The metaphysical topics take the human soul to be what animates the body. This is one of the areas where Rene Descartes is a chief exponent. Against the metaphysical topics, Hume counters on the grounds that:

Reasoning from the common course of nature, and without supposing any *new* interposition of the supreme cause, which ought always to be excluded from philosophy; what is incorruptible must also be ingenerable. The soul, therefore, if immortal, existed before our birth: And if the former state of existence no wise concerned us, neither will the latter. Animals undoubtedly feel, think, love, hate, will, and even reason, tho' in a more imperfect manner than man. Are their souls also immaterial and immortal? (Hume, 2007:147)

I am in agreement with David Hume in the excerpt above. I interpret this to be a kind of anthropocentrism. Humans have put themselves as candidates of immortality and pay little or no attention to entities that Environmental Biology claims to have existed several millennia before *Homo sapiens*. Plants and animals, our Sun, the Ozone Layer, Oxygen, Water and several other entities have been left out of the candidature of immortality. Assumed herein is the view that these substances are not germane for life after death. Bringing the skepticism of Hume to bear, I hold that since our previous existence is a *belief* that is not proportionate to evidence, the belief that humans can survive immortally is therefore, warrantable. In the end, anthropocentrism is forcefully endorsed. It is therefore not a surprise why Ecological Summits have become imperative to curb the tendency of thinking that humanity is at the top or apex of life. This has become pertinent due to the lack of respect and dignity for other members of the bios whose existences are requisite for *Homo sapiens*. Failure to adhere to some of the resolutions for the Summits, no doubt is a recipe for disaster.

The moral force for immortality is based on reward and punishment by the Deity. This has usually been the score card of many religions and their institutions. Against the moral stance of belief in immortality, Hume maintains that the Deity's praxis of what punishment is and its ulterior purpose constitutes an impasse to common-sense. In Hume's words:

By what rule are punishments and rewards distributed? What is the divine standard of merit and demerit? Shall we suppose, that human sentiments have place in the deity? However bold that hypothesis, we have no conception of any other sentiments. According to human sentiments, sense, courage, good manners, industry, prudence, genius, &c. are essential parts of personal merit. Shall we therefore erect an elysium for poets and heroes, like that of the antient mythology? Why confine all rewards to one species of virtue? Punishment, without any proper end or purpose, is inconsistent with *our* ideas of goodness and justice, and no end can be served by it after the whole scene is closed (Hume, 2007:148).

Hume is obviously reacting to the notion of immortality in the monotheistic parlance. He questions the logic in the Deity's meting out punishment eternal and infinite reward or damnation for atrocities committed in finite time. Hume maintains: "Punishment, according to *our* conceptions, should bear some proportion to the offence. Why then eternal punishment for the temporary offences of so frail a creature as man?" (Hume, 2007:149). Since the Deity rewards or punishes on the presumption that humans are rational creatures capable of keeping to precepts and dogmas, what is the place of those who cannot exercise their rational capacities or those born and living in vegetative states? David Hume expatiates further in this connection:

Nature has rendered human infancy peculiarly frail and mortal; as if it were on purpose to refute the notion of a probationary state. The half of mankind dye before they are rational creatures (Hume, 2007:149).

The third which is the physical argument further diminishes the belief in immortality as the preceding duo. Hume states that: "The *physical* arguments from the analogy of nature are strong for the mortality of the soul; and these are really the only philosophical arguments, which ought to be admitted with regard to this question, or indeed any question of fact" (Hume, 2007:150). He makes an analogy between the organs in humans and animals. Hume maintains that if one denies animals immortality even though they have similar organs as humans, there is no serious evidence why the one should consider humans to latent with immortal tendencies. David Hume continues his rebuttal:

When it is asked, whether *Agamemnon, Thersites, Hannibal, Nero,* and every stupid clown, that ever existed in *Italy, Scythia, Bactria,* or *Guinea,* are now alive; can any man think, that a scrutiny of nature will furnish arguments strong enough to answer so strange a question in the affirmative? The want of arguments, without revelation, sufficiently establishes the negative (Hume, 2007:151).

Given all of the above antecedents, Hume concludes:

All doctrines are to be suspected, which are favoured by our passions. And the hopes and fears which gave rise to this doctrine, are very obvious. It is an infinite advantage in every controversy, to defend the negative. If the question be out of the common experienced course of nature, this circumstance is almost if not altogether decisive. By what arguments or analogies can we prove any state of existence, which no one ever saw, and which no wise resembles any that ever was seen? Who will repose such trust in any pretended philosophy, as to admit upon its testimony the reality of so marvellous a scene? Some new species of logic is requisite for that purpose; and some new faculties of the mind, which may enable us to comprehend that logic. Nothing could set in a fuller light the infinite obligations, which mankind have to divine revelation; since we find, that no other medium could ascertain this great and important truth (Hume, 2007:151).

The whole enterprise in this section has been to engage with the kind of philosophy David Hume advances and the epistemic insights therein. I interpret his epistemology as a kind of fallibilism, and fallibilism is in itself, to my mind, a version of foundationalism. According to Baron Reed, “Fallibilism is the philosophical view that conjoins two apparently obvious claims. On one hand, we are fallible. We make mistakes – sometimes even about the most evident things. But, on the other hand, we also have quite a bit of knowledge. Despite our tendency to get things wrong occasionally, we get it right much more of the time” (Reed;2002:143). This is the kind of epistemology, which Hume to my understanding, portrays.

David Hume died of a terminal illness in 1776. There has been no encounter or revelation of his immortality in any way whatsoever. In the intellectual arena however, he lives on. I return to a comprehensive assessment of *Ori* from a Humean perspective. I shall unleash the Humean energy and argue that epistemically, it is humanly impossible to hold a rational and thorough-going belief in destiny as holds by the Yorùbá s.

***Ori* in Traditional Yorùbá Thought System: A Humean Evaluation**

Firstly, that the notion of *Ori* is anthropocentric is not the opposite of the truth. Every here and then, the Yorùbá thought system places the human person at the highest in physical, Earthly existence. Recall the process of creation and acquiring a destiny that discussed hitherto, it would be observed that there is no mention of other entities like animals acquiring the required destiny from *Ajala's* workshop. In fact, animals are usually used as one of the recipes in conjuring *etutu* (sacrifices) calculated to appease the gods and sometimes to turn a bad destiny into a good one.

Do animals have right in Yorùbá thought system? Do they possess destiny? Are they immortal? Perhaps the destiny of animals in the Yorùbá thought system is that they be used as ingredients for sacrifices. If this is the case, definitely it merely strengthens the anthropocentric nature of the Yorùbá thought system and the notion of *Ori*. What about plants used as herbs and concoctions? Are plants and animals also capable of consulting with *Orunmila* if need be?

From the foregoing, it is not false that destiny only concerns with human beings. It has nothing to do with any other species on and outside the planet Earth. Other entities such as plants and animals are merely means to an end, the fruition or abortion of human destiny. The danger in this line of thinking is very disturbing as the preceding section already hints. An anthropocentric view of life is tantamount to the extinction of the human species. As this anthropocentrism derives from the supposed immortal latency in humans, I now concern myself with immortality. As Hume advises that a wise man ought to proportion his belief to evidence, it is doubtful if all human beings possess a clear and distinct occurrence of what transpired before being born. Does anyone recall going to *Ajala's* put to pick a destiny? No! It is only *Orunmila* who fills this void of amnesia. When John Locke announces that the human minds are blank slates, he must have been aware of tendencies to think of occurrences pre-natally. Hume would most likely reply that such is not only impossible but incomprehensible as well. More so, it may be asked: At which point does a human become conscious? Are humans conscious soon as they descend from *Orishanla's* artistic fingers? When do humans begin using their rational faculty? This question is very germane as the possession of a rational faculty is assumed before making a choice of destiny at *Ajala's* put? Is it prior retaining the life-force from *Olodumare* or afterwards? Whatever the case, David Hume would retort: "Nature has rendered human infancy peculiarly frail and mortal; as it were on purpose to refute the notion of a probationary state. The half of mankind dye before they are rational creatures" (Hume, 2007:149). Whatever the likely answer(s), it is assumed that humans alone are immortal and as Hume maintains, that thinking is false. Entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity, Ockham warns. It is therefore safe to conclude that the creation process in Yorùbá is closer to mythology and metaphor than reality. This idea is also underscored by Debola Ekanola who presupposes that "...the Yorùbá mythical account of human creation is not meant to be taken literally but understood metaphorically" in a bid to defend his naturalistic interpretation of *Ori*. It may then be asked in the Humean fashion if inferences from metaphor to real states are ever justifiable. Could metaphor be an improvement from mythology? This could be a dialogue for another day!

Meanwhile, there is a false cause fallacy in the air! This is the case when an attempt is made to link what is currently happening to an individual, good or evil, to the choice of destiny made pre-natally. Let us assume for the sake of argument that immortality is real and the creation account is not meant to be understood metaphorically and neither is it mythological. Recall what Hume teaches about induction and causation as evinced in the earlier section. Habit! Custom!! We are never justified that an entity or occasion *A* is the reason (cause) for another entity or occasion *B*, as its consequence (effect).

David Hume defends the specific thesis that all our inferences (“reasonings”) “concerning causes and effects are deriv’d from nothing but custom” (Hume, 1886:272). To therefore say that the choice of *Ori* made is the reason why one is living so and so kind of life is warrantable. It is a belief fashioned out of custom. This habitual belief, which commits the false cause, has led to a contradiction among the Yorùbá s. On the one hand, they hold that the destiny cannot be altered, but they also clutch to the belief that “through consultations with *Orunmila*,...*etutu* (sacrifice), and hard work” (Ekanola, 2006:43) a bad *Ori* may undergo transformation and be a good *Ori*. Debo Ekanola amplifies in this connection that “conversely, an originally good *Ori*, may also be altered for the worse through activities of malicious agents like the *aje* (witches), laziness and bad character” (Ekanola, 2006:43). Wande Abimbola (1976) is also conscious of this. It would be best, at this juncture to commence with a working definition of destiny. A.S. Hornby (1974) conceives destiny as “what must happen and cannot be changed or controlled”. If this is the case, then there is obviously a contradiction, emanating from the false cause. Another top issue is that no human would be morally praiseworthy or blameworthy. They are not liable to any form of punishment since the outcome of their actions is a ‘caused’ by the choice of *Ori*. This idea is also articulated by Debo Ekanola in the following words:

One implication of this is that the Yorùbá seem to be irrational, because while they recognize that destiny is alterable, they still go ahead to make efforts to change it. Another implication is that the notion of freewill and belief in the moral responsibility of humans is unjustifiable and baseless within the context of Yorùbá culture (Ekanola, 2006:46).

Various attempts have been made by scholars to reconcile this asymmetry. Wande Abimbola (1976) subscribes to a fatalistic interpretation, having stated that not even the gods are capable of altering human destiny. For Abimbola, “every man would be able to thread the path already laid out for him without beating around the bush” (Abimbola, 1976:63). If this approach overcomes irrationality by condemning attempts to alter destiny, it does not pass muster on moral responsibility. Moses Makinde (1984:198) rejected the fatalistic interpretation and vies for a weak conception of *Ori*. He sees *Ori* in this wise as a potentiality latent in every man. *Ori* for Moses Makinde would need certain things like hard work, consultations with *Orunmila*, and *etutu* (sacrifice) to be brought to fruition. Would the attempts to bring the potentiality of *Ori* to fruition not be interpreted as *Ori* itself in action? At what point would the full potential of one’s destiny be deemed realized? For Egun Oduwale (1996), destiny is inalterable. She picks a fatalistic strand. For her, whatever choice of destiny will surely be fulfilled. Any contra attempt goes against the initial premise on the acquisition of *Ori*. There is nothing that can be done to undo one’s chosen *Ori*. Oladele Balogun (2007) proposes a soft-deterministic interpretation. He attempts to allow for predestinationism and moral responsibility.

This, to my mind does not amount to any improvement on the subject. Debo Ekanola (2006) holds a naturalistic position which conceives the creation process as a metaphor. He seeks to reconcile the asymmetry that concerned scholars hitherto. Whereas his position resonates a soft-deterministic stance, he has not gone beyond one of the ways of acquiring an *Ori*, which is *adeyeba*, (that which is encountered in the world). More so, Ekanola (2006) to my mind, portrays a naturalistic interpretation latent with biological determinism and environmental determinism. The common denominator among all these scholars is the assumption that destiny necessarily causes one's life pattern and choices. There is no genuine evidence that endorses this, Hume would add.

An apologetic could argue against all of the foregoing that *Orunmila* is the final Court of Appeal in such matters. Allow me therefore to argue that even *Orunmila* does not have full knowledge of what will happen to a man on Earth. To understand this critique, one would have to return to the creation process. The only place that *Orunmila* is sighted, you would recall is *Ajala's* abode. There is no mention of this entity at *Orishanla's* 'pottery' where humans are made from clay or sand. According to Oladele Balogun:

In all these myths, *Orunmila* (arch-divinity), the founder of *ifa* (oracle) system of divination, is noted to be a witness of man's choice of destiny. Little wonder he is referred to as *Eleri-Ipin* (the witness of destiny) and the only one competent to reveal the type and content of 'ori' chosen by each person (Balogun, 2007:122).

If we take the above excerpt seriously, then *Orunmila* would have no idea of women suffering from *Mullerian agenesis*, for instance. This is because he did not witness *Orishanla*, omitting the womb during his sand or clay session of such women. Neither is *Orunmila* able to recommend that couples with AS genotype ought not to copulate to avoid a high mortality SS offspring. It would be recall that in traditional Yorùbá societies, there are reports of children born to die at infancy. Whereas Yorùbá s call these '*abiku*', some other groups in Nigeria refer to these children as '*ogbanje*'. Poems from Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka and John Pepper Clarke already attest to this belief. With the advancement and development in medical technology and research, it has come to light that the problem is actually genetic but not spiritual. What says *Orunmila*? Debo Ekanola (2006) came very close to this conclusion. Perhaps because he was more concerned with retrieving the Yorùbá s from 'irrationality', he resisted the temptation only to be steeped in a weak thesis.

A final blow to a rational and consistent belief in *Ori* comes from the successful head transplant in February, 2015. Nineteen hours and a team of brilliant surgeons led by Professor Myron Danus was all it took at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital. What implication does this successful head transplant have on a rational believer of *Ori*?

Of several things, it points to that fact that belief in *Ori* is a contradiction. The contradiction is played against when one body carries another man's head. The former's head destroyed and the latter's body cancer-ridden. Even the medical community had thought of the breakthrough as impossible hitherto. Had *Orunmila* been consulted what would have been the divination outcome? Is it the destiny of one human to have her head used by another body? Who owns the real body? How would a future state of existence be conceivable? Hume would argue that this irrationality is a testimony of not proportioning belief to evidence. Now if you still hold onto the belief in *Ori* very strongly, the personal identity problem is even a more forceful critique.

Conclusion

So far, I have been able to show that it is philosophically speaking, impossible to live after death. I have also been able to argue that the belief in *Ori* is flawed. *Ori*, aside representing human destiny in Yorùbá thought also symbolizes the physical head. To my mind, it is more appropriate to link *Ori* with the latter instead of the former. For it is pointless and aimless remembering a pre-natal existence that is not ascertainable.

Nonetheless, Biology and Evolution have fortified us with the most rational explanation regarding the origin of life. The fusion of an ovum and sperm cell led to an embryo, then a foetus and lastly a human baby. This baby could suffer from some form of physical or mental deformities. This baby could either be an albino or Caucasian or dark-skinned. There are reported cases where Negro parents delivered a Caucasian baby. The child is obviously ignorant of several things and has to learn several things by experience. Rationality as part of a human embellishment is shared by all babies. Godwin Sogolo is therefore not in error when he asserts that:

There are certain universals which cut across all human cultures. Indeed, to say that man is a rational being is to imply that mankind as a whole shares in common certain features whose absence in a given group raises the question as to whether such a group is human by definition. Pre-eminent among these universal traits of humans is the ability for self-reflection and rational thought governed essentially by certain principles of reasoning (Sogolo, 1993:xv).

The child grows in a community with distinct its own ideology. The environment shapes the way the child would think. At this point, it really matters where the child is raised. Sogolo implores that “the mind of the African is not structurally different from that of the Westerner... The truth is that both are similarly marked by the same basic features of the human species. The difference lies in the ways the two societies conceive of reality and explain objects and events.

This is so because they live different forms of life (Sogolo, 1993:74). If the Western child construes reality as ‘what is out there’, interpret occurrences as chance or luck, s/he shares the same rational potentials as any other child. However if the Yorùbá child conceives of reality and her life as predetermined by some pre-natal choices, then it is not enough to allow the child to keep reasoning thus in a jet age. A review of ideas as this essay purports is pertinent. The belief in *Ori* has long outlived its purpose.

Lastly, none of these criticisms is calculated to downplay the efficacy of the *Ifa* divination system or Yorùbá spirituality. There is always a harmony between the scientific mind and the religio-spiritually inclined mind (see Ofuasia, 2015; Schwarz, 2002). The peak here is to reveal the contradiction and the lack of critical thought by the Yorùbá s on the idea of *Ori*. There is therefore the need to embrace those aspects of the Yorùbá culture which represent progress and discard the anachronistic elements therein (Wiredu, 1980). Belief in *Ori* as the basis for why a person would live a particular life course needs to be eliminated.

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