

**A POSTMODERNIST CRITIQUE OF *OMOLUWABI* IN  
YORUBA THOUGHT**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

Postmodernism, a philosophical position that advocates the relativity of truth, knowledge, values and morality, is opposed to any essentialist cultural or grand narrative like *omolúwàbí* in **Yorùbá** culture. Many scholarly attempts have been made to review the postmodern paradigm, especially concerning such over-arching narratives in political and epistemological domains. However, there is a dearth of attempts to examine the sustainability or otherwise of the postmodernist critique of such grand values that sustained many traditional cultures such as *omolúwàbí*. This study was, therefore, designed to examine the extent to which grand moral narratives like *omolúwàbí* could withstand the onslaught of the postmodernist critique. This is with a view to establishing the extent to which *omolúwàbí*, a grand cultural narrative that promotes the good of human flourishing, cannot be relativised.

Aristotle's Virtue Ethics served as framework, while Interpretive design was used. Texts examined in African Philosophy included Idowu's *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (OGYB), Fadipe's *The Sociology of the Yoruba* (TSY), Ajadi's *OMOLÚWÀBÍ 2.0: A Code of Transformation in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nigeria* (OCT), Hallen's *The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful* (TGTBTB) and Akintola's *Yoruba Ethics and Metaphysics* (YEM). In Epistemology, Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (PMN), Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (TPC), Wheen's *How Mumbo-Jumbo Conquered the World* (HMJCW), Moore's *Philosophical Studies* (PS) and Bewaji's *Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (ITK) were interrogated. The texts deal extensively with critical issues on moral values and knowledge acquisition. The philosophical tools of criticism, conceptual analysis and reconstruction were used.

The OGYB, TSY, OCT and TGTBTB reveal that *ìwà* (character) is crucial to being in **Yorùbá** society, and *omolúwàbí* is the vehicle by which it is transmitted. The degree and quality of humanness in a personality is depicted by his/her *ìwà*. *Omolúwàbí* legislated the right course for a good society in the traditional **Yorùbá** society and also served as the foundation on which values that sustained traditional **Yorùbá** society were built. Hence, an active renaissance of its ideology is solicited to engender a good society (YEM, OCT, TGTBTB). The PMN, TPC and ITK show that foundationalist account of truth has been questioned by postmodernists, who emphasised that knowledge does not require foundations to qualify as truth. Truth is a subjective notion and thus, method of knowing cannot be grand, universal or objective. However, HMJCW and PS claim that abandonment of objective truth may be socially unhealthy as it becomes difficult to pass moral judgement on acts like honour killing in some cultures on the ground that we cannot judge others by our own standards. Critical intervention revealed that *omolúwàbí*, a grand cultural narrative that promotes the good, which is an indispensable ideal for societal flourishing, is immune from postmodernist critique.

The postmodernist critique of *omolúwàbí* cannot be sustained because *omolúwàbí* espouses such humane qualities and virtues like honesty, truthfulness, kindness, compassion and justice, which are indispensable to engendering a stable and happy society.

**Keywords:** Postmodernism and relativism, Grand narrative in **Yorùbá** thought, *Omolúwàbí*

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You are my bread when I am hungry,

You are my shelter from trouble winds,

You are my anchor in life's ocean,

And above all, Jesus Christ, You are my best Friend.

## CERTIFICATION

I certify that this work was carried out by Adeyinka Oluseye OLATUNJI in the Department of Philosophy, University of Ibadan under my supervision.

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Date

## **DEDICATION**

To:

GOD ALMIGHTY: In Whom I live and move and have my being. A dependable Father in Whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning.

My Lord and Saviour, JESUS CHRIST, my truest Friend and Deliverer.

The HOLY SPIRIT, my Guide and Guardian.

To the memory of my father: Chief Olufemi Olukayode Adenuga JP, B. Ed., M. Ed.

(October 2nd, 1931- October 2nd, 2018)

Surely, the memory of the just is blessed.



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## INTRODUCTION

Our society today is being bedeviled by alarming forms and degrees of crimes and terrorism and life is nearly back to the hypothetical state of nature which Thomas Hobbes described as solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. This degeneration in security of life and property and moral rectitude is worldwide and not peculiar to Nigeria. Various decrees, orientation programmes, sensitization programmes, amnesty and other measures had been hoisted by our nation to bring a stop or a drastic reduction in the rate of negative actions perpetrated by deviants. However, dividends from these programmes despite the monumental human, financial and material resources invested in them are so insignificant. Crimes and criminalities struggle every day for space in the dailies. Our values are continually changing and moral values, which according to Durkheim, that act as glue in binding the society together have become melted down.

The trend described above can easily be linked to postmodernism which is seen as the rejection of the objectivity of human experience: a rejection of objectivity for subjectivity, universality for relativity, generalization for particularization and fixities for frailties. It is a paradigm shift from established ways of living in the modern period. Some had proposed that the world began to move from modernity to postmodernity after the first and second world wars that took place between 1914 – 1919 and 1939 – 1945 respectively. In fact, Arnold J. Toynbee maintained that our own post-modern age has been inaugurated by the general war of 1914 – 1919 while Oka Obono also noted that the two world wars were the final antecedents of shift in perceptions and the moral fabric of society, undermining the status quo in a surrounding spirit of existentialist inquiry.<sup>1</sup>

Postmodernism can manifest in diverse forms but for the purpose of this study our focus shall be postmodernism as it reflects in relativism of moral values, truth, and reasonableness. Relativism of moral values states that there is no universal, objective or absolute truth or moral judgement but that these are always relative to some particular frame of reference. <sup>2</sup> Granted the indispensability of postmodernism in contemporary discourse, to what extent has the discourse on postmodernism met the challenges of engendering a stable society in ensuring that virtues of humanity such as honesty, truthfulness, rectitude, patience, contentment and the like are promoted and sustained?

The imperative of the quest for the ‘good’ as an indispensable ideal for societal flourishing is non-negotiable. The promotion of the good is crucial in establishing a happy society globally but this has been hampered by the promotion of a postmodernist culture.

The Yoruba concept of *Omoluwabi* a prevalent concept in traditional Yoruba setting has been proposed as a panacea for re-working and promoting an ideal society. The concept refers to a morally upright person or an embodiment of morality and virtue. It is believed that if all or majority of people in the society adopt the *Omoluwabi* standard, and habitually and sincerely exhibit such virtues as honesty, consideration for others, self-discipline, truthfulness, chastity, kindness, respect for constituted authority, hard work and contentment, then the world will be a better place to live in. The meaning of the world being a better place implies that factors that contribute to crimes, insurgency, chaos, political unrest, politics with bitterness, hunger, diseases, enlarged IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps, increased number of immigrants and refugees, economic hardship, wide economic margin between the leaders and the led, high level of illiteracy, moral decadence and so many other societal ills are not allowed to blossom. The indices of a better world may include absence of crimes or low crime rate, absence of wars and communal clashes, religious tolerance, low level of illiteracy, stable and growing economy, stable and people oriented political scene, effective social and health schemes, responsive governance, social justice and moral rectitude. These indices and others being synchronized and working together culminate into the world being a better place.

The term *Omoluwabi* etymologically is a fusion of the expression *omo-olu-iwa-bi* meaning ‘a person born, nurtured and trained by someone with good character, that is, *olu iwa* (chief of character) or the child begotten of *Oniwa*<sup>3</sup> that is, *oni- iwa* (owner or possessor of character). This being suggestive of the fact that such a child having the privilege of being raised by the possessor of good character may grow up as a person with good character. It also stresses the inevitability of parental guidance and guardian’s counsel in children’s character-moulding. In Greek mythology, Mentor the son of Alcimus and an old friend of Odysseus was placed in charge of Telemachus (Odysseus’ son) when he, Odysseus left for the Trojan War. Athena, the goddess of wisdom

disguises herself as Mentor so that she could impart wisdom and courage to the young prince Telemachus. Athena leads Telemachus to the inner knowledge which dwells within him.<sup>4</sup> Mentor (Athena) encourages Telemachus to embark on a journey to find out whether his father is still alive, and where he may be. Mentor provides guidance, encouragement, and support to Telemachus during his journey in search of his father. A mentor from this relationship can thus mean “a wise and trusted counsellor or teacher”. Mentors are those special individuals who care enough to share their wisdom and guide one along one’s personal and professional journey. Mentors are problems-solving partners, they give sense of directions, they tell you the truth and they give you courage to take action.<sup>5</sup> In a nutshell, a mentor brings out the best in the mentees and support them to reach their optimal potentials in life and career through orientation, re-orientation, training, re-training, internalization et ce tera. An important point to note is that the mentor cannot give what he does not possess, so it is from the wealth of his experience that the mentor dishes out to nourish and mould the mentees. The *olu-iwa* (chief and custodian of character) whose offspring or mentees (those who follow his steps) are the *Omoluwabi* who share largely in his reservoir of good character and exhibit humane qualities as honesty, gratitude, hard-work, gentleness, kindness, respect for elders and constituted authorities, consideration for others.

The most probable source of the *Omoluwabi* expression has been identified to be the *odu ifa* divinatory verses which are Yoruba philosophical literary corpus with a binary system of 256 chapters (two hundred and fifty six) chapters. The studies and practical experiences highlight the strong moral code that prescribe acceptable standards of right and wrong in the society into which children were socialized early in life.<sup>6</sup> In the *Odu* corpus according to *Ogbe Egunda*, *Orunmila* once sought the means of success in life and was told that the only way was for him to marry *Iwa* (character or good character). *Orunmila* accordingly married *Iwa* and became very successful. Hence everybody has since been seeking after *Iwa*, with the result that *Iwa* becomes the mother of numerous children:<sup>7</sup>

*E wa w’omo Iwa berebe o,*

*E wa w’omo Iwa berebe o,*

*Iwa gbe dani,  
Iwa pon s'ehin,  
E wa w'omo Iwa berebe o.*

(Translation)

Come and behold the countless children of Iwa,  
Come and behold the countless children of Iwa,  
Iwa carries (children) in (her) arms,  
Iwa carries (children) on (her) back,  
Come and behold the countless children of Iwa.

*Iwa* personified as a good woman in the *Ogbe Egunda* cited above that *Orunmila* through divination was advised to marry and who brought him success to the admiration of other men can also be likened to the virtuous woman in the book of Proverbs in the Holy Bible. The passage is stated below:

Who can find a virtuous wife?  
For her worth is far above rubies.  
The heart of her husband safely trusts her;  
So he will have no lack of gain.  
She does him good and not evil  
All the days of her life.  
She seeks wool and flax,  
And willingly works with her hands,  
She is like the merchant ships,  
She brings her food from afar.



She rises while it is still yet night,  
And provides food for her household,  
And a portion for her maidservants.  
She considers a field and buys it;  
From her profits she plants a vineyard.  
She girds herself with strength,  
And strengthens her arms.  
She perceives that her merchandise is good,  
And her lamp does not go out by night.  
She stretches out her hands to the distaff,  
And her hands hold the spindle.  
She extends her hand to the poor,  
Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.  
She is not afraid of snow for her household,  
For all her household is clothed in scarlet.  
She makes tapestry for herself;  
Her clothing is fine linen and purple.  
Her husband is known in the gates,  
When he sits among the elders of the land.  
She makes linen garments and sells them,  
And supplies sashes for the merchants.

Strength and honour are her clothing;  
She shall rejoice in time to come.  
She opens her mouth with wisdom,  
And on her tongue is the law of kindness.  
She watches over the ways of her household,  
And does not eat the bread of idleness.  
Her children rise up and call her blessed;  
Her husband also, and he praises her.  
“Many daughters have done well  
But you excel them all.”  
Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing,  
But a woman who fears the LORD  
She shall be praised.  
Give her of the fruit of her hands,  
And let her own works praise her in the gates. <sup>8</sup>

The virtuous woman's worth is priceless or valueless for her worth is far above precious stones. The heart of her husband safely trusts her because she does him only good and not evil all the days of her life. She does not engage in activities like promiscuity, gossiping, tale-bearing, rumour-mongering, brawling, indebtedness that may bring shame and reproach to her husband and children. She is industrious, enterprising, resourceful and hardworking. She takes good care of her household, leaving no one or nothing unattended to. She has foresight and she is frugal in spending. By the reason of her foresightedness and frugality in spending, her business grows and expands from a bare field to a fruitful vineyard. Her lamp does not go out at night, she makes extra sacrifice, burning the

midnight candle to ensure that things under her purview are in good shape. She is not only concerned about the welfare of household, she also stretches her hands to the poor – she is generous. Changes in weather or economic situation do not stagger her because she always has adequate provision of food and clothing for her household. She also amidst all these does not forget to take good care of herself. She makes tapestry (a heavy woven cloth often with decorative pictorial designs) for herself and her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is successful, his peace of mind is always ascertained, knowing that the home-front is stable and formidable. He is not unduly perturbed because the wife does not give him reasons to distrust her. The husband by virtue of being successful due to his wife's dedication sits with the elders (nobles) of the land and not with base or obscure fellows. Even among the elders he is distinguished for all that is comely. She is not a loose-talker, she speaks only words of wisdom and she is kind-hearted. She does not eat the bread of idleness, she is not a busy-body. Her time is judiciously spent since she has so much to do and put in place that she also needs to stay awake for some extra hours at night in order to make sure that her household runs smoothly. Her staying awake for extra hours is also to lay prayers and supplications before the Almighty God on behalf of her household after the hustle and bustle of the day. She watches diligently over her household and nothing goes amiss. She does not rely on comments and observations from outsiders to know what needs to be attended to in her home. She fears the Lord and will not dabble into any venture that may tarnish her image. Her children call her blessed and her husband praises her. By virtue of her good character (*iwa rere*) of commitment and dedication to her family, chastity, wisdom, kindness, resourcefulness, foresightedness, frugality, generosity and hard-work she surpasses other women and thus can be seen as the epitome or quintessence of a good wife.

Also, it is taught in the Ifa corpus that *Iwa (rere)* is very essential in life. According to Oyeshile, one cannot compare *iwa (rere)* 'good character' with other valuable things such as money, houses, children and other assets which a man may aspire to have in life. The reason according to the Yoruba is that if a man or woman has other valuables and lacks character, he/she is regarded as having lacked all.<sup>9</sup> Another recital under Ogbe Egunda goes thus:

*Iwa nikan l'o soro o,*  
*Iwa nikan l'o soro,*  
*Ori kan kii buru l'otu Ife,*  
*Iwa nikan l'o soro o.*

(Translation)

Character is all that is requisite,

Character is all that is requisite,

There is no destiny to be called unhappy in Ife city,

Character is all that is requisite.

This recital is very instructive and laden with deep meaning. It unravels the fact that *Iwa* (character) is superior to destiny (*ayanmo*), if one should have a bright destiny but fails to garnish it with good character, such destiny may become unfulfilled. In the event of making choices, one is counseled to choose good character above other things.

The concept of *Omoluwabi* thus connotes a man that has been trained to behave properly by imbibing qualities and virtues at all time and by observing the various shortcomings of others with a resolution of not to running into such kind of misdeeds. The *Omoluwabi* is an individual who consciously exercises self-control and moderates his natural drives, impulses and inclinations. He is an epitome of a 'thorough bred' such that he or she is regarded as worthy of being entrusted with positions of responsibility.<sup>10</sup> The character traits exhibited by the *Omoluwabi* is largely responsible for his success. A study was carried out to examine the cultural influences in school successes as perceived by Nigerian voluntary immigrant parents and their adult children. The participants of the research credited their successes in education and in life to an African philosophy called *Omoluwabi*.<sup>11</sup>

Traits of *Omoluwabi* which is the exhibition of high moral standards are being infused into an individual from childhood not only by the parents or family members but also actively by members of the community. In fact, the community plays a crucial role in instilling the virtues of *Omoluwabi* in an individual. A Yoruba proverb says that "*enikan*

*nii bi mo, igba eniyan nii wo o*”, this is translated to mean that it is only one person that gives birth to a child but many people will be responsible for the child’s nurture and training. Also, the benefits of exhibiting traits of *Omoluwabi* are not being enjoyed only by the *Omoluwabi* but, to a larger extent by the community/society.

The Yoruba have a rich cultural heritage with values that regulate individuals’ and groups’ actions and reactions thereby making the Yoruba one of the most cultured and sophisticated group in the world. It however have been observed that with the emergence of postmodernism and the undue exploitation of its relativistic nature, communalism which has been a prominent feature of the Yoruba culture and other indigenous cultures has gradually given way to individualism, objectivity to subjectivity, fixities to frailties and universality to relativity.

Postmodernists believe strongly in self-actualization, individual freedom, influx of cultures and have come to argue that such concepts as the concept of *Omoluwabi* are forms of grand-narrative that propose final interpretations to issues and prescribe rules which must be adhered to. Grand-narratives to them attempt to monitor and control the lives of citizens thereby institutionalizing compliance, conformity and complacency. The concept of grand narrative and in particular what Lyotard called the “emancipation narrative” concerns the kind of meta-narrative which describes not just one thing after another, but sees some kind of interconnectedness between events, an inner connection between events related to one another, a succession of social systems, the gradual development of social conditions.<sup>12</sup> What grand narrative strives to achieve is to make sense of history, to give an objective explanation of different happenings in history and connect them in such a way to make a sensible whole. Lyotard is however of the opinion that in the postmodern period, people no longer believe in grand narratives, because .... “grand narratives” are old fashioned and oppressive.<sup>13</sup> Oppressive here may imply that such explanations exclude the opportunity for differing since they are usually fraught with a fear of looming and impending danger for anyone who holds a contrary view. This may be described as “fallacy ad baculum” which is propounding arguments that try to establish conclusions by creating fear in the minds of those who hold divergent views.

Lyotard believes for example, that norms or civil laws are man-imposed through the process of legitimization by which a legislator is authorized to promulgate such a law.<sup>14</sup>

The concept of *Omoluwabi* which is a form of cultural grand-narrative is claimed to be positive as it proposed and legislated the right course for a good society in the traditional Yoruba society. The aim of this study is to seek for the rejuvenation of *Omoluwabi* concept and to propose it as a moral blue print for global society. This is however dependent on the ability of *Omoluwabi* – a grand theory to overcome the critique of postmodernists. How viable is the critique or argument of the postmodernists against a positive grand-narrative that promotes the ‘good’ like *Omoluwabi*? Can the critique of the postmodernist obliterate the Yoruba concept of *Omoluwabi*? How relevant is the *Omoluwabi* concept in our postmodern world?

### **Literature Review**

Many literature were interacted with during the course of the study but those that are core to the study include Philosophy and the mirror of nature by Richard Rorty, Being and nothingness by Jean-Paul Sartre, Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison by Michel Foucault, The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge in theory and history literature by J. Lyotard, The myth of Sisyphus by Albert Camus, The cultural tapestry of African sexuality by Obono, We are all postmodernists now! African Philosophy and the postmodern agenda by Afolayan, Is postmodernism meaningful in Yoruba? by Afolayan, Richard Rorty and postmodern theory by Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, After Postmodernism: An introduction to critical realism edited by Jose Lopez and Garry Potter, The appeal of one half of the human race, women, against the pretensions of the other half, men, to restrain them in politics, and thence in civil and domestic slavery by Anna Doyle Wheeler and William Thompson, Philosophy: The Power of Ideas (5<sup>th</sup> Edition) by B. N. Moore and K. Bruder, Sociological Theory by G. Ritzer, A Short History of the British Industrial Revolution by E. Griffin, The Industrialisation of Europe 1760 – 1970 by Pollard Sidney, The effect of Industrialisation on the family: The Isolated Nuclear family by Talcott Parsons, All that is solid melts into air-the experience of modernity by M. Berman, The World Past to Present by B. R. Reque, Postmodernism:

Issues and Problems by M. H. Dewan and M.M. Karim, How Mumbo-Jumbo Conquered the World- a short history of modern delusions by F. Wheen, On Post – Modernism by N. Chomsky, The New Tolerance, by J. McDowell, & B. Hostetler.

Literatures on postmodernism listed above can be grouped into two. On one hand are authors like Rorty, Lyotard, Foucault, who are amenable to postmodernism. Richard Rorty in his book, *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*,<sup>15</sup> debunks traditional claims of objectively knowing the truth. Rorty is of the view that objectivity is but a fiction and the idea of ‘truth’ is a myth, because to him, there is no universal method of knowing when one has reached the truth or when one is close to it.<sup>16</sup> We live in a relativistic world<sup>17</sup> and according to Rorty, every culture has its own standards of what counts as evidences, reasonableness, knowledge and truth. This ultimately means that there is no universal method of knowing what is true and no one can claim whether he or she has reached the truth except in the sense of truth as it is held in one’s own culture. The import of this is that what accounts as truth cannot be universal, because what is held as ‘truth’ in one clime may not hold as ‘truth’ in another clime. This concept of truth seems to imply that different and perhaps conflicting beliefs could equally be true as long as they are fully justified relative to alternative standards of rationality.

Rorty further alludes to the fact that truth can never be found using universal principles since according to him, truth is a subjective concept. Hence, we should not be insistent on dissipating our efforts at striving to achieve universal truth. He says that truth in the subjective sense which is achievable should be put into productive use by helping to extend people’s horizons and possibilities. He asserts that what matters is our loyalty to other human beings by enabling them to develop their innate potentials and not the hope of getting things right by adopting a set of rules. We are not to create robots out of men or put them in straitjackets of history and culture.

Rorty insists that it is wrong to assume that our ideas can mirror reality as it ‘really is’. He explains that we approach reality from different conceptual perspectives, but we cannot ‘step outside’ our perspectives to see if they do indeed mirror reality as it really is. To step outside our ideas is impossible. He argues that there is no universal human nature, and instead the ‘self’ is a ‘decentred contingency’. The self is decentred because it

has no central defining essence that transcends its social and historical location in a particular society. As there is no such transcendental human nature, the self is not distinct from its changeable identity. This means that the self is contingent upon the prevailing social norms and customs that constitute its identity. In other words, there are as many 'human nature' as there are different human societies. What is to be human is defined and realised in different ways, in different places and at different times.

Different cultures have different ethics, and there is no universal ethical system by which we can judge different cultures neutrally (without being bias) and according to Rorty what the sense of (right and wrong) is, depends on one's location within a particular society. There are different societies which have different perspectives on what is normal and good; and we cannot go outside these perspectives to see a single fixed human nature. Therefore, the way we go on in one society will be different from how others go on in their different societies. But to insist on universal human nature will be to assume the status of an authoritarian society that imposes an identity alien to its subjects on them, thereby humiliating its population.<sup>18</sup>

Michel Foucault in his book, *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison*<sup>19</sup> rejects the disciplinary society where officials have the privilege of surveillance over the people and so curtail their freedom. Foucault attempts to chart the power relations by which societies exclude, lock up, look down on, and show disdain to the insane, the prisoners and the homosexual - those persons society defines as "other" because their behavioural patterns do not conform to the convention. These people are not to be excluded from the society by either being locked up in asylum or prison, and in Foucault's thinking, society should be able to tolerate the margin of differences exhibited by these people. Jean-Francois Lyotard on his own part asserts that our moral leaning should be one that helps to refine our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate those who overtime were termed as the 'other'. It is a call to look on the 'other' with benevolence and tolerance and see the good inherent in them. Everyone should be given opportunity to live and freely express himself since two individuals are never the same. This he opines will give greater opportunities for a diversity of voices and opinions to be heard which will automatically enhance the society. It is like saying that 'let a thousand flowers



bloom'. Lyotard urges that "let us wage war on totality..... let us activate the differences", that is, that an end should be put to concepts that advocate totality, universalism, objectivity, absolutism while subjectivity, relativity and multiplicity should be activated.

Also, Fredric Jameson in his book 'Postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism' <sup>20</sup> equates postmodernism with capitalism. He lays claim to the fact that there is conformity between Marxism and postmodernism and offers capitalism as the economic base of this new cultural world, that is, the postmodern world. Jameson is of the opinion that as Karl Marx viewed capitalism as a situation where there exists the production of liberation and very valuable advancement and at the same time the height of exploitation and alienation, so also, catastrophe and progress exist together in the postmodern society. Jameson's analysis is thus an objective view of postmodernism as a culture where both the negative and positive exist side by side. <sup>21</sup>

Afolayan's essay, We are all postmodernists now! is an attempt to understand the importance or relevance of the concept of postmodernism in African Philosophy. Afolayan identifies the views of 'detractors' who opine that there is a certain conceptual absurdity in the idea of postmodernism in a continent that is just grappling with the exigencies of modernity. This implies that Africa cannot be postmodern before being modern. On the other hand, the 'champions' of the necessity of postmodern theorizing in Africa believe that postmodernism offers an avenue to escape out of the *cul de sac* or frustration of intellectual nativism that has precluded Africa from the benefits of global open space of ideas". Afolayan concludes by stating that "the strategy has the advantage of giving African philosophers a leeway- beyond the mere critique of Eurocentrism (the practice of viewing the world from a European perspective, with an implied belief, either consciously or subconsciously in the pre-eminence or superiority of European culture) for confronting the twin problem of African identity and African development."<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand are thinkers who are averse to postmodernism. Scholars like McDowell Josh and Hostetler Bob have pointed out that postmodernism encourages relativism of values which states that points of view have no absolute truth or validity within themselves, but that they only have relative subjective value according to

differences in perception and consideration. Postmodernism to them embraces many theoretical frames which contrast and often contradict each other.<sup>23</sup> They are of the opinion that postmodernism weakens and undermines the potency of values, especially moral values upon which the society is based and which ultimately act as a binding force in a society to foster peaceful co-existence. Postmodernism in their estimate presents a very fundamental problem because with such a weakening of the common morality, people find themselves wandering aimlessly in the world in a state of anomie. Anomie is the lack of moral or social standard of conduct in an individual and by extension, in the community especially when these standards previously existed. Fredric Jameson, an American critic in his book, 'Postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism again stated that two significant features of postmodernism are 'pastiche' which means a work of art, a piece of writing and so on that is created by deliberately copying the style of something or somebody else, and 'schizophrenia' which means a mental illness in which a person becomes unable to link thought, emotion and behavior, leading to withdrawal from reality and personal relationship.<sup>24</sup> Here, postmodernism as a movement has been seen as a social malady where people inflicted with the illness are emotionally unstable and are frequently changing their minds or holding opinions that seem to oppose each other thereby creating a disintegrated and relativistic society.

Some thinkers also have in various ways analyzed and criticized some forms and tendencies in postmodernism. Critics aver that postmodernism can be meaningless, obscure and relativistic so much more that it destroys sound judgments. Culturally conservative writers such as Charles Colson submits that postmodernism is characterized by ideological agnostic and replete with moral relativism or situation ethics.<sup>25</sup> Many philosophical movements reject postmodernism as unhealthy states of being because of its rejection of natural truths and its emphasis on material and physical pleasure which lead to rejection of inner balance, peace and spirituality. Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler are also against the abandonment of objective truth which they opine is an unacceptable feature of postmodernism. They define postmodernism as 'a worldview characterized by the belief that truth doesn't exist in any objective sense but is created rather than discovered'<sup>26</sup> The concept of relativism of truth as held by the postmodernists is also criticized by Francis Wheen in his book How Mumbo-Jumbo Conquered the

world. According to Wheen, it will be ‘wrong’ to criticize practices like honour killings and female genital mutilation in some cultures by simply claiming that we cannot judge others by our own standards.<sup>27</sup>

For the understanding of Yoruba’s ethics, culture, values, metaphysics and the concept of *Omoluwabi* the following literature proved indispensable, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* by E. B. Idowu, *Christian Apologetics* by A. Richardson, *This House of Oduduwa Must Not Fall* by O. Ajayi, *The Sociology of the Yoruba* by N. A. Fadipe, *Yoruba politics and the concept of ‘omoluabi’* by J. Hakeem, *Omoluabi: The way of Human Being: An African philosophy’s Impact on Nigeria Voluntary Immigrants’ Educational and other Life Aspirations’* by D. Adeniji – Neill, *Omoluwabi: Its concept and education in Yoruba Land* edited by A. Ogundeji and A. Adeniji, *Glocalization of Yoruba Omoluwabi Ideology* by Ademola Dasylva, *Challenges of Good Governance and Development: Cultural and Literary Perspectives* by Arinpe Adejumo and *Omoluwabi 2.0: A code of Transformation in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nigeria* by Adewale Ajadi. Some of these literatures proposed the concept of *Omoluwabi* as a tool of socio-political engineering. The gap in scholarship noticed in this body of scholarly literature is that none took cognisance of and attempted a review of the critique of the postmodernists against totalitarianism and over-arching, grand moral theories of which *Omoluwabi* is one. It is this gap that this study intends to address by conducting a philosophical examination of the concept of ‘good’ to confirm if the *Omoluwabi* concept (*which is essentially about promoting the good*) aligns with what accounts as ‘good’ in some other cultures and also if it fits into the framework of Aristotle virtue ethics.

*Great Traditions in Ethics* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) by E. M. Albert, T. C. Denise, and S. P. Peterfreund, *What Is Good? The Search for the Best Way to live* by A. C. Grayling, *Why Be Moral?* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) by Archie J. Bahm, *Principal Ethica: What is Good?* By G. E. Moore, *Ethics* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) by William K. Frankena were of immense help in getting the crust of the theory of ‘good’.

The conglomeration of the literature interacted with during the course of study reveals that one cannot think about postmodernism without thinking about modernism, the movement from which postmodernism seems to grow or emerge.<sup>28</sup> Modernity which

precedes postmodernity refers to a historical period called the modern era, and modernism as the socio – cultural norms, attitudes and practices that arose in post-medieval Europe or the culture that arose out of enlightenment and has developed since in various ways and at various times around the world. <sup>29</sup> The age of enlightenment began with the emergence of Universities which gave people access to formal education. Also, the lord/serf order was broken. In place of the serfs were free men and women who received wages for services rendered to the lords and ladies.<sup>30</sup> The defining characteristics of modernity include the following:

- i. Bureaucracy – impersonal, social hierarchies that practice a division of labour and are marked by a regularity of method and procedure.
- ii. Rationalization – the idea that the world can be understood and managed through a reasonable and logical system of theories.
- iii. Commodification – the reduction of all aspects of life to objects of monetary consumption.
- iv. Urbanization – the movement of people to large towns and cities because of industrial revolution.
- v. Objectivism – the belief that truth – claims can be established by autonomous information which is accessible to all.
- vi. Universalism – application of ideas/claims to all cultures/circumstances regardless of local differences and distinctions.
- vii. Industrial Society – societies formed around the industrial production and distribution of products. The period also featured mass production of goods.
- viii. Homogenization – the social forces that tend toward a uniformity of cultural ideas.
- ix. Totalitarianism – central governments that suppress free expression and political dissent and give general explanation to phenomena regardless of the different situations surrounding such phenomena at a particular point in time.

Postmodernism supports flexibility of moral principles, however, Immanuel Kant, a prominent philosopher of the modern era had pointed out that moral principles should hold without exception, for example, if it is wrong to torture helpless animal, then it will

be wrong for anyone, at any time to do so. <sup>31</sup> To him, because a moral rule is something that holds without exception, that is, holds universally, one should act only on principles that could hold universally. Kant advocated universality based on morally acceptable principles as supported by reason. For example, this principle ‘to obtain a good grade, it is acceptable to cheat’ cannot be held universally since it would be irrational for anyone to want to hold or apply it universally. Then, if it is irrational for a principle to be held universally because it is irrational and morally improper, therefore the act should not be done. Thus for Kant, the supreme prescription of morality, which he calls supreme categorical imperative is to act always in such a way that one could rationally will the principle on which one acts to be a universal law. <sup>32</sup> He stated that categorical imperatives which hold unconditionally are different from hypothetical imperatives which states that one ought to do something if such and such an end is desired. <sup>33</sup> This is taking a stand against situational ethic that proves an act to be justified if the end result is desirable regardless of the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of the act. A moral imperative then to Kant commands obedience for the sake of no other end but its own rightness. It is not the effects or consequences of one’s action that determine whether one’s action is good for this is beyond one’s control. What is within one’s control is the intent with which one acts. Kant believes that to violate the supreme categorical principle of morality, that is, the supreme categorical imperative is to be irrational. <sup>34</sup>

In essence, Kant believes strongly in universality of moral ethical values and proposes that over-arching moral principles as categorical imperative should be adhered to. This is instrumental in debunking the claims of situation ethicists that situate the rightness or truth of an action in its consequence. He argued that rationality should be the source of all value and that the rightness of an action is not based on the end result but on one’s intention of perpetrating the action.

Postmodernism as a divergent concept to modernism emphasizes relativism of values and knowledge and it seeks to question authority and, at the same time, maintains that there are no set of universal rules valid for all times and places. Postmodernism also seeks to point out the limitations of modernism. Lemert asserts that postmodernism is a “culture” that emphasizes that there is a better world than the modern one. <sup>35</sup> While Modern Social

theory sought a universal, a historical and rational foundation for its analysis and critique of society,<sup>36</sup> postmodern thinking rejects this foundationalism and tends to be relativistic, irrational and nihilistic. Postmodernism is also against any grand totalizing and meta-narrative theory,<sup>37</sup> that is, any theory that proposes single, general or summary approach to issues that affect man and the society. Postmodernist thinkers are in opposition to any form of grand theory and so their ideas are fragmentary and extol non – argumentative procedures<sup>38</sup> but procedures that can enable individuals to live according to them a meaningful and purposeful life.

Postmodernists distrust any form of universal philosophy, while insisting that there is no single theoretical discourse that can offer an explanation for all forms of social relationships or for every mode of political practice. Postmodernists strongly believe that each case should be judged on its own merit bearing in mind its peculiarity at that point in time and that a general rule should not sway in judgment over all cases. Lyotard, for example, was critical of Marxism because he believes that the theory wishes to create a homogenous society which can only be brought about through the use of coercion which automatically will hamper the freedom of individuals. Lyotard believes that the individualistic and fragmented society we have today is here to stay.<sup>39</sup> Postmodernism planning aims to accept pluralism and heighten awareness of social difference in order to bring to light the claims of minority and disadvantaged groups.

Some fundamental objectives of postmodernism include emphasis on localism, development of an idea of anti – expertise, flexibility, fragmented and democratic organisation environment. These stand in contradiction to the concepts and tenets of modernism which is based on the idea of universal rationality, universal humanity and universal methodological assumptions.<sup>40</sup>

Values according to J. M. Henslin refer to the standards by which people define what is good or bad, beautiful or ugly. Values underlie our preferences, guide our choices and indicate what we hold worthwhile in life. To learn about a people's culture is to learn their values and their ideas about what is desirable in life.<sup>41</sup> Moral values are borne out of the ideals of our ways of life, our customs and our practices. Values are also derived from our religions and these are theoretical values which are the ideals we learn from the

various forms of religions that we practice. It is believed that these values are divine and adherence to them is not a matter of choice because deviation may incur the wrath of the Divine. There is no society without its set of values which may be written or unwritten. Values are to create and maintain sanity and order in the society and to regulate and control human excesses. Idowu asserts that the sense of right and wrong, by the decree of God, has always been part of human nature<sup>42</sup> that is, being able to distinguish good from evil is a natural trait given by God to men and according to Richardson, though it is true that moral standards vary widely from age to age and from place to place, yet all cultures acknowledge, according to their own standards, that there is a difference between right and wrong.<sup>43</sup>

It should however not be taken that moral values are derivatives only of our religious practices. For example, in the African traditional societies, there were other sources from which moral values engendered. It is taught in folk-tales, folk-lore and folk-songs, *ifa* corpus in the Yoruba society that those who go astray or flout the values of the society would not go unpunished while those who adhere to and promote such values as honesty, kindness, respect to elders, obedience to parents and elders would be rewarded. Oyeshile in his exposition on the origins of morality within the Yoruba framework writes thus “our conclusion is that although religion plays a prominent role in the life of Africans, morality from which the people derive and exhibit their sense of right and wrong, good and evil is never exclusively based on religion. Rather there are many origins of morality such as religion, rationality, prudence, societal custom and habit, and need for peaceful co-existence in society”.<sup>44</sup> Apart from establishing the fact that morality in African traditional societies streamed from a myriad of sources, one can deduce from the statement ‘religion plays a prominent role in the life of Africans’ that moral values from religious source are accorded strict observance because to act otherwise may attract the wrath of the Divinity whose punishment may not terminate on earth but extends from the here to the here-after.

In all, critics of postmodernism argue that it weakens moral values which serve as the common conscience of the society through moral laxity occasioned by

subjectivity/relativity of moral values, materialism and pragmatism. The legalization and decriminalization of practices which generally are regarded as obnoxious and engaged in secretly by those whom people refer to as social miscreants and reprobates has put a question mark on our moral integrity as rational beings. Social anomalies like crossing dressing, same sex marriage, cross-gendering, gay, lesbianism, bestiality have now come to look normal and innocent. The fact that same sex marriage is legalized in some countries may be worth reflecting on. This is so because the implication may be that a court registrar that refuses to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples would have contravened the law of the country and may be liable to sanctions for the refusal.

However, a keen and objective study reveals that postmodernism supports influx of values and seeks to establish the fact that no value is superior to the other. It also strengthens the notion that no culture should be used as a measure or a yardstick to judge another culture. The beauty of this is that everyone regardless of race, colour, culture, custom, gender and creed can freely present his/her ideas and have opportunity to compete on the same pedestal with others. The import of this is that prejudices and bias are removed and everyone has an equal chance to realize his/her optimum potential.

The benefits accruing from postmodernism will however be enormous and problem-free if the *Omoluwabi* is introduced into the postmodernists' discourse in order to stem the tide of avalanche and land slide degenerating moral issues afflicting the society.

### **Statement of Problem**

The statement of problem is about the extent to which we can sustain the postmodernist critique of such essentialist, over-arching, and grand moral theories as the *Omoluwabi* concept which portray and promote the good. The gap in scholarship is that although many scholarly attempts have been carried out to review and critique the postmodernist paradigm especially concerning such over-arching values in political and epistemological domains, however there is a dearth of attempts to examine the sustainability or otherwise of the postmodernist critique of such values that sustained many traditional African cultures as the concept of *Omoluwabi*. This study therefore aims at the philosophical



examination of the adequacy or otherwise of the critique of postmodernism of over-arching African cultural and moral values such as *Omoluwabi* in Yoruba culture.

Postmodernism has been viewed by many as a cultural approach, perspective, orientation or worldview that promotes influx of values by its permissible nature and which has adversely affected the contemporary society. It is believed that the influence of postmodernism by the over-exploitation of its subjective nature has led to the erosion of established moral values giving rise to moral, social and political vices of frightening magnitude in the contemporary African societies.

This is not to claim that the African past was completely flawless or that there existed a state of utopia. In the traditional African societies, for example, the Yoruba traditional society, there existed words like *janduku* (robber), *ika* (wicked), *ojukokoro* (covetousness) and the like to denote that there were unscrupulous elements in the traditional African societies. However, the communitarian nature of the African societies where each person was responsible to the other person and everyone was responsible to the community did not in any way support the propagation and flourish of vices whereas the relativistic/subjectivity nature of postmodernism with all its many positive attributes regrettably can be said to aid or foster vices.

The concept of *Omoluwabi* in Yoruba communal philosophy has been proposed by scholars like Daslyva, Omole, Adejumo and many others as a panacea for addressing the problem of erosion of values. Postmodernists have argued against ‘fixities’, ‘totalitarianism’ and other concepts that propose general, summary and statutory explanations to life issues which they believe will stifle diversity and enforce conformism. The question that looms high is ‘will the concept of *Omoluwabi* with all its glowing attributes be able to withstand the critique of postmodernists that have no tolerance for theories that support universalism?’

### **Statement of Thesis**

The thesis of this study is that postmodernism, in spite of the freedom it grants in recognition of individual and cultural autonomy cannot obliterate such over-arching

moral values as the *Omoluwabi*. This is because such grand theories as the *Omoluwabi* promote the concept of the good which is fundamental to the sustenance of any society. The shifting values promoted by postmodernism cannot obliterate the concept of the good without which a society cannot experience sustainable development. *Omoluwabi* (a morally upright person) derived from *iwa* (character) which is the foundation of Yoruba morality can help to address the negative traits of postmodernism thereby engendering sustainable development and social order in contemporary society.

In this work, we further seek to debunk the critique of the postmodernists by examining the concept of ‘good’ as theorized by philosophers like Aristotle to see if *Omoluwabi* meets the requirement of what accounts as ‘good’. We also analysed the concepts of good in some African societies and established its relatedness to the Yoruba *Omoluwabi*. This is necessary in order to justify our proposing its (*Omoluwabi*’s) tenets for social, political and economic re-ordering of our contemporary society.

The concept of *Omoluwabi* is embedded in Yoruba culture.<sup>45</sup> The Yoruba lived together in the pre-colonial era in compounds and life under this condition of living communally would have been intolerable if ways and means had not been devised to enable them live together in harmony. There is an elaborate code of manners and etiquette, the observance of which serves to reduce the strains and frustration of interpersonal relationship. The communal spirit which exists in the Yoruba culture is pronounced by many Yoruba proverbs, one of which runs thus ‘*agbajo owo la fi nso ‘ya’, enikan kii so wipe awa de*’ (it is with the fist that we beat the chest: one person cannot say ‘we’ have arrived). Another Yoruba proverb says that ‘*ka rin ka po, yiye nii ye ni*’ which is to show that Yoruba are of the opinion that togetherness is a thing of pride and strength.

Joy and pain are shared by all in the community and a self –contained, self-reliant person who can keep his mental and physical suffering to himself is regarded as churlish and one to be feared.<sup>46</sup> Yoruba will say ‘*adakemafohun, a ko mo ti eni to nse*’ (a silent, reticent person, you do not know on whose side he is ). Yoruba looks upon expressions of sympathy offered to a man who is expressing temporary or permanent injury as helping to lighten the pain.

Communitarianism as a concept is derived from the community and it refers to any philosophical standpoint that defines a person in terms of social bonds and cultural traditions rather than through individual traces. It is argued that communal relationships form the fabrics of all human societies and so it is only proper for people to subsume their individual rights in the central community. As a member of a community, each person belongs to a network of family and social relationships and he/she is defined by this membership. Also, each person seeks personal fulfilment through participation in the evolving social structure of this community. Communitarians further have argued that not only is the communitarian conception of the person a more accurate description of human life but that it is the cultural ideal informing our policies and institutions, strengthening community bonds and reinforcing the character of its members. Some communitarians are also of the view that community is the most natural and highest form of life for human beings. They assert also that community is a basic human need and frustration of this need leads to alienation, addictions, crimes and ineffective families.

Communitarianism whose philosophy is framed in terms of the common good, social practices and traditions, character, solidarity and social responsibility is however not without its critique especially from proponents of postmodernism who are of the opinion that human beings should be free and that a community centered political philosophy could lead to government intrusion in private affairs and suffocating conformity in social life. Postmodernists also are of the opinion that a philosophy in which the fundamental good resides in the community would legislate features that are unacceptable in a democratic society e.g. authoritarian culture, social hierarchy and male dominance. They believe that this could lead to the submerging of the individual where there is a tendency towards political and social totalitarianism with its reduction of personal responsibility and its evaluation of personal value in terms of service to the collectivity.<sup>47</sup>

However, we know that when the conditions of equal respect for all members of the community and personal freedom are united with the concern for the common good, then the danger of majority dominance would be minimized. By developing a strong, disciplined and virtuous people within the bounds of a well – functioning community, this would lead not only to greater personal satisfaction but also to a superior public

ethics and a more effective democracy. So we can say that the concept of *Omoluwabi* will positively enhance individual/personal freedom, satisfaction and happiness and at the same time entrench and strengthen democracy and also ensure security of lives and property.

We at this point examined the concept of the ‘good’ or ‘goodness’ in the history of philosophy as theorized by Aristotle to see if *Omoluwabi* (a morally good person) meets with the requirements for what account as good. This in essence, will give the *Omoluwabi* a background to lean on as we propose it as a panacea for socio-political and economic re-ordering of the society.

In the Aristotle’s Virtue ethics, Aristotle maintains that the highest good is happiness and he goes on to specify what happiness truly is and how to attain it. <sup>48</sup> To him, human beings are rational creatures who reflect and make choices, and in particular are capable of thinking about what is their ultimate interest. Happiness is everyone’s ultimate interest because it is desirable for its own sake and all other goods are merely instrumental in helping to bring happiness about, whereas happiness is complete and self-sufficient. The appeal to man’s rationality is an important feature of Aristotle’s view, which emphasises that to be human is to reason – more particularly, to employ practical reason in thinking of how to live. Aristotle describes such a life as one lived ‘in accordance with virtue’. By virtue, Aristotle means what reason will choose as the middle path or mean between the opposing vices or extremes. Thus the virtue of courage is the mean between cowardice and rashness, <sup>49</sup> and generosity is the mean between miserliness and listless spending. This can be seen as the application of moderation in all that one does. Moderation holds a very vital position in Yoruba ethical theory. An *Omoluwabi* should not be an extremist but one who by reasoning judges when to hasten or control. As the Yoruba regard a tight fist person as a miser and one to whom no honour is accorded as depicted in this proverb, *agba ti o je ajeiweyin yio ru igba re dele* (an elder who eats all without leaving for others will carry his calabash all the way home by himself without the offer of assistance from others), likewise the Yoruba accords no honour to a spend-rift who spends money with no thought of the future or are even suspicious of him, believing that his over-generosity may for an ulterior motive. A silent and reticent person is regarded as churlish by the

Yoruba especially as you cannot predict him because of his reticence likewise a lousy person is regarded as an uncouth fellow whose company is not sought by any honourable person. The Yoruba regard such as *agba ofifo* (empty barrel). Being able to determine the mean will also help in curbing religious fanaticism which has become a bane not only to our country but to the world as a whole. Nefarious activities like killing, bombing and destroying of places of worship will be eradicated. To Aristotle, the person who lives according to practical wisdom attains *eudaimonia* (a flourishing state of the soul) <sup>50</sup> and is counted as virtuous, where virtues are such traits of character as courage, temperance, liberality, justice and honesty. These virtues enumerated by Aristotle are also very important in Yoruba moral sphere and which an *Omoluwabi* is expected to have internalized and to exhibit habitually.

The thesis ‘A Postmodernist Critique of *Omoluwabi* in Yoruba Thought’ thoroughly examines the term ‘postmodernism’, its merits and de-merits, the critique it has launched against totalitarianism and universality, the spheres of life and moral values that the over-exploitation of its subjective and relativistic nature have eroded, and how these values can be resuscitated using the concept of *Omoluwabi* – exhibition of high moral values.

## **Aim and Objectives of Study**

### **Aim**

To determine the adequacy or otherwise of the postmodernist’s critique of over-arching moral values like *Omoluwabi* concept in Yoruba thought which promote the good.

### **Objectives**

- i. To attempt a detailed analysis of the ‘good’ by drawing inferences from the works of philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, G. E. Moore, Emmanuel Kant, David Hume, C. D. Broad, A. C. Grayling. To also examine the concept of ‘good’ in some African societies like Igbo, Fulani and cultures in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Malawi. To portray ‘good’ as a virtue that

must be pursued by every culture in order to ensure the holistic development of the human person.

- ii. To consider the meaning of the concept and tenets of *Omoluwabi*. Also, to take a look at the history of *Omoluwabi* concept, its flourish in Yoruba traditional society with a view of proposing it as a panacea for socio-political and economic stability in our contemporary society.
- iii. To state that the concept of ‘good’ is what *iwa rere* (good character) the pivot on which *Omoluwabi* ideology rests is set to achieve by drawing inferences from ethnographic study on *Omoluwabi* carried out among Yoruba indigenes from various Yoruba states. To also establish the nexus between *Omoluwabi* and the good as enunciated by Aristotle Virtue Ethics.
- iv. To consider the meaning of the term ‘postmodernism’. To see the emergence of postmodernism as linked to the two world wars and industrialisation. To examine the views and critique of postmodern philosophers like Richard Rorty, Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard especially against grand-narratives.
- v. To establish the fact that *Omoluwabi* is a form of cultural grand-narrative evolved in the Yoruba culture visible in its tradition, custom, taboos, folklores and songs, proverbs and adages and the *ifa* corpus. To review the critique of thinkers with postmodernist tendencies like Richard Rorty, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard, William Thompson, Anna Doyle Wheeler, Harriet Taylor, Kate Millet and Simeon de Beauvoir of *Omoluwabi*, a cultural grand concept. To conclude that the postmodernist critique of *Omoluwabi* in Yoruba culture cannot be sustained because *Omoluwabi* promotes the cherished values of the good.
- vi. To present the concept of *Omoluwabi* as an instrument in shaping our world to a better society. To state that as postmodernism has brought development to our nation, for this development to be sustained and for the society to fully benefit from the development without the fear and threats of insurgence, crimes and vices, we need to imbibe the tenets of

*Omoluwabi* to make our society a better place for ourselves and generations after.

### **Methodology of Study**

In this work, we shall adopt the methods of conceptual analysis, critical method and reconstruction in realizing the goals of the study. The method of conceptual analysis will help to examine the meaning of concepts such as postmodernism, *Omoluwabi*, industrialization, culture, values, communitarianism, capitalism, idea of the ‘good’ and so on in the bid to achieve clarity, logicality and coherence.

Critical thinking comes to play in denoting the merits and demerits of postmodernism so that all of postmodernism is not discarded. Critical thinking is also employed at examining the concept of ‘good’ as theorized by philosophers like Aristotle with the Aristotle Virtue Ethics as the conceptual frame work. The findings may help to establish the fact that *Omoluwabi* conforms with Aristotle virtue ethics. Having established the fact that *Omoluwabi* meets the criteria of ‘good’, reconstruction will be utilized in proposing its ideology as a quintessence for effecting socio-political and economic stability in our contemporary society.

Also, the study adopts the grounded theory<sup>51</sup> in which respondents answer such questions as who is an *Omoluwabi*? What character traits allude to the fact of an individual being referred to as an *Omoluwabi* or otherwise? How relevant is *Omoluwabi* in our present world? Is it advisable for parents, guardian, teachers to instil the *Omoluwabi* ideology in children and wards? The answers given by the respondents will help to ground the *Omoluwabi* ideology that seems abstract into empirical reality. Also the personification of Iwa (good character) as a sought-after bride in *Ogbe Egunda* and the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 of the Holy Bible as the epitome of a good wife removes the concept of good character (*iwa rere*) which is the pivot on which *Omoluwabi* is premised from an abstract domain to the physical.

## **Justification of Study**

The justification of this study is based on the assertion that the “development of a nation is primarily the development of human personality”<sup>52</sup> and this is only possible in the light of this thesis, by imbibing the *Omoluwabi* attributes. We cannot talk about national development when the human personality is deficient in sound moral training and orientation. While the nation develops through advancements and breakthroughs in Science and Technology, it is expedient that the human personality is also groomed to be able to nurture and sustain national development which according to this study is achieved by imbibing the tenets of *Omoluwabi*.

The Yoruba proverb that says “*omo ti a ko ko yoo gbe ile ti a ko ta*” which translates to mean that the child we have not trained will sell the house we have built is very apt. This connotes that if the human personality is not well trained and disciplined, it is eminent that these humans will bastardize institutions, agencies and commissions put in place by the Government.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is an age of automation and advancement in nearly all the fields of human endeavour, it is indeed an age where men run to and fro (in pursuit of knowledge) and knowledge is increasing over the face of the earth. Discoveries in the field of medicine have given man grace to live longer and various gadgets have made man’s life easier, less stressful, more beautiful and more enjoyable. It is however very disheartening that crimes and vices have turned man’s life into a nightmare. As it had been mentioned, crimes of frightening magnitude are now so rampant in the society. Armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom or ritual, murder, rape, swindling, duping, exploitation, and such practices like sodomy, same sex marriage, (staggering the sanctity of marriage), trans-gendering have altered significantly the moral base of the society. Of particular interest is the issue of ‘baby factories’ where ladies sell their new born babies, this was never heard in the past. Our values indeed have changed, so also the orientation of our community has changed from praising people who are of good character to praising people who have wealth, even when the source of their wealth is questionable.



Postmodernism and *Omoluwabi* seem antithetical, and postmodernists have critiqued grand theories like *Omoluwabi* because of its tendency for totalitarianism, universalism, and absolutism. The *Omoluwabi* concept have survived this critique by being in line with what counts as ‘good’ in some cited African societies and also aligns with Aristotle virtue ethics. *Omoluwabi* is so proposed as a panacea for an all –round sustainable national and human development.

### **Significance of Study / Contributions to Knowledge**

This study contributes to existing body of knowledge by reviewing the postmodernist’s critique of *Omoluwabi*, a grand moral narrative which evolved in the Yoruba culture. It is noted that many scholarly attempts have been made to review and critique the postmodernist paradigm especially concerning such over-arching values in political and epistemological realms. However there is a dearth of attempts to examine the sustainability or otherwise of the postmodernist critique of such values that sustained many traditional African cultures such as the concept of *Omoluwabi*. This study brings to fore the assertion that the critique of the postmodernists cannot obliterate or overrule the ideology of *Omoluwabi*. This is so because (*Omoluwabi*) promotes the ‘good’ which is pivotal to sustainable and holistic development of a society thereby leading to the efflorescence of a peaceful, progressive and prosperous society.

The concept of *Omoluwabi* which was a prevalent way of life in traditional Yoruba system that is based on good character (*iwa rere*) can bring greater development and advancement and yet peace and stability to our nation when its tenets are introduced to our contemporary society. This study throws illumination on the fact that although postmodernism encourages and supports influx or multitude of values and places no one above the others yet, postmodernism does not have a place for concepts like *Omoluwabi* that support totalitarianism, fixities, objectivity, etc and it has launched a critique against such. This study further contributes to existing body of knowledge by noting that ‘good’ is a virtue that should be pursued by every culture in order to ensure the overall development of the human person, and by stating that the concept of good is what the *Omoluwabi* is set to achieve. This study concludes that the critique of the postmodernists cannot obliterate *Omoluwabi* since it promotes the ‘good’ by meeting the

criteria for what accounts as good as theorised by Aristotle and being in line with what count as ‘good’ in some African societies.

The work made up of six chapters:

In Chapter One, we discuss the concept of the ‘good’. The major objective of this chapter is to portray good as a virtue that should be pursued by every culture in order to ensure the holistic development of the human person. In establishing this fact, we shall look at how the concept of good had been theorized in the history of Philosophy by drawing inferences from the works of philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, G. E. Moore, Emmanuel Kant, David Hume, C. D. Broad, A. C. Grayling. We also shall look at some African societies and their moral ideologies that seek to promote the concept of the good. Our major task is to seek to know if *Omoluwabi* aligns with the attributes of a good person in Igbo culture, Fulani culture and cultures in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Malawi. We shall conclude by portraying ‘good’ as a virtue that must be pursued by every culture in order to ensure the holistic development of the human person.

Chapter Two is titled “The concept of *Omoluwabi* in Yoruba Thought”. Here we shall consider the meaning of *Omoluwabi*, the tenets of *Omoluwabi* and how the progenitors of the Yoruba were able to instill these tenets into their off-springs. We shall also juxtapose the Yoruba concept of *Omoluwabi* with the Western idea of a gentleman. We look into the flourish and wane of *Omoluwabi* in traditional Yoruba society and factors that were responsible for its wane. We will consider the views and submission of various renowned Yoruba scholars and authors like Fadipe, Bolaji Idowu, Olaniwun Ajayi, Emmanuel Yoloje, Akinwunmi Isola, Adebayo Faleti and others on how *Omoluwabi* can serve as a panacea for socio-political and economic stability in our contemporary society.

Chapter Three is on “*Omoluwabi* and the Attainment of the Good”. The concept of good is what *iwa* (character) the nucleus of *Omoluwabi* (a morally good person) is set to achieve. In this chapter, we shall be concerned with establishing the nexus between *Omoluwabi* and the good as enunciated by Aristotle Virtue Ethics. An ethnographic study will be carried out amongst people of Yoruba speaking states, to lay claim to the fact that

good or goodness as enunciated in the history of philosophy can only be promoted and sustained by an overarching theory such as the *Omoluwabi*.

Chapter Four is on “The Postmodernist Critique of Grand-Narratives” and here we shall consider the views of postmodern philosophers like Richard Rorty, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard. We will also link the emergence of postmodernism to the two World Wars and Industrialisation. We shall consider what grand or meta narratives are and the interpretations and critique of some thinkers to it. The general opinion of these philosophers to grand narrative is that it limits and decreases the worth, the potentials, the urge to explore, to query the already settled matters. Lyotard in particular is of the opinion that in the postmodern period, people no longer believe in grand narratives, and hence .... “grand narratives” are old fashioned and oppressive.<sup>53</sup> Oppressive here may imply that such explanations exclude the opportunity of differing since they are usually fraught with a fear of looming and impending danger for anyone who holds a contrary view. This may be described as “fallacy ad baculum” which is propounding arguments that try to establish conclusions by creating fear in the minds of those who hold divergent views.

In Chapter Five, our focus is on “The Postmodernist Critique of *Omoluwabi*” and we will establish the fact that *Omoluwabi* is a cultural grand-narrative that evolved in the Yoruba culture because of its prescriptive nature. Postmodernism as a concept opposes any theory that advocates objectivity which *Omoluwabi* embraces. Postmodernists stand against any grand, totalizing and meta-narratives which they opine can suppress free expression and political dissent in the society. In this chapter, we will review the critique of thinkers with postmodernist tendencies as Richard Rorty, Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard, William Thompson, Anna Doyle Wheeler, Harriet Taylor, Kate Millet and Simeon de Beauvoir against such theories as the *Omoluwabi* that support rationality, objectivity, universality and totalitarianism. We conclude that the postmodernist critique of *Omoluwabi* in Yoruba culture cannot be sustained because *Omoluwabi* promotes the cherished values of the good or goodness.

Chapter Six is titled “Towards A Viable Moral Order in Africa”. Here we will present the concept of *Omoluwabi* as an instrument in shaping our world to a better society. We

admit that postmodernism has brought advancement and development but also with it the erosion of values that bind the society together through the over exploitation of its relativistic tendency. Our work will rest on the submission of Joseph Omoregbe that ‘the development of a nation is primarily the development of human personality’. As postmodernism has brought development to our nation, for this development to be sustained and for the society to fully benefit from the development without the fear and threats of insurgence, crimes and vices, we need to imbibe the tenets of *Omoluwabi* to make our society a better place for ourselves and generations after.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## THE CONCEPT OF THE GOOD

### 1.1 Introduction

Our major objective in this Chapter is to analyse the concept of the 'good'. What do we imply when we say an action, a word, a character trait, a practice, a person is good? Are we not engaged in making value judgement when we say something or someone is good or bad? What are the views of great thinkers about the concept of the 'good'? We shall also take a cursory look at the concept of 'good' in some African societies to determine if what account as good in one society is essentially related or vastly different from one African society to another. This exercise is necessary because it has been professed that the Yoruba *Omoluwabi* promotes the 'good' which was instrumental and indispensable in engendering a healthy, safe and progressive society in the past. The intention of the study is to propose *Omoluwabi* as a veritable instrument for economic and socio-political re-engineering of our present society towards achieving a viable moral order in Africa. This can only be possible if *Omoluwabi*- an indigenous moral concept fulfills the stated requirements: does the *Omoluwabi* concept fit into the sagacious analysis and definition of the 'good' and can the concept find its nucleus in the interpretations and connotations of what 'good' stands for in some cited African societies?

### 1.2 What is 'Good?'

Good as a concept seems so simple to define however, its definition has proved to be a herculean task. In fact, G. E. Moore says that when asked the question, 'what is good?' his answer will be good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or when asked, 'how is good to be defined?' his answer will be that it cannot be defined, and that that is all he has to say about it. Moore goes on to say that good is a simple notion just as yellow is a simple notion and just as one cannot by any means explain to anyone who does not already know what yellow is, so it is hard to explain what good is.<sup>1</sup> The conception of the indefinability of the good in Moore's ethical theory is augmented by the doctrine of 'ethical realism' which states that attribution of justification or truth in morality is of the same type as that used in science.<sup>2</sup>



According to this doctrine, there are ethical properties which exist not as empirical facts as in science but independently of human consciousness and for Moore, goodness is such a property. It exists in the real world, apart from the desires and aversions, the pleasures and pains of human beings. To Moore, the term 'good' refers to a quality which is analogous in some ways to sensory qualities. In Moore's ethical theory, however, the analogy is not carried beyond this point, because goodness unlike sensory qualities, cannot be imagined 'as existing by itself in time'. The objective reality of goodness however consists in its being intrinsic, that is, it is unchanging and absolute,<sup>3</sup> in the sense that "when anything possesses it ...it would necessarily or must always, under all circumstances, possess it in exactly the same degree"<sup>4</sup> The result of Moore's analysis of the primary ethical question, "how is good to be defined?" is that the term good is meaningful, yet indefinable, and that it refers to an independently existent quality, yet it is unlike the natural qualities of the sensory world.

Thomas Hobbes has said that "whatever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part calleth good". This implies that reasoning or thinking about what to do is tantamount to reasoning about how to satisfy our interests which is the "good" to us. Moore however believes that this view cannot be correct for two reasons. First, he said that if we focus our attention on what we mean by "good" and what we mean by "satisfies our interest" one will see that these two are really not the same. The second reason is that if goodness and interest-satisfaction are the same thing, then this would be like asking the question, "do the things that satisfy our interests satisfy our interests? This analogous argument seems to show that goodness cannot be identical with anything other than itself and so Moore still concludes that good as a concept is indefinable.

These answers of G. E. Moore may be disappointing, especially as one is enthusiastic about getting to know what good is. Can we then like the utilitarians say that 'good' is what makes someone happy, or that which produces the greatest amount of pleasure for the greatest number of people?, Or that since pleasure is good, and since we ought to aim at what is good, we ought to seek pleasure and to avoid pain and, where alternatives exist, we ought always to aim at more pleasure, or indeed, the most pleasure<sup>5</sup> Howbeit, deontologists will be quick to assert that goodness does not consist in the amount or

quantity of pleasure derivable from an action, not even for the greatest number of people, but the motive behind the action. Dzurgba lays credence to this by noting that:

Good and “bad” are inherently interwoven in a human language. Everyday uses of good and bad form a layer of mundane, commonplace and spontaneous social consciousness. So when we say that an action, a decision, a policy, an event is good, we accept it has value on its own account and that value is positive and it is beneficial to mankind. Therefore, for anything to be either good or bad does not depend on its potential or actual consequences, for instance, pleasure or pain<sup>6</sup>

Moore further explains that it is rather difficult to define the concept ‘good’ because propositions about the good are all synthetic and never analytic. The analytic–synthetic distinction was made famous by Kant, and an affirmative subject-predicate statement (proposition, judgment) is called analytic if the predicate concept is contained in the subject concept, and synthetic if otherwise. For example, the statement ‘All red roses are red’ is analytic, since the concept ‘red’ is contained in the concept ‘red roses’. ‘All roses are red’ is synthetic, since the concept ‘red’ is not contained in the concept ‘roses’. The denial of an affirmative subject-predicate statement entails a contradiction if it is analytic. E.g., ‘Not all red roses are red’ entails that ‘Some roses are both red and not red’<sup>7</sup> which is obviously a contradiction. The analytical sentence such as ‘apples are fruits’ has historically been characterized as one whose truth depends upon the meanings of its constituents term and how they are combined alone. This is opposed to ‘synthetic’ sentence such as ‘apples are liked by all’ whose truth depends upon the facts about the world that the sentence represents. This is sometimes referred to as the ‘metaphysical’ characterization of the distinction concerning the source of the truth of the sentence.

A more cautious epistemological characterization is that analytic sentences are those whose truth can be known merely by knowing the meanings of the constituent terms, as opposed to having also to know something about the represented world. Indeed, a denial of analytical sentences (since their meanings are so obvious and do not need any verification as the predicate concept is contained in the subject concept) would seem to be unintelligible and very more like a contradiction in terms. Sadly, the concept ‘good’ does not belong to the analytic group but to the synthetic group. We are forced to take a recourse to Moore whose assertion is that, it is rather difficult to define the concept ‘good’ because propositions about the good are all synthetic and never analytic.<sup>8</sup>

### **1.3 Moral and Nonmoral Sense of ‘Good’**

Moral value must be distinguished from nonmoral value. Moral values are things that are morally good in a moral sense. Moral values or things that are morally good must be distinguished from nonmoral values or things that are good in a nonmoral sense. The sorts of things that may be morally good or bad are persons, groups of people, traits of character, dispositions, emotions, motives and intentions, e. g. “hospitality is good while hostility is bad”. All sorts of things, on the other hand, may be nonmorally good or bad, for example, physical objects like cars and paintings, experiences like pleasure, pain, knowledge, freedom et ce tera. It will not be intelligible to call these things listed morally good or bad, unless we mean that it is morally right or wrong to pursue them. When we judge actions or persons to be morally good or bad we always do so because of the motives, intentions, dispositions or traits of character that they manifest. When we make nonmoral judgments it is on very different grounds or reasons, and the grounds or reasons vary from case to case depending, for example, on whether our judgment is one of intrinsic, instrumental, or aesthetic value. For instance, we may say an axe is good because it performs its function of cutting well or that a car is good because of ease of movement it provides but the ‘good’ in these instances are not moral judgement but judgement based on the adequate or efficient functionality of the objects cited.

However, the same thing may be both morally good and nonmorally good. When we consider the expressions “a good life” and “the good life”, we may say of a man that he “had a good life”, while we may say as well that “he led a good life.” In both cases we are saying that his life was good, but in the second case we are saying that it was morally good, or useful, or virtuous, while in the first case we are saying in effect that it was happy and satisfying, that is, that it was good but in a nonmoral sense (but this is not to say that it was immoral).<sup>9</sup> However, for the purpose of this study we shall restrain ourselves to good in the moral sense.

In his book, ‘What is good?’ A. C. Grayling asked the question, ‘how shall I live in order to live a good life?’ And this question is what philosophers both ancient and modern have grappled with. For Grayling, while talking about the good life for human beings, it transpires that there are two large but very different conceptions of what the good life should be. To him, one is a broadly secular attitude rooted in views as human nature and

the human condition meaning that the source of morality is not supernatural. The other is a broadly transcendental one that locates the source of moral value outside the human realm. A transcendental realm which is a demand to realise aims and attain ends located beyond the boundaries of this world and its circumstances and the source of morality is usually attributed to the Divine. These two fundamentally different ways of understanding the nature and sources of value (good) have competed and sometimes overlapped in the course of history <sup>10</sup> Plato is a philosopher who postulates a non-natural ethical system and this is also recognizable in Christian ethics while ethical systems which do not refer to transcendental and supernatural sources are called naturalistic ethical systems. According to ethical naturalism, moral judgments are really judgments of facts about the natural world.

#### **1.4 Non-Naturalistic Ethical System**

Non-Naturalistic ethical theory is the idea that what is morally right and good is determined by divine command, that is, by the edict or decree of God. <sup>11</sup> Plato as stated above is a philosopher that subscribes to the view that ethical theories are premised on divine mandate. Thus his idea of the ‘good’ is transcendental as he believes that good is not a concrete entity existing or that which one encounters directly in the sensible or physical world. He avers that good is an ideal belonging to the world of Forms and that actions, words, thoughts, objects that participate in “good” existing in the world of Forms can be said to be good but are actually not the “good”. This brings us again to the disturbing assertion by Moore that good as a concept is undefinable because of its abstract nature.

It is worthy to note that “good” as it exists in the world of Forms is eternal, unchanging, unmoving and indivisible. The import of this assertion is that good or goodness is unfading. Objects or deeds that participate in the form of good and thus earn the appellation good can along the way lose their goodness whether through misuse, mishandling, misrepresentation et ce t era but the concept of good in the world of Form abides unchanging. The various Forms according to Plato constitute a hierarchy in terms of their inherent value or worth. At the apex of all Forms is the Form of goodness or the good, because it is the Form of the highest value. Since the Form of Good is the source of

all value and reality, Plato believes that we must strive to obtain knowledge and understanding of it. This we can achieve by governing ourselves, (thoughts, words and actions) by reason.

The human soul to Plato has three different elements: an element consisting of raw appetites or desires, an element consisting of drives like anger or ambition, and an intellectual element, that is, of thought or reason. For each of these elements there is an excellence or virtue that obtains when reason is in charge of that element, as is the case when one governs oneself by reason. When our appetites are ruled by reason, we exhibit the virtue of temperance, when our drives are governed by reason, we exhibit courage, and when the intellect itself is governed by reason, we exhibit wisdom. Thus, Plato holds that the well governed person, the person ruled by reason, exhibits the four cardinal virtues of temperance, courage, wisdom and justice. <sup>12</sup>

By Plato's allusion to the word "virtue", will it be safe then to say that good is virtue or goodness is exhibiting virtuous acts? Well, this may lead to a vicious cycle in an attempt to define the word "virtue". Given Plato's understanding of the soul, the principle, "be governed by reason" dictates that one be temperate, courageous, wise and just. Plato maintains that only by being virtuous, that is, by possessing these four cardinal virtues can one have a well ordered soul and thus possess a psychological well-being that is reflective of true happiness which translates to living a good life. Another philosopher, Aesara, the Lucanian also like Plato believes that the key to attain the well-ordered or virtuous or just soul- the balanced and harmoniously functioning psyche is to live a good life (a life governed by reason). <sup>13</sup>

Howbeit, David Hume in contrast to this asserts that "since morals, therefore, have an influence on the actions and affections, it follows, that they cannot be deriv'd from reason; and that because reason alone, as we have already prov'd, can never have any such influence. Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusions of our reason". <sup>14</sup> As Hume puts it, the questions that must be asked are whether 'we attain

knowledge of (moral principles) by a chain of argument and induction, or by an immediate feeling and inner sense; whether like all sound judgment and falsehood, they should be the same to rational intelligent being, or whether, like the perception they should be founded entirely on the fabric of the human specie'. Therefore to Hume, morality is nothing in the abstract nature of things but is entirely relative to the sentiment or mental taste of each particular being'. Hume therefore concludes that, 'moral perceptions therefore ought not to be classed with the operations of the understanding, but with the tastes and sentiments'.<sup>15</sup> Hume thus by his assertion seeks to establish the fact that moral conducts are not only ordered or controlled by reason but are at sometimes the products of our passions, affections, likes and dislikes.

### **1.5 Naturalistic Ethical System**

Naturalistic Ethical System is the idea that ethics can be understood in the terms of natural science. This alludes to the fact that moral properties such as goodness and rightness are identical with "natural" properties, that is, properties that can figure into scientific descriptions or explanations of things. Ethical naturalists hold also that justified moral beliefs are beliefs produced by a particular kind of causal process. However, C. D. Broad observes that "if naturalism be true, ethics is not an autonomous science but it is a department or an application of one or more of the natural or historical sciences".<sup>16</sup> Broad's observation is so because an attempt to derive goodness from disciplines like psychology, anthropology, sociology, history is futile since these subjects are counted as irrelevant to the philosophical understanding of morality.

Ethical naturalism is also premised on the fact that moral judgments are really judgments of fact about the natural world. Aristotle, for instance believes that the "good" is defined by our natural objective. According to Aristotle, our principal or highest objective by nature is the attainment of happiness, for it is that alone that we seek for its own sake. Since the attainment of happiness is naturally our highest objective, it follows that happiness is our highest good. In what does happiness, our highest good consists? According to Aristotle, to answer the question, we must consider the human being's functions which are living and reasoning. Thus, to Aristotle, happiness consists of two

things to man: enjoyment – living an enjoyable life (pleasure) and the exercise of the capacity to reason. It consists in part in enjoyment because the human being as a living thing has biological needs and impulses the satisfaction of which is pleasurable. It also consists in part of developing and exercising the capacity to reason because only the human being as distinct from other living things has the capacity of reasoning and reflecting.

This capacity differentiates humans from other living things and its exercise is stressed by Aristotle as the most important component of happiness. The exercise of our unique and distinctive capacity to reason is termed by Aristotle *virtue* – thus his famous dictum that “happiness is activity in accordance with virtue”. To Aristotle, there are two different kinds of virtue. When we exercise actively our reasoning abilities, for example, through studying we are being intellectually virtuous. However, when we exercise our rational capacity by moderating our impulses and appetites, we are said by Aristotle to be morally virtuous<sup>17</sup> and so able to live a good life, a well–ordered life.

By and large, although belonging to two different ethical systems, Plato and Aristotle conceive of ethics as focusing on virtues which are the good or positive character traits of individuals.

Now, in order to disengage ourselves from the quagmire of trying to get the definition of the concept “good”, it may be in order to simply say that good is that which possesses positive attributes, that which is pleasant, sincere, worthwhile, noble, reasonable, favourable, satisfactory, beneficial and desirable (the list is inexhaustible). Although, G. E. Moore has stated that the word good is undefinable, but this is not to mean that one cannot recognize actions, things and behaviours that are good. For the sake of emphasis, as it has been noted above, we shall restrain ourselves to good in the moral sense in this study. But still, the question of how to recognize a good action looms high, Moore however says that, this can be achieved through intuition. Intuition refers to immediate or instinctive knowledge or awareness that something is the case without having previously perceived or discovered it to be so. Intuition is a priori knowledge which is a form of

cognition that is independent of reason or experience. A priori knowledge is contrasted with a posteriori (empirical) knowledge, that is, knowledge based on and derivable from reason and human experience.

### **1.6 The African perception of the ‘good’ in the traditional setting**

However, it is of note that in the traditional setting, people were not generally much encumbered with the issue of the definition, clarification, or analysis of words and concepts. They believed that words are instruments for conveyance of our thoughts, observations, intuition, visions, aspirations and intention and so the issue of endless analysis may be remote to the indigenous person. It may even be thought that such analysis may be mischievous by trying to evade the real issue at hand. A Yoruba musician once sang this song:

*Ohun ti o dara, ko dara*

*Ma gba’yawo ore re*

*Oju lo nda ti ni*

*O n ba ni je lawujo ore*

What is not good is not good

Do not snatch your friend’s wife

It brings to one shame

And defames someone in the gathering of friends

(Translation is mine)

It may seem insincere and hypocritical to start a prolonged analysis of what the musician means by the phrase ‘*ohun ti ko dara, ko dara*’ or to refer to it as a needless tautology when the burning issue of treachery is on ground. The words of H. S. Staniland support this that philosophers often “become so fascinated with the technical problems of their trade that they forget the human problems for the sake of which that trade exists”.<sup>18</sup> Karl Popper also asserts that “only if the word ‘good’ is used in an ethical sense, that is, only if it is used to mean that which I ought to do, could I derive from the information X is good’, the conclusion that I ought to do it.” In a nutshell, Popper’s submission is that any analysis of the nature of the good leaves open the question: “how does it concern me?”<sup>19</sup>



as a moral agent. The analysis that does not immediately lay bare what I ought to do and what I ought to refrain from doing in order to live a good life and positively impart my world may just be a parade, a show and display of eloquence that have no direct bearing on societal well-being. Popper concludes by saying that the surest path to intellectual perdition is the abandonment of real problems for the sake of verbal problems.<sup>20</sup>

The Yoruba have words or phrases to summarily pronounce actions or words that are wrong like, *ohun ti ko dara*, (that which is not good), *ohun ti ko ba oju mu*, (obscene, that which is unbecoming to the sight, an eye sore), *ohun ti ko see gbo seti*, (abominable, despicable or obnoxious acts that the ears should not hear), *ohun ti ko mu ogbon dani* (that which is devoid of sense (senseless)). Needless to say that the African sense of what is good and bad is clear and not warped or muddled up. Howbeit, the rigorous, analytical, systematic way of dealing with discourses in Philosophy should not under any guise be sidelined.

According to Irele, the idea of good has to be viewed within the context of human experience and human relationship rather than in an abstract way only.<sup>21</sup> Hence, in the next section of this Chapter, we shall be examining the concept of the “good” in some African societies.

### **1.7 The Concept of the Good Person in Igbo Culture**

As noted by Agulanna, the Igbo term for a good person is *ezigbo mmadu*. Ezigbo is synonymous with words as good, acceptable, correct which can connote virtues like truthfulness, sincerity, honesty, integrity, straightforwardness, rectitude, loyalty, dependability, chastity and the like. Mmadu means human being or human kind, and so to put very succinctly, *ezigbo mmadu* refers to a good person or a morally upright person. Ezigbo mmadu is a term that is descriptive of good character or positive moral conduct in a person or group of persons. Among the Igbo (one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria), a person is designated as *ezigbo mmadu* who possesses good conduct or moral fibre.<sup>22</sup> To have an in-depth understanding of the concept *ezigbo mmadu* in Igbo moral setting, the concept must be viewed within the context of what accounts as morality in Igbo land. To Agulanna, moral entails:

Human principles of right and wrong, and deals with how people treat themselves in order to promote mutual welfare, progress, creativity and meaning in a striving for what is right over what is wrong, and what is good over what is bad.

The worthy characters of the *ezigbo mmadu* are to be emulated and imbibed by others around him because one of the chiefest aims of exhibiting the characters of an *ezigbo mmadu* is to promote and sustain a morally healthy society. A society that has been able to drastically reduce to the barest minimum occurrences of crimes and vices will ultimately flourish socially, economically, politically and spiritually. Hence, the concept of a good person is such as is not taken lightly in any indigenous society because the welfare of the society hinges heavily on it. *Ezigbo mmadu* is contrasted with *ajo mmadu*, which is a term used to describe a bad man or woman. An *ajo mmadu* is defective in morals and exhibits negative character traits. Such a person is referred to as bad, wicked, evil, insincere and one who has lost his/her inherent beauty as a creation of Chukwu - Almighty God. Agulanna makes the point clear that however, the challenges of modernity and the harsh social environment in which the Igbo have found themselves seem to greatly tint their conceptualization of who an *ezigbo mmadu* is. The scenario painted here is not the exclusive preserve of the Igbo culture, it seems that there is no indigenous culture that has not been impacted significantly both positively and negatively by postmodernism.

Ethical notions such as good and bad, right and wrong, duty and obligation, justice and injustice are common to Igbo language and social life. The need to live virtuous and straight forward life was greatly cherished by the Igbo particularly in the pre-colonial days. Ethical norms or moral values are instrumental in ensuring peace and social order in the human community. The reason is that peaceful co-existence contributes very significantly to social stability and promotes human solidarity that is necessary for development and its sustenance. Agulanna has stated that the expression *ezigbo mmadu* is not merely descriptive of a person's character but also of the person as an atomic individual and human entity.<sup>23</sup> It implies that these virtuous character traits are to be internalized to become part and parcel of an individual who is to be referred to as an *ezigbo mmadu*. These character traits are not just a set of moral codes that a person

checks on and takes on when it is convenient, but rather, through the process of internalization, he habitually displays virtuous characters and thus, s/he is so thought of and referred to and addressed as an *ezigbo mmadu*, - a good person. This point is further laid credence to by this Igbo saying – *agwa bu mmadu* – it is character that defines who an individual is.

The point must however be made that Western culture has affected contemporary Igbo mores that one notices a marked difference between Igbo life in the pre-modern and contemporary world order. However, the Igbo whether in the pre-modern or modern era, recognize some character references that define who a good person is or ought to be. Some basic quality of life or character traits an individual needs to possess before he/she can be referred to as an *ezigbo mmadu* are identified: respect for social norms or customs, loyalty to ancestors, good moral conduct, acquisition of wealth, gaining of affluence and mercantile. <sup>24</sup>

The listed attributes of an *ezigbo mmadu* conform to the *Omoluwabi* of the Yoruba moral sphere with the exception of - “acquisition of wealth, affluence and mercantile”. Yoruba believes that one can be referred to as an *Omoluwabi* without necessarily having the acumen or prowess to amass wealth. This is not to mean that wealth acquisition is an aberration in Yoruba society but that its significance stops at the realm of its purchasing power. There are sayings in Yoruba society to show the relevance of wealth in daily living like “*ore ko dun bi owo ko si*” friendship is not sweet if there is no money, “*owo ni ki e ma da aba leyin ohun*” money says don’t start making plans in my absence, “*olowolaiyemo*” the world recognizes the wealth man, “*ese giriri ni ile a n jofe*” lots of people visit the house of the one that gives free food. However, sayings also abound to denote wariness or caution against recklessness in mercantilism and going to any length in amassing wealth, for example, “*isale oro legbin*”- sources of wealth can be despicable, “*oju eni maa la a ri iyonu*”- the one that will be wealth will surely undergo diverse turbulent experiences, “*owo ni gbongbo ese, emi o le fi ipa wa owo o jare*” – money is the root of evil, I won’t be reckless in looking for wealth.

The place of hard work and honesty (straight forwardness) in business are of great importance. Any one will prefer to partner in business with a person who though is not so

wily in trading or not so enterprising but whose integrity is intact. Agulanna has however lent a note of caution to the Igbos against the vulgar struggle for survival which manifests in the worship of money for its own sake, the spirit of mercantilism and the abandonment of all ethical or social norms that define their contemporary life. He advocates for a return to the social ideals which made the pre-colonial Igbo put price on certain members of the society as *ezigbo mmadu*. He further says that this will require a reinventing as well as a revival of the moral life and positive aspects of the people's social ethos or custom. <sup>25</sup>

According to Ukpokolo, every human society has certain framework of principles, values and norms or precepts with which people are categorized and placed in the moral scheme of things. It is on such templates or ethical system that individual's conduct or behaviour are evaluated, judged as good or bad, right or wrong. This categorization is based on what society perceives as the model of a good person and model of emulation. In Igbo worldview, the personalization of the model in the ethical system is embedded in what the Igbo people refer to as *ezigbo mmadu*. <sup>26</sup> The Igbo people believe in the duality of human existence. Madu summed it up in this excerpt:

Traditional Igbo is convinced of the existence of two distinct but similar worlds – the physical world and the spiritual world.... Whatever exists in the physical world has its counterpart, equally real, in the invisible, spiritual world. <sup>27</sup>

The interaction of these two worlds implies that there is the need for harmonious relationships between inhabitants of the two worlds. Traditionally, the people worship the gods of their ancestors, which include spirits and deities. They also believe in the Supreme Being whom they refer to as Chukwu- the Almighty God. The Igbo, as common to many indigenous tribes will always resort to the gods for help, guidance, and direction in their pursuits in the world. This is well captured in Chinua Achebe's famous book, 'Things Fall Apart' when Unoka, Okonkwo's father went to consult the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves to find out why he always had a miserable harvest. The Oracle was called Agbala, and people came from far and near to consult it. They came when misfortune dogged their steps or when they had a dispute with their neighbours. They also came to discover what the future held for them. <sup>28</sup> The earth goddess referred to as

Ala play important role in the people's day to day living. To the Igbo people, the earth goddess is the messenger of the Supreme Being and she assists Him in punishing the wicked and rewarding the just.

This strengthens the fact that there exists in the Igbo moral space the notion of reward and punishment where perpetrators of evil are restrained by the consciousness of impending judgment for wrongdoing. Punishment is believed to be meted out by the earth goddess as the earth is intimately close to humans and it is impossible to do anything that she is not aware of. Again, we look at Okonkwo in Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart' who killed a clansman though unintentionally. It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land. The crime was of two kinds male and female. Okonkwo had committed the female because it had been inadvertent. He could only return to the clan after seven years.<sup>29</sup> The seven years exile from the land where the crime was committed was the requirement for cleansing. It is believed that the earth goddess helps in maintaining public morality. Parrinder notes that:

Among the Ibo, earth is the great mother goddess, the spirit of fertility, the nearest and dearest of all deities ... and is the most important of all the gods. She is the giver and administrator of moral laws, and priests are guardian of public morality on her behalf. Oaths are sworn in her name and she is invoked in law-making. Crimes such as murder, theft, adultery and poisoning must be purged by sacrifice to her.<sup>30</sup>

The good person, an ezigbo mmadu is he who conforms to the value of the community and not a deviant. It is believed that the ancestors had evolved regulations which had sustained the community over time and an individual who goes against these laws in essence will be disrupting or tilting the socio-cultural balance on which the community is based. The Igbo culture is perceived solely in terms of its communality. In Africa, the focus falls on social ethics rather than personal ethics, for African people emphasize the community rather than the individual. Individuals are not neglected, but they are expected to fulfil their roles in a way that fits with the ethos of their society.<sup>31</sup>

The Euro-American model on the other hand views community simply as an association aggregate of individual persons who share interests, which is at variance with the African conception of the community. Gyekye notes that community is “a group of persons linked by interpersonal bond, biological and/or non-biological, who consider themselves primarily as members of the group and who have common interests, goals and values’<sup>32</sup> Members of the community in Igbo culture go beyond the physical human beings to include the spiritual. The Igbo people believe that all these entities participate and make impact in their day to day life. According to Nwoga, it is believed that in Igbo culture:

The individual is a member of the community that sets the goals that have acceptability within the community. It is the community that sets up reward and punishment systems. To a large extent, the individual in Igbo land is subsumed within the requirement of the community.<sup>33</sup>

The individual is bound to the values of his community because it is in this community that as it were, he exists and has his being. It has been observed that culture has great impact on the behaviour of the human person and it is the fundamental distinguishing factor between a human person and the lower animals. Shared values integrate the individual into a community. To be integrated into the community, one has to accept the values as paramount and which if observed in daily lives paves way for one’s social acceptability. A good person recognizes the fact that he does not live for himself alone and that his actions whether good or bad and his moral failings have great repercussion on the community. He therefore will not act rashly but weighs objectively the consequences of his actions not only as it affects him but also more so, the community. Nso ala (abominations) like murder, suicide, unmasking a masquerade (who is believed to be the reincarnated spirit of the departed), shifting of land boundary, or having sexual relationship with a pregnant woman or a woman who is still mourning the late husband are to be eschewed by one who is an ezigbo mmadu for these are believed to have grave consequences not only on the perpetrators but generally on the community.

Generosity and philanthropic acts are also of importance in the Igbo community for an individual to be regarded as ezigbo mmadu. For this purpose, chieftaincy title taking for example, ozo, provides an avenue for a wealthy man to distribute part of his wealth to

others. When he distributes his wealth, he is given chieftaincy titles which further offers him honour, privilege and power in the community. <sup>34</sup>

The Igbo people also believe that without economic well-being, life is meaningless and every individual is expected to work hard towards meeting the basic necessities of life. According to Ukpokolo, poverty is abhorred and a life of abject poverty is worthless. As noted above, in Yoruba moral sphere, acquisition of wealth is not a parameter to denote if one is an *Omoluwabi* or not, though laziness is abhorred and well-meaning individuals distance themselves from lazy drones like plague. Generally speaking, no one desires a mean life but the Yoruba believe that circumstances of life can make someone poor but his or her character in that state of wretchedness will determine if he is an *Omoluwabi* or not. It was noted by Ogundeji and Akangbe that:

Among the pre-colonial Yoruba, someone with a humble background if s/he has those good qualities would be regarded as *Omoluwabi*, while the so-called aristocrat that lacks them would be condemned and not so regarded. <sup>35</sup>

In Igbo culture, empowerment especially, for the youths and adolescents, as means of directing their future is important. Traditionally, the methods of imparting knowledge in the traditional education include imitation, demonstration and direct instruction. Traditional education or informal education produced men and women who were suited in their cultural and social environment. <sup>36</sup> The lazy or never do well had no regard or respect accorded to them and were not recognized by the authorities of the community for conferment of traditional titles. A hardworking person is encouraged and praised while a lazy person is scorned.

Another crucial point to note is that *ezigbo mmadu* is community centred. A good person in Igbo society and so in nearly all African pre-colonial communities is he whose hopes, aspirations, ambitions are such as are embedded in the welfare of the community. He does not seek a goal that is contrary or inimical to the collective interest, and what he aims to be, as much as it would benefit him would also be beneficial to the community.

In the context of our earlier analysis on the relationship between the individual and community, a good person is also one who abides by the principles of communal interests

and must necessarily exhibit those non-material qualities {which} the people value. Such a person stands for the common good and when self-interest conflicts with common good, the overriding consideration is to de-emphasize self-interest. Ezigbo mmadu is that person to whom the members of the community can entrust responsibility with the conviction that he/she is trustworthy and abides by the principle of collective interest. An ezigbo mmadu does not cheat or defraud people of their belongings and dues.

An ezigbo mmadu does not relegate his role as husband, father, wife, mother, daughter, son, brother, or in-law but performs social roles and responsibility {that} customs and tradition demand. Ezigbo mmadu is sought after whenever the need for third party consultation arises-for conflict resolution, peacemaking, leadership position and the like. It could be in term of marriage partner, business associate or even in giving out one's child for business apprenticeship. To the people, in human relationship, such an individual is an epitome of beauty, goodness, and justice. In addition, an ezigbo mmadu is conscious of the limits of human's engagement with the universe and therefore appreciates the place of the {Supreme God} in all his dealings. <sup>37</sup>

### **1.8 The Concept of the Good Person in Fulani Culture**

The Fulce, popularly referred to as Fulani are found scattered over the whole of West and Central Africa <sup>38</sup> up to the shores of the Red Sea. The original home of the Fulce is believed to have been the middle Senegal River valley and the adjacent Futa Toro Savannah <sup>39</sup>. The Fulani are nomadic in nature and their main occupation is cattle rearing. It is worthy to note that there are town Fulani and cattle Fulani. The town Fulani are those who found themselves in positions of power, affluence and responsibility, some of them became emirs, district chiefs, village heads and wealthy private individuals. The cattle Fulani however remain nomadic herding their cattle from place to place for pasture.

The concept of pulaaku is that unique attribute of the Fulani that serves as an unwritten code of conduct for all true Fulani. Pulaaku is the Fulani's guiding principle in their dealings with their fellow Fulani as well as with other people. Abu Manga described pulaaku with all its ideals as the cornerstone of the Fulani culture. <sup>40</sup> Pulaaku has also



been defined as the actual rules or guidelines for appropriate behaviour and presentation of self, as well as a series of virtues and personal attributes which may be viewed as rewards for behaving like a Pullo. A Pullo also means a Fulani or a Fulani person. There are many aspects of pulaaku and if a person exhibits any one of them he will be regarded as a Pullo (a good and worthy person) or to be likened to one. Some components of pulaaku are hereby cited and each will be illustrated by appropriate Fulani proverb.

### **1. Semteende (Shamefulness Or Being Reserved (Contenance))**

This is by far the most important component of pulaaku. It is also the most noticeable. Its literal meaning is ‘shamefulness’, however terms as ‘being reserved’<sup>41</sup> or ‘shyness’ may also be appropriate. To the Pullo, it is very degrading or shameful to beg or request for something from someone. It is much more honourable for him to suppress such urge no matter how pressing it may be. The lesson this virtue teaches is self-restrain or self-denial. “Torii he cii maa noye toroo he caayi?” is a Fulani proverb which means that ‘to be granted one’s request is bad enough, let alone when the request is turned down. The Pullo believe that it is demeaning to beg from others and rather that a life of continence and self-denial is more dignifying. The Yoruba also have a proverb that aligns with this that “*ti enu ba je, oju a ti*” – when the mouth has eaten, the face will be shy. This implies that when a person has subjected himself to begging from others, he has lost his dignity and cannot stand for any opinion that he calls his own but must dance to the whims and caprices of the one(s) from whom he has received one favour or the other.

The concept of pulaaku entails a person holding on to his dignity even in very trying times. It is no wonder that it was mentioned that this virtue is the most important component of the pulaaku, this is because anyone who cherishes his dignity will not only not beg from others but will also desists from any acts like stealing, thuggery, unfaithfulness, truce breaking, dishonesty that can tarnish his image. The Yoruba in an adage will say, “*aso ala ni mo wo, ma ta epo si ala mi*”- I am wearing a white garb, don’t smear it with palm oil, and they are wont to pray that “*aso iyi ko ma faya mo wa lara*” meaning that may our cloak of dignity not become torn. This fabric of this cloak of dignity are the moral values one observes habitually, and if in an event one starts to lose sight of these values and slips to a life of recklessness, the cloak may be perceived as

torn. If everyone consciously guards his/her relationship and interaction with others by observing a life of moral dignity, the society will be a better place for all where crimes and vices will be drastically reduced. The Yoruba however believes that those who have should extend whatever resources are at their disposal to the less-privileged.

## **2. Munyal (Perseverance)**

This can be interpreted to mean patience, tolerance or perseverance. It is expected of a Pullo to exhibit this quality. The virtue of perseverance teaches that whatever difficulty that we may face, if only we persevere there will be relief at the end. It teaches us not to despair even when situations are not so cheery. A person who perseveres will on the long run have something to show for his/her patience and unrelenting attitude. Perseverance keeps hope alive and curbs one from taking short cuts and seeking for quick and dubious ways like duping, smuggling, robbery, cocaine pushing, kidnapping, black mailing to get wealth. A Fulani proverb says “no ndiyam luggiri fuu woodi njareendi” – no matter how deep a body of water is, there is fine sand at the bottom. <sup>42</sup> This is to serve as an encouragement for people who may be going through turbulent times that there is light at the end of the tunnel. The Yoruba in a corresponding proverb says, “*bi ori ba pe nile, a dire*”-the one that perseveres will on the long run become successful.

Perseverance as a component of pulaaku also relate to interpersonal relationships. Goonga hiiAay hiddeko ko ja cee is a Fulani proverb that means that the truth will become old before people accept it. <sup>43</sup> This proverb teaches that people do not readily accept the truth. Hence, we should be prepared to give them time even if they are presently disillusioned by falsehood. Perseverance is of great importance in relationship that when a party is not ready to admit his/her fault, the other does not quit but with patience and tolerance points out the areas of the other’s failings.

## **3. Enaam (Kindness)**

The meaning of this aspect of pulaaku is being kind and affectionate, especially to one’s own relations or kindred. A Fulani proverbs “ko meemi kine fuu meemii gite” <sup>44</sup> means that whatever affects the nose, affects the eyes also illustrates this point. It is interesting that the Yoruba have a proverb that is translated exactly as this, “*ohun ti o ba oju, ba*

*imu*”. It depicts that we are to be our brethren’s keepers. This stresses communalism, as people share in joy and sadness together. The show of kindness is however not limited to one’s kindred alone, but should be extended to strangers, wayfarers and guests. It is expected that a good man shows kindness to all around him and also to strangers. “Ko Ao Aum ndiyam ndoggoojam” in Fulani means that a visitor is like run-off water and it is advisable to be kind and nice to them while they are still with us. <sup>45</sup> This is because whatever impression they form based on our reception will stay forever in their memory. The Yoruba says, “*oju la nte f’alejo, ki a to te eni*” meaning that we first welcome our visitor with a pleasant face before spreading the mat for them to sit. It is good for one to be hospitable because it may be one’s turn to be in need of hospitality next time. Hospitality is an indispensable tool for national cohesion. Anyone should feel welcomed in any part of the nation without fear of molestation and marginalization.

#### **4. Ngorgu (Bravery)**

The literal meaning of ngorgu is ‘manliness’ or bravery. Bravery is however not tantamount to thuggery or hooliganism. It depicts hard work and commitment to a cause. “GiAAo cokkon colli daale yaa ca gi e” <sup>46</sup> is a Fulani proverb that is translated as he who goes after birds’ nests must be prepared to tread on thorns. The proverb infers that one has to labour first before one enjoys the fruits of one’s labour. Yoruba adage says that “*ikoko ti o maa je ata idi re a gbona*”, that is, the pot that wants to eat soup, the bottoms will be really hot and it signifies that of a necessity hard work should precede pleasure. Hard work does not kill but toughens and prepares one for the future. The Fulani in another proverb says “*sollaare teppere curii nde pooce*” <sup>47</sup> meaning that the dust on the heels is better than the one on the buttocks. This reveals that a person who while working gathers dust on his feet is better than a lazy person who while a way the time sitting idly. The idle hand is the devil’s workshop. A good person should thus not be lazy but through hard work be able to fend for himself and his household.

#### **5. Neaaaaku (Dignity Or Self Respect)**

The meaning of neAAaaku is dignity or self –respect. The Fulani will say that “*nyaami haaraayi ciiri haaray na?*”, that is, if after eating one is not full, will licking the bowl make one full? The proverb is an admonition against doing something that is beneath

one's dignity. <sup>48</sup> In the Fulani custom, grown-ups are not expected to finish their meal but to leave a small portion for the little children. A grown-up who licked his plate will thus lose his dignity and self-respect in the sight of the children. A Yoruba adage says, "*agba ti o je ajeiweyin yio ru igba re de le*" meaning that the elder that eats without looking back (to give to the younger ones) will all by himself carry his plates home. Some things may be acceptable but may be beneath one's status and so as a dignified entity one should desist from such demeaning acts. An elder that trades words or locks in fight with a younger person may be chided by being told that "*igi imu jinna sori*" – the nozzle is far from the head. Maintaining one's self-respect translates into shunning acts that can bring one to disrepute. This attribute will engender a saner society where everyone will ruminate over the intentions of his heart before bringing it forth into action.

### **1.9 The Concept of the Good Person in South African, Zimbabwean and Malawian Cultures**

Ubuntu is a Bantu term meaning "humanity". It is often translated as "I am because we are". It is a belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity." <sup>49</sup> In Southern African the term refers to a kind of humanistic philosophy, ethic or ideology and a good man is he that upholds the tenets of Ubuntu which essentially are togetherness, forgiveness, caring, sharing, hospitality among other virtues. In the Shona language which is the majority spoken language in Zimbabwe Ubuntu is referred to as 'unhu' while in Malawi, it is called 'uMunthu' <sup>50</sup> which according to Rt. Rev. Fr. Thomas Msusas is the world view about living as one family belonging to God. Despite the different names, the tenets of Ubuntu, unhu and uMunthu are ultimately the same. Ubuntu can be translated to mean human nature, humanness, humanity, virtue, goodness and kindness. It is believed that humanness or human nature consists in being good and anyone who displays or exhibits bad or unacceptable character is said to have lost his humanness and is referred to as a brute. Ubuntu was described as a form of "African humanism" and was used as a term for a specifically African kind of humanism which exists in the context of the transition to black majority rule in Zimbabwe and South Africa. The term has as its tenet that "there is need for understanding but not for

vengeance, a need for reparation but not retaliation, a need for Ubuntu but not for victimization.”<sup>51</sup> According to Judge Colin Lamont, the concept of Ubuntu is that which:

- i. is to be contrasted with vengeance
- ii. dictates that high value be placed on the life of a human being
- iii. is inextricably linked to the values of and which places a high premium on dignity, compassion, humaneness and respect for humanity of another
- iv. dictates a shift from confrontation to mediation and conciliation
- v. dictates good attitudes and shared concern
- vi. favours the re-establishment of harmony in the relationship between parties and that such harmony should restore the dignity of the plaintiff without ruining the defendant
- vii. favours restorative rather than retributive justice
- viii. operates in a direction favouring reconciliation rather than estrangement of disputants
- ix. works towards sensitizing a disputant or a defendant in litigation to the hurtful impact of his actions to the other party and towards changing such conduct rather than merely punishing the disputant
- x. promotes mutual understanding rather than punishment
- xi. favours face-to-face encounters of disputants with a view to facilitating differences being resolved rather than conflict and victory for the most powerful;
- xii. favours civility and civilized dialogue premised on mutual tolerance.<sup>52</sup>

The list above can be grouped under a concept called ‘Redemption’. Redemption relates to how people deal with errant, deviant and dissident members of the community. The belief is that man is born formless like a lump of clay. It is up to the community, as a whole, to use the fire of experience and the wheel of social control to mould him into a pot that may be of general use. Any imperfection should be borne by the community and the community should always seek to redeem man.

Ubuntu avers that society or community gives human being their humanity. According to Michael Onyebuchi Eze, the crust of Ubuntu can be summarized as:

“A person is a person through other people’ strikes an affirmation of one’s humanity through recognition of an ‘other’ in his or her uniqueness and difference. It is a demand for a creative intersubjective formation in which the ‘other’ becomes a mirror (but only a mirror) for my subjectivity. This idealism suggests to us that humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; my humanity is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe each other. We create each other and need to sustain this otherness creation. And if we belong to each other, we participate in our creations: we are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am. The ‘I am’ is not a rigid subject, but a dynamic self-constitution dependent on this otherness creation of relation and distance”<sup>53</sup>

The good man in Ubuntu context is he who is considerate of the humanness of others. What binds him to others is the humanness they share and thus they are his brothers and sisters irrespective of religious leanings or cultural backgrounds. Ubuntu preaches togetherness and a community where individuals empathise with one another and have vested interest in its collective prosperity. Audrey Tang sheds more light on Ubuntu that it “implies that everyone has different skills and strength; people are not isolated, and through mutual support they can help each other to complete themselves”.<sup>54</sup> Affirming the principle of togetherness, Archbishop Desmond Tutu states that “a person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, based from a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed”.<sup>55</sup> To him, Ubuntu is not “I think therefore I am” as Descartes puts it but rather it is “I am a human because I belong. I participate. I share.” This in essence summarises as, I am because you are”. This is Ubuntu, where all sectors belong as partners, where all participate as stakeholders and where all succeed together at a rapid rate.

The concept of a good man according to Ubuntu also include the care of strangers and travellers. Nelson Mandela explains that “ a traveller through a country would stop at a village and he didn’t have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food and attend him”. Visitors do not need to burden themselves with carrying

provisions- all they need is to dress properly and be on the road. <sup>56</sup> All visitors are provided for and protected in every home they pass through without expecting any form of payment. This practice of showing particular care for strangers is common to many African societies before the world became sophisticated. Also under Ubuntu, unhu or uMunthu, children are never orphans since the roles of mother and father are not vested in a single individual with respect to a single child. A good man or woman with Ubuntu will not allow any child around him or her to be an orphan.

In essence, the ideology of Ubuntu is such that embodies all the invaluable virtues that society strives for towards maintaining socio-political and economic stability amongst the people. It also promotes the concept of reaching out to and sharing. There is a sincere warmth with which people relate with one another. The belief in the interconnectedness of human beings is very keen and hence are always very cautious that the cord of connectedness is not broken or strained. Stanlake asserts that to be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and on that basis establish respectful human relationship with them. When we recognize the humanness of others, there are some actions that we won't do which may be inimical to our fellow human being. A good man refrains from immorality, selfishness, exploitation of the less privileged, dishonesty, stealing, embezzlement of public fund and embraces virtues as selflessness, generosity, kindness, consideration of the humanness of others. By this, we can establish and sustain a society that is tolerant of people's religious affiliation, and perceptions about life. We realize that a man or a woman is first human (and it is perceived that humans are essentially virtuous and rational) before being an African or European, a black or white, educated or illiterate, rich or poor and it is based on this humanness that we share that we are able to mould together a world that is worth living.

### **1.9.1 Conclusion**

In this Chapter, we have analysed the concept of 'good' and it is obvious that 'good' is a virtue which all societies should pursue to ensure holistic development of the human person. Good refers to all human virtues as honesty, justice, charity, chastity, sincerity, kindness, hospitality. The *Omoluwabi* ideology which is essentially based on good

character (*iwa rere*) espouses the virtues above cited. From our analysis of good in Igbo, Hausa/Fulani, South-Africa, Zimbabwean, Malawian cultures we are able to infer that *Omoluwabi* ideology relates to and aligns with the ideologies of good in these societies.

In the next Chapter, we shall attempt an indepth exposition of the concept of *Omoluwabi* as it existed and functioned as an institutionalized moral guide in traditional Yoruba society.



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## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CONCEPT OF *OMOLUWABI* IN YORUBA THOUGHT

#### 2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed etymology and analysis of “*Omoluwabi*” in Yoruba thought. It is also to expose the admirable and commendable qualities embedded in *Omoluwabi* that has fostered a dynamic, positive, pleasant and rewarding human relationship in traditional Yoruba society. Central to this chapter is the fact that *iwa rere* (good character) is the cardinal upon which *Omoluwabi* rests. A person will not be referred to as *Omoluwabi* even if he/she possesses qualities like bravery, courage, mercantile without good character manifesting in honesty, truthfulness, respect for elders and constituted authority, self-control, contentment. In this chapter, we shall also establish the fact that *Omoluwabi* is a grand theory developed in Yoruba culture and had prescribed moral/ethical code of conduct which instituted a healthy society morally, politically, socially and economically in the Yoruba traditional setting.

#### 2.2 The Etymology and Meaning of *Omoluwabi*

The concept of *Omoluwabi* is credited to the Yoruba who might rightly claim to be the largest cultural aggregation in West Africa with a history of political unity and a common historical tradition.<sup>1</sup> Yoruba people are one of over 250 (two hundred and fifty) ethnic groups in Nigeria. They are one of the largest groups, the two others being Igbo and Hausa/Fulani. Within the Yoruba ethnic group are the Ife, Ijesa, Ijebu, Oyo, Ekiti, Ilaje, Ifon, Owo, Akure, Oke-Ogun, Ibarapa, Egba, Egbado (Yewa), Egun, Edo.<sup>2</sup> The Yoruba are gregarious and sociable. They lived together in the pre-colonial era in compounds and life under this condition of living communally would have been intolerable if ways and means had not been devised to enable them live together in harmony. There is an elaborate code of manners and etiquette, the observance of which serves to reduce the strains and frustration of interpersonal relationship.<sup>3</sup>

An example of this code of manner is greeting. A Yoruba person will not pass by without offering a form of greeting, there is an ‘*e ku*’ for every occasion, time of the day,

occupation, situation, happening, position, weather and even posture. The communal spirit which exists in the Yoruba culture is pronounced by many Yoruba proverbs, one of which runs thus '*agbajo owo la fi nso' ya*' (it is with the fist or a gathered hand that we beat the chest; one cannot beat the chest with a single finger.) Another Yoruba proverb says that '*ka rin, ka po, yiye nii ye ni*' which is to show that the Yoruba are of the opinion that togetherness and number are things of pride and strength.

Joy and pain are shared by all in the community and a self-contained, self-reliant person who can keep his mental and physical suffering to himself is regarded as churlish and one to be feared. Yoruba will say '*adake ma fohun, a ko mo ti eni to nse*' (a silent and reticent person, you do not know on whose side he is). Yoruba look upon expressions of sympathy offered to a man who is expressing temporary or permanent injury as helping to lighten the pain.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of *Omoluwabi* thus connotes a man that has been trained to behave properly by imbibing qualities and virtues at all time and by observing the various shortcomings of others with a resolution of not running into such kind of misdeeds. The *Omoluwabi* is an individual who consciously exercises self-control and moderates his natural drives, impulses and inclinations. The *Omoluwabi* also can be referred to as 'a good man', 'a man of good and impeccable character', 'a man with a high moral background', 'a morally upright person' or 'an embodiment of morality and virtue'. He / She is not egoistic but altruistic. Human beings are naturally egoistic but the *Omoluwabi* through training and re-orientation has been able to overcome the egoistic instinct by becoming altruistic and putting the interest of others before his own.

The term *Omoluwabi* etymologically is a fusion of the expression *omo-olu-iwa-bi* meaning 'a person born, nurtured and trained by someone with good character, that is *olu iwa* (chief of character) or the child begotten of Oniwa<sup>5</sup> that is, *oni-iwa* (owner or possessor of character). This being suggestive of the fact that such a child having the privilege of being raised by the possessor of good character may grow up as a person with good character. It also stresses the inevitability of parental guidance and guardian's counsel in children's character-moulding. In Greek mythology, Mentor the son of Alcimus and an old friend of Odysseus was placed in charge of Telemachus (Odysseus'

son) when he, Odysseus left for the Trojan War. Athena, the goddess of wisdom disguises herself as Mentor so that she could impart wisdom and courage to the young prince Telemachus. Athena leads Telemachus to the inner knowledge which dwells within him.<sup>6</sup> Mentor (Athena) encourages Telemachus to embark on a journey to find out whether his father is still alive, and where he may be. Mentor provides guidance, encouragement, and support to Telemachus during his journey in search of his father. A mentor from this relationship can thus mean “a wise and trusted counsellor or teacher”. Mentors are those special individuals who care enough to share their wisdom and guide one along one’s personal and professional journey. Mentors are problems-solving partners, they give sense of directions, they tell you the truth and they give you courage to take action.<sup>7</sup> In a nutshell, a mentor brings out the best in the mentees and support them to reach their optimal potentials in life and career through orientation, re-orientation, training, re-training, internalization et ce tera. An important point to note is that the mentor cannot give what he does not possess, so it is from the wealth of his experience that the mentor dishes out to nourish and mould the mentees. The *olu-iwa* (chief and custodian of character) whose offspring or mentees (those who follow his steps) are the *Omoluwabi* who share largely in his reservoir of good character and exhibit humane qualities as honesty, gratitude, hard-work, gentleness, kindness, respect for elders and constituted authorities, consideration for others.

The most probable source of the *Omoluwabi* expression has been identified to be the *odu ifa* divinatory verses which are Yoruba philosophical literary corpus with a binary system of 256 chapters (two hundred and fifty six) chapters. The studies and practical experiences highlight the strong moral code that prescribe acceptable standards of right and wrong in the society into which children were socialized early in life.<sup>8</sup> In the *Odu* corpus according to *Ogbe Egunda*, *Orunmila* once sought the means of success in life and was told that the only way was for him to marry *Iwa* (character or good character). *Orunmila* accordingly married *Iwa* and became very successful. Hence everybody has since been seeking after *Iwa*, with the result that *Iwa* becomes the mother of numerous children:<sup>9</sup>

*E wa w'omo Iwa berebe o,*

*E wa w'omo Iwa berebe o,*

*Iwa gbe dani,*

*Iwa pon s'ehin,*

*E wa w'omo Iwa berebe o.*

(Translation)

Come and behold the countless children of Iwa,

Come and behold the countless children of Iwa,

Iwa carries (children) in (her) arms,

Iwa carries (children) on (her) back,

Come and behold the countless children of Iwa.

The *Iwa* personified as a good woman in the *Ogbe Egunda* cited above that *Orunmila* through divination was advised to marry and who brought him success to the admiration of other men can also be likened to the virtuous woman in the book of Proverbs in the Holy Bible. The passage is stated below:

Who can find a virtuous wife?

For her worth is far above rubies.

The heart of her husband safely trusts her;

So he will have no lack of gain.

She does him good and not evil

All the days of her life.

She seeks wool and flax,

And willingly works with her hands,

She is like the merchant ships,



She brings her food from afar.  
She rises while it is still yet night,  
And provides food for her household,  
And a portion for her maidservants.  
She considers a field and buys it;  
From her profits she plants a vineyard.  
She girds herself with strength,  
And strengthens her arms.  
She perceives that her merchandise is good,  
And her lamp does not go out by night.  
She stretches out her hands to the distaff,  
And her hands holds the spindle.  
She extends her hand to the poor,  
Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.  
She is not afraid of snow for her household,  
For all her household is clothed in scarlet.  
She makes tapestry for herself;  
Her clothing is fine linen and purple.  
Her husband is known in the gates,  
When he sits among the elders of the land.  
She makes linen garments and sells them,

And supplies sashes for the merchants.  
Strength and honour are her clothing;  
She shall rejoice in time to come.  
She opens her mouth with wisdom,  
And on her tongue is the law of kindness.  
She watches over the ways of her household,  
And does not eat the bread of idleness.  
Her children rise up and call her blessed;  
Her husband also, and he praises her.  
“Many daughters have done well  
But you excel them all.”  
Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing,  
But a woman who fears the LORD  
She shall be praised.  
Give her of the fruit of her hands,  
And let her own works praise her in the gates.<sup>10</sup>

The virtuous woman's worth is priceless or valueless for her worth is far above precious stones. The heart of her husband safely trusts her because she does him only good and not evil all the days of her life. She does not engage in activities like promiscuity, gossiping, tale-bearing, rumour-mongering, brawling, indebtedness that may bring shame and reproach to her husband and children. She is industrious, enterprising, resourceful and hardworking. She takes good care of her household, leaving no one or nothing unattended to. She has foresight and she is frugal in spending. By the reason of her foresightedness

and frugality in spending, her business grows and expands from a bare field to a fruitful vineyard. Her lamp does not go at night, she makes extra sacrifice, burning the midnight candle to ensure that things under her purview are in good shape. She is not only concerned about the welfare of household, she also stretches her hands to the poor – she is generous. Changes in weather or economic situation do not stagger her because she always has adequate provision of food and clothing for her household. She also amidst all these does not forget to take good care of herself. She makes tapestry (a heavy woven cloth often with decorative pictorial designs) for herself and her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is successful, his peace of mind is always ascertained, knowing that the home-front is stable and formidable. He is not unduly perturbed because the wife does not give him reasons to distrust her. The husband by virtue of being successful due to his wife's dedication sits with the elders (nobles) of the land and not with base or obscure fellows. Even among the elders he is distinguished for all that is comely. She is not a loose-talker, she speaks only words of wisdom and she is kind-hearted. She does not eat the bread of idleness, she is not a busy-body. Her time is judiciously spent since she has so much to do and put in place that she also needs to stay awake for some extra hours at night in order to make sure that her household runs smoothly. Her staying awake is also to lay prayers and supplications before the Almighty God on behalf of her household after the hustle and bustle of the day. She watches diligently over her household and nothing goes amiss. She does not rely on comments and observations from outsiders to know what needs to be attended to in her home. She fears the Lord and will not dabble into anything venture that may tarnish her image. Her children call her blessed and her husband praises her. By virtue of her good character (*iwa rere*) of commitment and dedication to her family, chastity, wisdom, kindness, resourcefulness, foresightedness, frugality, generosity and hard-work she surpasses other women and thus can be seen as the epitome or quintessence of a good wife.

Also, it is taught in the Ifa corpus that *Iwa (rere)* is very essential in life. According to Oyeshile, one cannot compare *iwa (rere)* 'good character' with other valuable things such as money, houses, children and other assets which a man may aspire to have in life. The reason according to the Yoruba is that if a man or woman has other valuables and lacks

character, he/she is regarded as having lacked all. <sup>11</sup> Another recital under Ogbe Egunda goes thus:

*Iwa nikan l'o soro o,*

*Iwa nikan l'o soro,*

*Ori kan kii buru l'otu Ife,*

*Iwa nikan l'o soro o.*

(Translation)

Character is all that is requisite,

Character is all that is requisite,

There is no destiny to be called unhappy (unlucky) in Ife city,

Character is all that is requisite.

This recital is very instructive and laden with deep meaning. It is suggestive of the fact that *Iwa* (character) is superior to destiny (*ayanmo*), if one should have a bright destiny but fails to garnish it with good character, such destiny may become unfulfilled. In the event of making choices, one is counseled to choose good character above other things. A man was once faced with choosing only one thing from the array of wealth, children, patience (an attribute of good character) and long life, after much counsel, the man rightly chose patience and consequently got all the other things and much more.

*Iwa pele* (gentle character) is also very important to enable one journey through life without harm or hurt and to enjoy a peaceful pilgrimage. *Iwa* is also inevitable in prolonging one's years on the face of the earth. Irete-Idi affirms that:

*Iwa pele l'okun aiye*

*Fi ro peti l'owo eni*

*O da fun Orunmila*

*Ti o nlo fi iwa pele*

*Gba okun aiye l'owo okan-le-ni-rinwo imale*

Translation

Gentle character it is which enables the rope of life

To stay unbroken in one's hand

So declares the oracle to *Orunmila*

Who by means of gentle character

Was going to win the rope of life from

The four hundred and one divinities.

Dasyuva identifies three main *iwa pele* types and which are explained thus:

- i. *(Iwa-) Pele ko ma baa ku.* (Be careful, or be of good conduct, so that you do not die suddenly/get hurt or harmed). Taking extra caution to avoid a sudden or untimely death or fatal harm caused by negligence and/or carelessness. Many disasters could have been averted if caution had been applied. *Iwa pele* admonishes that measured steps should be taken and carefully thought-of words should be spoken. It is like saying-‘look before you leap’.
- ii. *(Iwa-) Pele ko ma baa koba awon ara yooku.* (Be careful that you may not cause problems for others) i. e. avoid behaviour that indicates that one does not have consideration for others, like reckless driving, drug dealing, gun-running, abuse of office or acts that may result in conflicts or full bloom war. Consideration for others is compulsory as a social being, because some of our actions like the ones stated above can have direct resultant effects on others. Actions that can yield negative consequences should be avoided, *iwa pele* does not portray weakness but wisdom in avoiding calamities. Inciting words that are capable of rousing the anger in others and causing ill feelings and wars that can extend for generations should wisely be avoided, *ibere ija la mo,*

*ko si eni ti a mo opin re* meaning that one may know the onset of a war but may be unable to predict how and when it will end .

Also, a Yoruba adage says '*ti ara eni ba je ayan, huruhuru re ko ni jeki a sun l'oru*' which is translated to mean that if one's family member ate cockroach, the horrible sound he will be making at midnight out of discomfort will not allow others in the house to sleep. This strongly indicates that there are some behaviors that cause problems and sleepless nights for perpetrators and those people that are associated with them. *Iwa pele* is solicited and advised not only to avoid one's untimely death but to also avoid being a cause of agony and anguish to one's relatives.

- iii. (*Iwa-*) *Pele ko ma baa para re, or (ko ma baa para re lara)*. (Be careful so that you do not kill yourself or bring some harm upon yourself) i. e. self-inflicted harm, as in cultivating dangerous habits like night-crawling, drug-addiction, promiscuity etc. Some habits to the young or inexperienced may seem as having fun and the call to caution is usually regarded as a sledge hammer on their freedom to enjoy life to the fullest. Drug addiction may become irredeemable while the addict could die or become useless to himself and a promiscuous person can contract deadly diseases like HIV/AIDS.

The *Irete-meji* in ifa corpus cautions *Agilinti* (the alligator):

*Agilinti rora maa so je*

*Alaamu pete rora maa somu*

*Nigberi osa, nigberi okun*

*Koo ma baa fibi haihai kan haihai*

*Egun lo gun o lese leekan*

*Koo ma gbabi egun koja mo.*

Alligator, be cautious how you eat

Great lizard, exercise caution how you drink

At the bank of the lagoon, at the bank of the sea

So that you do not encounter trouble from these places

You were pricked once by a thorn in the foot

Serving as a warning for you not to venture again on a thorny path

(Translation is mine)

The *Omoluwabi* is not a readymade product depicting that one is not born an *Omoluwabi* but the traits are being imbibed by a child through the process of internalization. The point being alluded to here is that the *Omoluwabi* is essentially not an innate concept but that which one imbibes through upbringing and habit. This is not to mean that man is born intrinsically bad, but that as Idowu points out, the sense of right and wrong, by the decree of God, has always been part of human nature. It only requires good upbringing, admonition, correction, instruction to be able to attain the *Omoluwabi* standard.

This learning process does not cease although it is expected that at certain times there are some profound mores of the community that a child should have been inducted into or that he/she should have been exposed to either directly by the immediate family members and the extended family or indirectly by members of the community. An *Omoluwabi* learns from personal mistakes or shortcomings of others. He takes warning or rebuke with an open heart and words of gratitude since such admonition is necessarily to make him a better person in the society and to enable him evade un-foreseen calamities injurious to himself or/and to others.

*Omoluwabi* though, a prevalent moral concept that developed within the Yoruba Cultural matrix can be made universal because it promotes the attainment of the good which is an indispensable ingredient for sustainable development.

*Omoluwabi*, in summary, fosters a dynamic, positive, pleasant and rewarding human relation. It is both a people-centred and a personality-propelled philosophy that helps to advance the collective vision of a people. A child that is raised in an *Omoluwabi* community enjoys close parental attention, love and discipline, and undergoes a process

of focused systemic socialization and cultural integration through internalization of core cultural values, ethics and mores. He is predictably, a psychologically integrated personality consciously guided by the *iwa-pele/ iwa rere* codes that constitute the core values of *Omoluwabi*.<sup>12</sup>

### **2.3 Yoruba Concept of *Eniyan***

The justification for this sub-heading is that in Yoruba thought, one cannot be ‘eniyan’ – a person in social terms without good character (*iwa rere*). This implies that there is a traceable link between *Omoluwabi* (a person of good character) and the Yoruba concept of eniyan. The Yoruba believe so deeply in destiny, however, they also hold strongly that one’s destiny is affected whether positively or negatively by one’s character.

Omotade Adegbindin identifies a tripartite conception of man in the Yoruba metaphysics which are (i) *ara*- the physical and tangible entity. *Ara* is composed of flesh, bones and blood, (ii) *emi* – the soul or the spiritual element which is immaterial and is regarded as the vital force which gives life to the body,<sup>13</sup> (iii) *ori* or *ori inu* (inner head) which is also spiritual and held to be the essence of human personality. *Ori* is the word for the physical head, to the Yoruba, the physical, visible head is a symbol of *ori-inu*, the internal or inner head. In the Yoruba belief, it is the *ori* that rules, controls and guides the life and activities of the person. The Yoruba believe that one’s destiny in life is determined by the kind of ‘ori’ he chooses. The Yoruba mythology has it that a person chooses ‘ori’ before coming to the earth. This is laid credence to by this Ifa citation:

*Ebiti egbake nii yedi pee.*

*A dia fun Oriseeku, omo Ogun;*

*A bu fun Orileemere, omo Ija;*

*A dia fun Afuwape tii somo Orunmila,*

*Nijo ti won nrele Olodumare lo ree yanri.*

It is the snare which strikes suddenly.



*Ifa* divination was performed for *Oriseeku*, the son of *Ogun*;

*Ifa* divination was performed for *Orileemere*, the son of *Ija*;

*Ifa* divination was performed for *Afuwape*, the son of *Orunmila*;

On the day they were going to the abode of *Olodumare* to choose *Ori*.<sup>14</sup>

(Translation)

What makes for the individuality of each *ori* however is its quality. Thus, a fortunate and prosperous person is referred to as an *oloriire (olori rere)* - possessor of good head, while one who is unfortunate and unlucky in life is regarded as *olori buruku*- possessor of bad head. The physical head that is the symbol of the inner head is treated with great reverence and regarded as a personal god. The Yoruba however also believe that *ori* cannot perform its function well without the aid of *ese* (leg) both in the physical and spiritual senses. Wande Abimbola puts it thus:

It must be emphasized, however, that the Yoruba concept of the choice of destiny through *ori* also emphasizes the need for hard work to bring to fruition the potentiality for success represented by the choice of a good *ori*. This leads us to believe in *ese* (leg) as an important ingredient of human personality. *Ese* (leg) is regarded by the Yoruba as a vital part of the human personality make-up, both in a physical and spiritual sense. *Ese*, for the Yoruba, is the symbol of power and activity. It is therefore an element which enables a man to struggle and function adequately in life so that he may bring to realization whatever has been marked out for him by the choice of *ori*. Like *ori*, *ese* is regarded as an *orisa* (deity) which must be catered for in order to achieve success. Therefore, when a man makes sacrifices to his *ori*, part of the sacrifice is also offered to *ese*.<sup>15</sup>

This had attracted arguments that since *owo* (hand) and *opolo* (brain) are equally useful to one's success in life as one's *ese*, why not consider these as important elements, especially as *owo* (hand) does most of the work to be done by man on earth, while the effective functioning of both *ese* and *owo* depends on the central co-coordinating activity of the human brain. Also, if *ese* and *owo* had been identified as crucial to the realization of one's destiny, is this to conclude that those who are deformed have no destiny to fulfill

or are they in essence of no positive consequence in the scheme of things? To this second question, Makinde had replied that it is possible for a person to have chosen a good *ori* in heaven and yet fail on earth in spite of the use of his legs and hands, if such use is not properly coordinated by one's brain (*opolo*). On the other hand, a deformed person (with deformed legs or hands) may yet succeed in life if he makes good use of his mental qualities. In essence, to this body of arguments, the answer is that *ori* in the Yoruba belief system is a mere potentiality and that while recognizing it as a deity to be worshipped since it determines what one's portion in life will be, it remains a fact however that certain things must accompany the choice of a good *ori* in order to bring such potentially good destiny to reality.<sup>16</sup> As mentioned above, *iwa rere* is a major requisite in aiding the good *ori* to realize its good destiny while *iwa buruku* on the other hand may jeopardize the good fortune of a potentially good *ori*. *Oladunnke Ayoola Aransi* in her book, *Omoluabi* stated that:

*Opo omo lo yan oriire lodo Eledua*

*Lo dele aye tan*

*Lo se afowofa ohun buburu*

*Lo ba pa kadara ara re da*<sup>17</sup>

Many children chose good-luck from God

But getting to the world

They dabble into wrong doings

Thereby marring the good destiny they chose

(Translation is mine)

This brings us back to the recital under *Ogbe Egunda* that goes thus:

*Iwa nikan l'o soro o,*

*Iwa nikan l'o soro,*

*Ori kan kii buru l'otu Ife,*

*Iwa nikan l'o soro o.*

(Translation)

Character is all that is requisite,

Character is all that is requisite,

There is no destiny to be called unhappy in Ife city,

Character is all that is requisite.

The identified three layers of the conception of *eniyan* according to Adegbindin will be examined thus: first, the *eniyan* as persona is the physical human being, the tangible that we can see and touch. The second concept of *eniyan* refers to the quality of the human mind or that which foregrounds a refined intellection and perception of, and attitude to, life and living. Thirdly, *eniyan* refers to such principles or values that define and determine the degree and quality of humanness in a personality. <sup>18</sup>

The moral dimension of persons (*eniyan*) is most frequently ascribed to their character. This is related to our actions and to what we say by words of mouth, as there is no way to identify (overtly) the behavior and the quality of a person but by what they do and what they say. Before we can identify a bad person (*eniyan buruku*), we must see their acts or hear the words of their mouths. Likewise, a good person (*eniyan rere*) is wont to always say good or pleasant words (*oro rere tabi oro pele*) and truthful words (*oro otito*) and does what is good and right (*iwa to dara ati iwa tito*). The Yoruba however recognize an exception to the above stated, a bad person can still camouflage and behave very pleasantly but may have an ulterior motive behind his good action and fine words. The Yoruba while talking about a persona as this will say, *awo fele bonu, ko je kaa ri ikun asebi* (the thin skin that covers the stomach does not allow us to recognize a wicked person, they can also say about such person as “*fi eje pupa sinu, tu ito funfun jade*” (retaining inside the red blood, but spitting out white saliva). However, by and large, the wicked will eventually be known by his/her bad words and untoward behavior. As Barry Hallen says, ‘I believe you (*gba o gbo*) when I know (mo) your character (*iwa re*). <sup>19</sup>

*Iwa* (character) is a cardinal on which *Omoluwabi* stands and no one can be called an *Omoluwabi* if he/she lacks good character. The entirety of Yoruba living is based on *iwa*. There is no time or occasion that the dealings and relationship of the Yoruba is permissible to be without good character. The Yoruba will say that *obinrin so iwa nu, o so pe oun ko lori oko* which translates to mean that a woman who lacks good character will endure years of spinsterhood. Whereas, a person with good character has all things and can achieve and accomplish great feats. Morality is summed up in Yoruba by the word '*iwa*'. It is stressed that good character must be the dominant feature of a person's life and that it is character that distinguishes a person from a brute. Therefore, it is common for the Yoruba to say concerning an individual that '*okunrin na se eniyan*'- the man behaves as a person while they may also refer to another as '*okunrin na ko l'eeyan lara*'- the man lacks good character, he does not behave as a person or literarily, he does not possess a person in his being. Since it is *iwa* that distinguishes a person from an animal, a person who behaves contrary to the expected and acceptable modes of behavior is regarded as an animal that lacks sense of propriety. Yoruba will say '*eranko lasan lasan ni okunrin yen*'- the man is nothing but an animal. Thus, the picture of the proper or complete *eniyan* to the Yoruba is the *Omoluwabi* who employs *iwa rere* in all his ways and nexus of dealings with others.

#### **2.4 Juxtaposing the Yoruba Concept of *Omoluwabi* with the Western Idea of a Gentleman**

In our exposition of the Yoruba concept of *Omoluwabi*, it is imperative to look also into the Western idea of a gentleman. It has been established that the *Omoluwabi* exhibits refined traits and his actions are being propelled by *iwa rere /iwa pele*, thus there is the tendency to summarily equate the Yoruba concept of *Omoluwabi* with the Western idea of a gentleman. We shall however point out the similarities, nuances and apparent differences between these two concepts which emanated from different cultural backgrounds to decipher if they are one and same thing.

In its original meaning, the term 'gentleman' denoted a man of the lowest rank of the English gentry, standing below an esquire and above a yeoman. This definition also included the younger sons of the younger sons of peers and the younger sons of baronets,

knights and esquires in perpetual succession.<sup>20</sup> To this degree, gentleman came to signify a man with an income derived from property, a legacy, or some other source, who was thus independently wealthy and did not need to work. This use developed through the centuries until 1710 when Steele argued that ‘the appellation of Gentleman is never to be affixed to a man’s circumstances but to his behavior in them’. By this definition, a limitation over-narrow even for the present day usage. This implies a strict usage of the term for people who only are found worthy in behavior and morals as in the Yoruba concept of *Omoluwabi*.

William Harrison, writing in the late 1500s says ‘gentlemen be those whom their race and blood, or at the least their own virtues, do make noble and known’. Going by this definition, priority is shown to race and blood in the attainment of the appellation ‘gentleman’. A gentleman in William Harrison’s time was being expected to have a coat of arms as an emblem to show that he was a gentleman. Harrison gave the following account of how gentlemen were made in Shakespeare’s days. (It worthy of note that William Shakespeare also acquired this gentleman coat of arms):

Gentlemen whose ancestors are not known to come in with William of duke of Normandy do take their beginning in England after this manner in our times. Who soever studieth the laws of the realm, who so abideth in the university, giving his mind to his book, or professeth physic and the liberal sciences, or beside his service in the room of a captain in the wars, or good counsel given at home, whereby his commonwealth is benefited, can live without manual labour, and thereto is able and will bear the port, charge and countenance of a gentleman, he shall for money have a coat and arms bestowed upon him by heralds (who in the charter of the same do of custom pretend antiquity and service, and many gay things) and thereunto being made so good cheap be called master ....

In this way, Shakespeare himself was demonstrated by the grant of his coat of arms to be no vagabond but a gentleman, it seemed then that there was no separation of arms and gentility. However, it was strongly argued that only a gentleman could have a coat of arms (so that possession of a coat of arms recognized rather than created the status). Thus, according to this argument all armigers were gentlemen, but not all gentlemen were

armigers. The significance of a right to a coat of arms was that it was a definitive proof of the status of gentleman, but it recognized rather than conferred such a status, and the status could be and frequently was accepted without a right to a coat of arms. The question that looms high in the mind however is -why the need to acquire a coat of arms with money in order to show that one is a gentleman, if the idea of a gentleman is not class based?

Ogundeji and Akande observe that there is a tendency to want to translate *Omoluwabi* as gentleman/lady but that the possibility of equating English and Yoruba concepts is a relatively new development. They cite that in Medieval Europe, the concept of gentleman/lady was class-determined while in the pre-colonial traditional Yoruba culture, the concept of *Omoluwabi* transcends social class boundaries. They further mention that in medieval Europe, however chaste, upright, hardworking and generally good a person may be, he/she could not be regarded as a gentleman/lady if he/she is not of the aristocratic breed. Meanwhile, among the pre-colonial Yoruba, someone with humble background, if he/she has good qualities and morals would be regarded as an *Omoluwabi*, while the so-called aristocrat that lacks them would be condemned and not so regarded.<sup>21</sup> In this wise, a well behaved slave could be regarded as *Omoluwabi* while a free-born without manners would be regarded as *eniyan k'eniyan*- a worthless person. Ogundeji and Akande howbeit opine that today, the meaning of the concept of gentleman/lady has expanded beyond the social class-determined confinement to a broader semantic field that recognizes anyone with good character like that of the Yoruba. While agreeing with the above position, it should be noted that although the Yoruba *Omoluwabi* concept bears some similarities with the English idea of a gentleman, the two concepts are strictly not the same, this is because in the recent times 'gentleman' has been further widened as a term of politeness for all men in a gathering, as in the phrase 'Ladies and Gentlemen' while *Omoluwabi* remains the prerogative of a person with good character (*iwa rere*).

### **2.5 Good character (*iwa rere*) as the bedrock of *Omoluwabi***

The Yoruba have established culture and customs with attendant rules. The beautiful and respectable Yoruba culture goes with Yoruba religion, coupled with sanctions for anyone who errs or transgresses. Whenever and wherever anyone betrays Yoruba ethics and

culture which emphasise moral consciousness, such a person unavoidably pays for his or her failings. The importance placed on virtues and values among the Yoruba race leads to attaining peace, good neighbourliness and happy relationship among the people.

Yoruba civilization highlights a strong moral code that prescribes acceptable standards of right and wrong in the society into which children were socialized early in life. Children were demanded early in life to internalize humane qualities of honesty, transparency, accountability, integrity, justice, fair play, hard work and truthfulness. The communal life of the Yoruba have also allowed the concept of *Omoluwabi* to be deeply entrenched, because people are always around to correct any erring child and various methods of social control like instruction, advice, persuasion, reward and punishment are employed to instill the virtues of the *Omoluwabi* into a child. All these combine to equip the Yoruba person with a built-in shock-proof ability to resist evil; this is called the *Omoluwabi* standard. The *Omoluwabi* resists evil habitually and not by chance or coercion. The Yoruba have a character that is both distinctively tolerant and resilient and self-control occupies a cardinal position in the Yoruba concept of *Omoluwabi*. An *Omoluwabi* must thus be outstanding at eliciting the right type of behavior even in difficult situations.<sup>22</sup> An *Omoluwabi*'s actions and reactions are not subjected to mood swings and emotions since moral virtues which constitute the core of the character of the *Omoluwabi* remain constant and unchanged. For example, it is unheard of in the Yoruba setting for a well-trained child to speak back or abuse an elder even at the highest level of provocation.

An *Omoluwabi* will do everything to protect and preserve the good image and reputation of his family. Little wonder, this proverb is always used in the Yoruba setting: '*iwa rere lesu eniyan*' which means that good character is one's guard or the beauty of a person inheres in his good character).<sup>23</sup> This implies that good character is sufficient armour against any untoward happening in life and anyone who wears it need not fear anything. The Yoruba believe that *iwa rere* will prevent one and even one's offspring from witnessing or partaking in calamities whether suddenly or cumulatively, *bi o ku die ki omo oloore jin si koto, monamona a sise imole*, the offspring of the kindhearted will always escape calamity even by a whisker. Good character is also an adornment that beautifies an individual. The outcome of good character is of course good reputation, it is

like when some wears pure white regalia unspotted by any blemish. Such a person is always very careful of getting involved in activities that can soil or tarnish his good reputation. Yoruba will say, 'ma ta epo si ala mi', don't sprinkle palm oil on my white garment. The moral standing of a family was usually a major determining factor for marriage in the Yoruba traditional society. The Yoruba would not have anything to do with a family that lacked virtues and morale, or had a stint of immorality and vice however wealthy such family might be.

An *Omoluwabi* rather than pilfer, steal or help himself to things belonging to others will gladly work hard or even become a slave to be able to earn a living. To the *Omoluwabi*, becoming a slave and doing drudgery work is better than being a thief.

This is in shown in this Yoruba song:

*Kini n o fo 'le se laye ti mo wa ..... 2ce*

*Laye ti mo wa kaka ki n jale*

*Ma kuku d' eru*

*Ki ni n o fo le se laye ti mo wa.*

I will have nothing to do with robbery and theft

I'd rather be a slave.

(Translation is mine)

One of the ways of inculcating the virtues of *Omoluwabi* is more or less an unconscious absorption of the lessons of morality and good manners embedded in the numerous Yoruba proverbs which are generally employed to drive home some practical truths. Of all African people, Yoruba are probably unsurpassed for the wealth and appropriateness of their proverbs. <sup>24</sup> Proverbs are wise sayings used in order to avoid giving a blunt and direct answer when expressing one's opinion before elders, so as not to appear uncouth and to also bring out clearly the meaning of obscure points in arguments. Even, as a sign of respect to the elders who are around, the young man/woman making use of proverbs



will say, *'toto, o sebi owe'*, meaning that 'this saying resembles a proverb'. This is to show modesty, that the young person is not proud as to be reeling off wise sayings in the presence of elders.

Hospitality is also a part of the code of good behaviour which an *Omoluwabi* imbibes. The hospitality of the Yoruba is spontaneous and not forced. *'Oju la nte f'alejo ka to t'eni'* meaning that 'one should first welcome a visitor with a broad smile on the face before spreading a mat for the visitor to sit down' is a proverb which shows that a guest from afar, however unexpected his arrival, receives hospitality from his host as long as he cares to stay. The guest's own sense of propriety will however warn him against unnecessarily prolonging his stay.<sup>25</sup> E. B. Idowu observes that the Yoruba are by nature a hospitable race and are particularly hospitable to strangers. Before life became artificial and sophisticated, a traveller need have no fear where to lodge or what to eat if benighted as he was sure to find ready hospitality wherever he called. The Yoruba teach that one should be hospitable because it is right to do so, as also because one can never tell when one might be in need of hospitality oneself.<sup>26</sup>

In the pre-colonial era, the Yoruba were emblem of morality.<sup>27</sup> Sexual immoralities such as rape, fornication and adultery were frowned at and despised with passion and offenders were usually ostracized. It was expected of a young lady to remain chaste till marriage as untold embarrassment and taunts awaited her and her parents if she had been defiled before wedding. *'Bi omo ba se ri, ni a se nse ana re'* means that it is how a maiden presents herself (whether chaste or defiled) that will determine the gifts and honour that the groom's family will accord her and her parents.

It is the joy of parents to hear good testimonies from outsiders that their children are well behaved, the Yoruba proverb to depict this says that *'bi egungun eni ba jo ire, ori a maa ya atokun'* that is, 'if one's masquerade dances well (if one's child does well), the guide (the parents) feels happy'. It is a shame when a child is reported to parents of bad behaviour by outsiders. This implies that the parents have failed or are failing in their responsibilities to properly groom the child into an *Omoluwabi*, *'bi omo odun meta ba ko ti ko rin, die lowo iya, die lowo baba'*, that is, 'if a-three year old child refuses to walk (fails to do what is right), it is the fault of both the father and the mother'.

The education of the young Yoruba in the codes of manners, conventions, customs, morals and laws of his society is however not the sole responsibility of his parents. Members of his family and household, his extended family, his kindred and neighbours are also instrumental in his attainment to the *Omoluwabi* standard. The Yoruba maintain contacts with a much larger circle of blood and affinal relations, neighbours and friends. These various relationships have a way of bringing together a very large group of people whose opinions the individual must take into account in his conduct and behaviour. A Yoruba proverb says '*enikan nii bimo, igba eniyan nii wo*' which translates to mean that only one person gives birth to a child, but two hundred people, that is, the whole community joins hands to bring him up. As a rule, the Yoruba cannot pretend to be indifferent to the public and its opinion<sup>28</sup> because from his early childhood, the public has begun to contribute to his grooming into an *Omoluwabi*.

As mentioned above, in the traditional Yoruba setting, the training of the child is not left only for the parents to carry out. The community takes it as a responsibility to train a child in the proper manner, thus, it is not expected of an elder to look away or be oblivious when a child is doing something wrong around him, but to correct such a child. Hence this Yoruba proverb that says, '*agba ki i wa loja, ki ori omo tuntun wo*' which literally translates to mean that 'an elder cannot be in the market, and the head of the newborn strung on his mother's back will be bent'.<sup>29</sup>

In the traditional Yoruba culture, the elders are the custodian of the conscience of the society. Before a bad issue gets out of hand, a good elder would normally draw attention to it so that it could be curtailed and prevent calamity, '*agba kii wa ni ilu, ki ilu baje*', 'the elder does not look on and allow things to go wrong in the community'.<sup>30</sup> *Bi omode ba n gegi ni'gbo, agba ni yio mo ibi ti o ma a wo si*', this Yoruba proverb translates to mean that 'if a child is cutting a tree in the forest, it is an elder that will know the direction to which the tree will fall'. It is expected that the elders have vast experience and knowledge and can predict the aftermath of a thing and so should be able to correct and curb the excesses of the young ones. However, the society has changed from being communalistic to individualistic where even parents have to be careful of imposing punishments on their erring children.

For the *Omoluwabi*, moral values are particularly important. Values refer to the standards by which people define what is good or bad, beautiful or ugly. Values underlie our preferences, guide our choices and indicate what we hold worthwhile in life. To learn about a people's culture is to learn their values and their ideas about what is desirable in life.<sup>31</sup>

Moral values are borne out of the ideals of our ways of life, our customs and our practices. Values are also derived from our religions and these are theoretical values which are the ideals we learn from the various forms of religions that we practice. It is believed that these values are divine and adherence to them is not a matter of choice because deviation may incur the wrath of the Divinity. There is no society without its set of values which may be written or unwritten. Values are to create and maintain sanity and order in the society and to regulate and control human excesses. Idowu asserts that the sense of right and wrong, by the decree of God, has always been part of human nature<sup>32</sup> that is, being able to distinguish good from evil is a natural trait given by God to men and according to Richardson, though it is true that moral standards vary widely from age to age and from place to place, yet all cultures acknowledge, according to their own standards, that there is a difference between right and wrong.<sup>33</sup>

It should however not be taken that moral values are derivatives only of our religious practices. There were other sources in the African traditional societies from which moral values engendered. It is taught in folk-tales, folk-lore and folk-songs, *ifa* corpus in the Yoruba society that those who go astray or flout the values of the society would not go unpunished while those who adhere to and promote such values as honesty, kindness, respect to elders, obedience to parents and elders would be rewarded. Oyeshile in his exposition on the origins of morality within the Yoruba framework writes thus “our conclusion is that although religion plays a prominent role in the life of Africans, morality from which the people derive and exhibit their sense of right and wrong, good and evil is never exclusively based on religion. Rather there are many origins of morality such as religion, rationality, prudence, societal custom and habit, and need for peaceful co-existence in society”.<sup>34</sup> Apart from establishing the fact that morality in African traditional societies streamed from a myriad of sources, one can however deduce from the

statement 'religion plays a prominent role in the life of Africans' that moral values from religious source or with religious under-pining are accorded strict observance because to act otherwise may attract the wrath of the Divinity whose punishment may not terminate on earth but extends from the here to the here-after.

## **2.6 Culture and Morality**

E. B. Taylor in his definition of the anthropological concept of culture observed that culture as taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, norms, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society.<sup>35</sup> To him, a people's concept of culture is determined by the values of that society and their world views. Culture serves to curtail the egocentric nature of man in a state which has been described by Thomas Hobbes as "a state of anarchy, a ceaseless war of all against all where an individual's life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."

Culture is essentially a set of rules which enables man to live, interact, learn and develop his physical capabilities and adjust to any environment. According to Peter B. Hammond, culture refers to that element in human behaviour which enables man to make the most of his physical capabilities and adapts to different environment without highly specialized biological equipment. This implies that culture is a product of humanism which came out through reasoning based upon observation and experience of the physical world. Culture in a broad perspective refers to the social heritage of a group of people which their children learn through socialization. Thus, culture in general comprises the selective ways of thinking, feeling, acting, communicating used by people of one group and ethnicity that differentiate their way of life from that of other ethnic groups.

It has been learnt that the phenomena of culture can be divided into three components: material culture, social culture and mental culture. These tripartite components have been referred to by T. Lapierre as the three universal ingredients of culture. The material culture or technological component of culture consists of the products of man's creative abilities, arts and skills used by man to produce material goods and services for livelihood and

security. This aspect of culture is complementary to the survival of the society since it enables man in the society to meet basic needs as food, shelter and clothing. It is important to note that material culture in any society shows the level of development in that culture. Social culture or organization component of culture involves social action by which daily relationships between individuals and groups in a society take place. This is because no society can survive without interrelationships or group cooperation. The mental culture or ideological component of culture includes belief systems, values, ideas and knowledge which a group of people share and it is concerned with the interrelationships between man and his environment and his God.<sup>36</sup>

The Yoruba have a rich cultural heritage with values that regulate individuals' and groups' actions and reactions thereby making the Yoruba one of the most cultured and sophisticated group in the world. To the Yoruba, the family is the microcosm that is, the first cell of all the concentric circles which form the different levels of society, village, tribe, kingdom and empire. Marriage in traditional African Societies is stable since marriage is seen not only as a union between individuals but an alliance between the kin groups of husband and wife. Divorce was forbidden or made difficult –as when it is necessary for a wife's kinsmen to return a substantial number of cattle or money to her husband before she can be freed of her marital ties.<sup>37</sup>

Moral Values which are the yardsticks to describe what is virtuous, just, good, right and proper are like banks of the river to curtail the excess of the river in order to avoid overflow and the damage it may do to the environment.

E. B. Idowu identifies the following moral values:

1. Chastity in sexual matters

(Wiwa ni mimo ati alailabawon)

2. Selflessness

(Airo tara eni nikan)

3. Hospitality

(Itoju alejo)

4. Kindness or generosity

(Aanu tabi fi'fun ni)

5. Avoidance of wickedness

(Yiyera fun iwa ika)

6. Truth and rectitude

(Otito ati Iwa tito)

7. Avoidance of stealing

(Yiyera fun ole jija)

8. Dependability in keeping covenants

(Pipa majemu ati ofin mo)

9. Straight forwardness (avoidance of hypocrisy)

(Aise agabagebe)

10. Protection of women as the weaker sex

(Di'dabo bo obinrin gegebi alaini ipa)

11. Honour and due respect to elders

(Bi' bu ola ati owo fun agba) <sup>38</sup>

(Translation is mine)

However, it is no gainsaying that the above-mentioned virtues are gradually being eroded from the Yoruba culture and we advocate that an active renaissance to the concept of *Omoluwabi* will help bring sustainable development, peace and forthrightness to the society.

Another value which is very paramount to the Yoruba is moderation in everything one does. They believe that things should always be done with moderation. A flagrant, self-seeking, self-pointing person will sooner than later come to disrepute. The Yoruba refer to this kind of individual as *alaseju* (one who over-does things), they will say that '*alaseju pere nii te*'. A Yoruba folktale which centres on tortoise and snail clearly illustrates this point. Tortoise was snail's son-in-law. A time came when snail observed that a thief had been coming frequently to his farm to steal yams. He then decided to set a trap to catch the thief, and to his utter amazement when he went to check the trap, he met tortoise his son-in-law in the trap. Unbelievable! So, the one stealing his yams all along had been tortoise, his son-in-law. Snail decided that he would not allow this to pass, everyone must know who the thief was. Fortunately for Snail, it was the market day when nearly the whole community would visit the market for buying and selling and for leisure. He then tied tortoise his son-in-law to a big iroko tree near the market for all to see. Indeed, every one going to the market in the morning blamed tortoise for what he had done calling him various degrading names. Snail was pleased with the comments of the people about his shameless son-in-law who was stealing from his father –in- law's farm.

After the crowd had gone, tortoise begged snail to kindly untie him because of the pain he was suffering from being tied and more so, he would not want the crowd to still meet him there on their way from the market. Snail however would not listen to tortoise, he would also want to relish another bout of abuses being hurled at his son –in- law by the market crowd on their way home. In the evening, when the people were leaving the market for their various homes, they were surprised to see that tortoise was still on the noose. It was then the turn of snail to be strongly reprimanded by the crowd, they yelled at him angrily, calling him heartless, callous and wicked. The crowd said that the yams that tortoise had been stealing from snail's farm were definitely being eaten by tortoise and his wife, Mr. Snail's daughter. Thus, snail while in the bid to thoroughly disgrace tortoise and label him as extremely abominable found himself instead being disgraced. Yoruba will say, *alo ni t'awun, abo ni t'ana re* (while going, it was the tortoise's turn, but while coming it will be his in-law's turn) in order to caution anyone who wants to over flog an issue.

## 2.7 The Flourish and Wane of *Omoluwabi* in Traditional Yoruba Society

*Omoluwabi* flourished in the traditional Yoruba society and it was an approved manner of living. It aided a communitarian conception of the person as each person sought personal fulfillment through participation in the evolving social structure of the community. The communitarian conception of the person not only gives a more accurate description of human life but also communitarians have argued that it is the cultural ideal informing our policies and institutions, strengthening community bonds and reinforcing the character of its members. They also assert that community is a basic need and frustration of this leads to alienation, addictions, crimes and ineffective families.<sup>39</sup> In the olden days, farmers and traders could leave their wares by the road-side with some pebbles to signify the monetary worth of the wares. Interested buyers would approach and take the wares after dropping the amount of money depicted by the pebbles even though the trader was not there. The buyer would not take advantage of the absence of the trader to try to defraud him. However, if any trader in these days should leave his goods un-attended to, he will surely have himself to blame. This is however not to claim that the Yoruba past was completely flawless or that there existed a state of utopia. In the traditional African societies, for example, the Yoruba traditional society, there existed words like *janduku* (robber), *ika* (wicked), *ojukokoro* (covetousness) and the like to denote that there were unscrupulous elements in the traditional African societies. However, the communitarian nature of the African societies where each person is responsible to the other person and everyone is responsible to the community did not in any way support the propagation and flourish of vices.

In traditional Yoruba society, the training of the child in informal and formal education was non-negotiable. It was a society unfit for loafers and lazy bones, *ole o lee gbe ilu wa* (the slothful cannot live in our land) is a profound statement among the Yoruba. Laziness was not condoned, there were so many Yoruba poems to glaringly show that laziness was loathed. The Yoruba believe that sooner than later a lazy man will be compelled by necessity to steal, which was an unpardonable offence in traditional Yoruba society. Parents would not deal lightly with a child that showed tendencies to be lazy or sluggish. Elders told stories of hardworking and industrious people, the feats they achieved and the



honour they were accorded in order to serve as propeller for the younger ones to also be up and doing. The *amulu-odu Ogunda-Yeku* illustrates this with this citation:

*Tokio, Ija gidi-gidi awo Arandun*

*Akoni nii jogun ohun gbogbo*

*A dia fun irin, a bu f'oje*

*Nwon n ti ikole-orun bow a s'ikole-aye*

*A dia fun irin, a bu f'eboto (ole)*

*Ti nwon n ti ikole-orun bow a s'ikole-aye*

*Nwon ni ki won (awon meteeta) o rubo:*

*Oje gbo ebo o ru die*

*Eboto (ole) gb'eru bee ni ko teru*

*Koko-irin lo rubo ai-ku ara re*

*Ogun a-jo wewe waa ba won loko,*

*Eboto (ole) pare lale-egan*

*Oje lo tie la-lo-kanle*

*Ako irin duro gan-gan-an gan fun won loko:*

*Bi n tii pa ako, bee lo npa abo.<sup>40</sup>*

(Translation is mine)

Tokio the priest of Arandun,

Akoni, also a priest,

Consulted the Ifa oracle on behalf of Metallic Iron and Metallic Lead

On the day they were leaving heaven for earth

The Ifa oracle was consulted on behalf of Metallic Iron and Earthen Mud (the lazy one)

On the day they were leaving heaven for earth

The three were requested to make propitiatory sacrifice

Metallic Lead heeded the advice but only performed the rites by halves

Earthen Mud (the lazy one) listened to the oracle but failed to perform the rites

Only Metallic Iron performed the propitiatory sacrifice in full

On their way to the earth, slave raiders waylaid them

Earthen Mud (the lazy one) fell flat before the raiders and was completely destroyed

Metallic Lead melted itself away

Only Iron withstood the onslaught

And completely vanquished the enemies.

The training of children was initiated at home (informal) but did not stop there. This included ways and manners of greeting people of different age-grades and professions, and generally learning how to relate with people in the compound (*agbo-ile*) to foster peaceful co-existence. It also included learning to process and cook various dishes (for female-children) and farming with trap setting majorly for the boys. As the child developed into an adolescent, the scope of training expanded to accommodate the formal aspect which was the training aimed at acquiring a lifetime occupation or career. Fafunwa opines that vocational and traditional education produced individuals who were honest, respectable, skilled and co-operative and who conformed to the social order of the day.<sup>41</sup> There was a wide range of careers and occupations for the child to choose from, for example, large scale farming (*agbe*), blacksmithing (*agbede*), hunting (*ode*), carving, woodwork and skin and hide designing (*gbena-gbena/onisona*), drumming (*ayan*), pottery (*amokoko*), buying and selling of different goods (*onisowo*) and many others.

However, many a times, a child was not afforded the opportunity to choose a career but continued with the occupation of his family lineage and these are reflected in the names bore by family members like *Ayanlaja, Ogunlana, Odebode, Onawunmi, Agbekoya*, etc. The main crust was on the youth learning a trade or acquiring a skill that would enable him to be financially independent as an adult. This is apart from the fact that a child who learnt his family trade would help in carrying on the family's tradition to ensure its continuity and for the trade name of the family not to go into extinction. This practice interestingly exists in the present days, where children take after the professions of their parents, for example, medical profession, legal profession, politics, teaching etc. Indigenous education was directed at making the individual not only responsible for the upkeep of his immediate family but also to be alive to his social responsibilities. The youth was introduced to the dynamics of social interaction and relations and to the general social engineering and control in an *Omoluwabi*-compliant society, ensuring good governance, communal peace and cohesion, and advancing the ideological and socio-economic goals of the society.<sup>42</sup> In this setting, youths were grouped into different societies depending on age or profession. Each group was given a responsibility/ies according to the need of the community which is to further buttress the communalistic nature of the Yoruba indigenous society. Each group pulled human and financial resources together to ensure the sustenance of the community. It was also the responsibility of the age groups to ensure that nothing untoward was named or identified with their groups or group members. The orientation of the youth was geared towards appreciating collective efforts and communal spirit as opposed to individualism, and that whatever affected one of them affected all. It was a case of being one's brother's keeper where a neighbor was seen as someone to be protected and not one to be exploited as prevalent in our capitalist society.

*Omoluwabi* started to recede and decline gradually many decades ago. The following factors were identified to be contributive to its eclipse: Yoruba tribal wars, transatlantic slave trade, colonialism/neocolonialism and more recently and dealing a devastating blow is postmodernism Postmodernism has not only fostered the erosion and striping of moral values that act as glue in holding the society together, it has also launched a vehement

critique against all theories that support totalitarianism and conformity of which the concept of *Omoluwabi* is one.

### ***The Yoruba Inter-tribal War (1793-1893)***

This war which erupted among the Yoruba tribes in 1793 and lasted for over a century was essentially a struggle of one Yoruba tribe to establish its supremacy over the others. This was always met with rebuff, reprisal and revolt. The Hausas and Fulanis were also involved in this war when they were welcomed by Afonja in Ilorin in order to strengthen his own hands against his assailants.<sup>43</sup> This war greatly shook the Yoruba multifarious tribes; families were dislodged, towns were sacked and razed. The tribes of Yoruba that had once seen themselves as brothers springing from one ancestor: *Oduduwa* then began to regard one another as spiteful enemies. The *Omoluwabi* tenet was thrown over the fence as everything is fair in war and this made the Yoruba tribe bereft of values which before distinguished them as people of cultured and courteous behaviour.

### ***The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade***

It was during this period that the Yoruba tribal war was ongoing that the Europeans initiated slave trade. Slaves from Africa were shipped to Europe and Americas as labourers on plantations, factories or as domestic servants. This served as a major impetus and incentive for the Yoruba tribal war to continue since monarchs, war-lords and prominent people engaged in slave-trade by selling people captured from vanquished towns to the ready slave markets. This was clearly against the *Omoluwabi* behaviour and a flagrant departure from who the Yoruba were known to be. Slave trade thrived during this period as it translated into instant wealth for slave-dealers. Monarchs were given a large umbrella for forty (40) slaves as a sign of ostentation. Some of these umbrellas are still available as artifacts in the museum at Badagry.

### ***Colonialism and Neocolonialism***

What colonialism and its after-birth neocolonialism do to a people is to empty them of their past, disrupt their present and disenchant their future. In a nutshell, the effect of colonialism is to greatly destabilize a people thereby making them unfit to properly

channel or map out a laudable future. The colonized especially in the case of nations that also suffered the effects of slavery might for a long time grope in darkness trying to find a way in the wilderness to which they were led by their colonial masters having been bereft of their indigenous cultures, morals, languages, education and robbed of their human resources. There is in colonizing countries doctrines of racial superiority which denied the fitness of subjugated peoples for self-governance. Even after the purported independence from colonial rule, the colonized states still in one way or the other are subservient and dependent on the colonial masters. Many of such countries find it rather difficult to leave the bracket of Third World to becoming industrialized because they did not have a pre-industrial bourgeoisie able to carry on a capitalistic development or even a stable and peaceful state. Those aborted experiences left huge debts towards western countries and fuelled public corruption.

Around the world today, intractable conflict is found in many areas that were once colonized. The source of many of these protracted conflicts lies in past colonial policies especially those regarding territorial boundaries, the privileging of some groups over others and the uneven distribution of wealth and political positions. In Nigeria, with its multitude of ethnic groups, we usually have communal clashes over land borders and alleged marginalization in the distributions of national benefits. All these were occasioned by imperial policies that promoted ethnic rivalry by favouring one group above the others, distributed resources in an unequal manner, disallowed democratic governments and prohibited local participation in governmental decisions and actions.<sup>44</sup> Thus, it is no wonder today that in Nigeria there are various ethnic militias groups and many crises have been attributed to these agitating groups. By implication, colonialism played a major role in the basic contradictions that characterized the colonial Yoruba and the *Omoluwabi* decline has remained a monumental loss.<sup>45</sup>

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The sterling qualities of *Omoluwabi* have been highlighted in this chapter and how it engendered a peaceful and stable society in the traditional Yoruba society. An active renaissance of *Omoluwabi* is solicited for our present society in order to douse the

gnawing prevalence of crimes and criminalities. *Omoluwabi* is a grand theory developed in Yoruba culture and had legislated successfully the right course for peaceful living in the past.

In the next Chapter, we shall be occupied with the burden of further denoting if *Omoluwabi* actually aligns with the definitions and analysis of ‘good’ as laid bare in chapter one. We take a further step to situate *Omoluwabi* concept into Aristotle virtue ethics to accentuate the claim that *Omoluwabi* is basically a doctrine of moderation and self-control in all dealings of life. A life of conscious moderation and self-control has a direct resultant positive effect on the community. Joseph Omoregbe has observed that “the development of a nation is primarily the development of human personality”<sup>46</sup>. We cannot talk about national development when the human personality is deficient in sound moral training and orientation. While the nation develops through advancements and breakthroughs in Science and Technology, it is expedient that the human personality is also groomed to be able to nurture and sustain national development. A re-enactment of *Omoluwabi* may be what the world needs for economic, social and political positive re-engineering.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### *OMOLUWABI* AND ATTAINMENT OF THE GOOD

#### 3.1 Introduction

In Chapter one we analysed the concept of good and also examined the conceptions of good in some African societies. Our main task in this Chapter will be to establish the fact that *Omoluwabi* which rests on the pivot of good character (*iwa rere*) prompted by moderation and consideration of others as communalistic beings leads to the attainment of the good. This translates to mean that the concept of good is what *Omoluwabi* is set to achieve. In other words, we shall be concerned with establishing the nexus between *Omoluwabi* and ‘good’.

From the analysis of the conception of good in some African societies in chapter one we were able to see that what account as ‘good’ in these communities is largely a filial to the tenets of *Omoluwabi* thereby, confirming that *Omoluwabi* works and aims at the attainment of the good. We shall take a step further by looking at how the concept of good had been theorized in the history of Philosophy making Aristotle virtue ethics our framework. We shall examine the relatedness and nuances of *Omoluwabi* to Aristotle virtue ethics and also from our ethnographic study of *Omoluwabi* carried out among Yoruba people we may therefore conclude that *Omoluwabi* attains the good.

As the ‘good’ is indispensable in achieving a serene, safe and trouble free society and is thus expected of people to do the good or be good and eschew the bad, in what way then can our actions be said or adjudged to be morally good or bad? What informs the judgment about the ‘goodness’ or ‘badness’ of our actions or how can I as a moral agent determine what is good or bad? Is what is good or bad subject to me and my feelings as a free individual as Jean-Paul Sartre has declared that “the individual’s duty is to do what he wants to do, to think what he wants to think and be accountable to no one but himself”.<sup>1</sup> Or should I align with the view of J. Pieper that “the good man is the master of his own self. He does not give free rein to his ambition or desires for pleasure. He does not act without order or against nature”.<sup>2</sup> Should moral judgments spring from the notion that there are morally and rationally acceptable principles which are standards of

behaviours with which human conduct should conform as enunciated by Kant? These questions lead us to examine two broad and conflicting moral theories that may expose to us if moral judgment should be subjective or objective.

### **3.2 Moral Subjectivism**

Moral subjectivism implies that that which is right or wrong is what each individual believes is right or wrong. This means that there is no general rule or standard of behaviour. Anyone who holds this view will not pass moral judgment like ‘stealing is wrong’, ‘honesty is a virtue’ ‘your character is bad’, ‘she possesses good character’ on others. This is so because according to moral subjectivism there are no universal, over-arching or objective standards of behaviour. Also, the action of a person is right or wrong depending on what the individual perceives to be right or wrong. For an action to be right in this wise is dependent on the mental state of a particular person and because mental state may change either in the same person or from one person to another, an action may be right at one time and wrong at another time. Subjectivists are of the view also that ethical judgment is not anything that may be either true or false.<sup>3</sup> They aver that it is a mere expression of the attitude of the individual and that it communicates no truth at all but only expresses the emotion, present likes or dislikes of the perpetrator.

The question that bothers the mind concerning subjectivism as a form of moral theory is whether the perpetrator can be termed a moral agent and be liable or held accountable for the outcome of his/her actions. Can the perpetrator be blamed for untoward and unrestrained behaviour or praised for good behaviour through the exercise of self-control and discipline? Should our action be premised on our feeling at a particular point in time? Can we be said to be rational if we allow our feeling of perhaps anger, envy, arrogance to dictate and control our actions which may be irrevocable? This brings to remembrance the incident of Wednesday, 14 February, 2018 when a former student of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, United States of America opened fire in the School killing at least 17 (seventeen) people including staff and students. Can this action of the 19 year old suspect, Nikolas Cruz be justified if he was venting his anger and resentment on staff and students of his former school where he was expelled for allegedly fighting his ex-girlfriend’s new boyfriend?<sup>4</sup>

What becomes of wise sayings like “don’t talk when you are angry”, “look before you leap”, “pride goes before a fall” which over the time have served as moral guide if moral values can fluctuate between moods or from one individual to the other. The Yoruba use different anecdotes, folk songs and lores, life’s experiences, happenings, nature, animals and their behaviours to teach morals. The story of the wily tortoise and cantankerous, bellicose and aggressive pig depicts why the pig is ever using his nose to nuzzle the ground and dumps in search of an elusive object. Tortoise had borrowed a sum of ten thousand cowries from pig to complete the building of his house. He promised to pay pig back in a month’s time. At the expiration of the agreed time and when tortoise had failed to fulfill his promise, pig took it upon himself to visit tortoise at home in order to collect his money. Tortoise however kept postponing the time of payment until pig became really angry. After some time, he told pig that he would pay unfailingly in three days’ time. On this day, pig went to tortoise’s house full of expectation but was surprised to learn from Yannibo tortoise’s wife that he had embarked on a journey and would not be back till the next moon.

Pig made further enquiries from Yannibo about tortoise’s purported journey but she ignored him and just continued grinding bean seeds on the grinding stone. Pig was thoroughly angry and kicked the grinding stone upon which Yannibo was grinding outside the house. Yannibo started to cry and bemoan her lost grinding stone. Tortoise then strolled in to pig’s utter amazement and asked Yannibo why she was crying. She told him that pig had thrown away the grinding stone she was using to grind beans to make akara (beans cake). Tortoise calmly told pig that he was ready to pay his debt but first pig must produce the grinding stone which he had purchased at a sum of twelve thousand cowries. He said that if pig could not produce the grinding stone he would not pay him back his money. Pig went out confidently to bring the grinding stone inside but could not find the grinding stone despite all his efforts. This was because the grinding stone indeed was tortoise who upon sighting pig coming to his house to demand his money told his wife to turn him upside down and start to grind beans on his smooth tommy after withdrawing his limbs inside the shell. Thus, pig because of anger forfeited his money and is still today searching for the lost grinding stone. The moral lesson taught

by this story is that we should not allow negative drives to control us and that we should always put our feelings, urges and drives in check.

In Moral subjectivism, two persons may talk about an action, and while one of them says that it is right, the other may say it is wrong and yet these two individuals do not really contradict each other.<sup>5</sup> It follows that there can never be a real difference of opinion or a real argument or judgment about the rightness of an action. A moral judgment, for example, 'the action is right' may simply mean 'I like this action' which is based on the mental or psychological state of the assessor.

David Hume also claims that morality is not something objective in the world and existing independently of anyone's private choices and preferences, but that it is a product of these latter, that is, personal choices and preferences. The fact that there are no objective moral facts according to Hume is one reason why the claim of the rationalists (denoting thinkers who allude to the fact that all truths, including those about moral principles are discoverable by reason alone) has to be rejected. Hume argues further that even if there are indeed objective moral facts, the mere recognition of them would never motivate anyone to act one way rather than another. He adds that action can only be prompted by emotion, and that it will still be necessary for us to feel something in order for us to be moved to do anything.

One objection typically against subjectivism is that it makes moral judgment an arbitrary matter, dependent upon the whims of the individual, whose subjective responses may vary widely from those of others. However, Hume thought that human nature is generally the same everywhere for everyone.<sup>6</sup> The question that springs up in the mind is that given Hume's allusion that human nature is the same, then it shouldn't be out of place to assert that sense of morality, that is, what is morally good or bad should be universal and what accounts as the truth or morally acceptable should be objective and akin from one clime and from one individual to the other.

### **3.3 Moral Objectivism**

Moral Objectivism is the belief that truth – claims can be established by autonomous information which is accessible to all. This connotes that what is acceptable as the true

moral standards of behaviour is such that is universal, general, accessible to all and advocates the conformity and compliance of all. In essence, it means that there are moral rules which are valid at all times. These are morally and rationally acceptable principles which are standards of behaviours with which human conduct should conform always. Good or what is good in this wise is objective and not dependent on our feelings and mental disposition but the observance and adherence to moral rules/principles. Acting on principle is to act from a detached position that is not influenced by personal feelings and attitudes and anyone who acts on principle is often accorded a due respect of an 'objective person'.<sup>7</sup> To Kant, moral principles are absolute commands of reason that permit no exceptions and are not related to either pleasure or practical benefits. Objectivity in morality may be better understood and appreciated if we can try to envisage a world where people act at the trigger of their emotion and where there are no rules, principles that serve as standards of behaviour for people to conform with. If lying, dishonesty and killing are made universal laws to be obeyed by everyone then order, security, peace and stability will be things of the past. It may be a return to the hypothetical state of nature where life was solitary, poor, brutish and short. But if moral rules promoting virtues such as honesty, fairness, equity, justice, chastity are to be encouraged to be imbibed by everyone how blissful will our world be. J. D. Mabboth states that:

There are some rules without which no civilized society could survive and few values could be achieved. The rules against killing and promise breaking are of their kind and this may be the reason why they have been supposed to be self-evident<sup>8</sup>

The above citation by Mabboth reveals the indispensability of moral rules to every culture and community for the sake of engendering peaceful co-existence which obviously is the bedrock for socio-economic and political development.

### **3.4 Postmodernism and present world order**

Postmodernism as a concept foster moral subjectivism. It goes beyond moral objectivism in that it discards the ability of reasoning power to discern and articulate moral principles or arrive at the truth. Postmodernism influences and affects the way

people live as it brings a marked difference in olden days and present days. It questions and undermines traditional values which it pronounces derogatively as 'absolutes'. Postmodernist's campaign is that there is no truth and all we can have are interpretations of the truth, your interpretation, my interpretation, <sup>9</sup> his interpretation and so we have various and many representations of truth and all are correct and valid! This is quite alarming because the emphasis has shifted from the truth to the interpreter. Everyone speaks the truth as he/she sees it in his own situation, hence, we can have conflicting versions of the truth and no one is permitted to raise an eye-brow. Every belief, every moral obligation is purely a matter of individual choice. One person's interpretation of truth is as valid as that of anyone else.

Scholars like McDowell Josh and Hostetler Bob have pointed out that postmodernism encourages relativism of values which states that points of view have no absolute truth or validity within themselves, but that they only have relative subjective value according to differences in perception and consideration. Postmodernism to them embraces many theoretical frames which contrast and often contradict each other.<sup>10</sup> They are of the opinion that postmodernism weakens and undermines the potency of values, especially moral values upon which the society is based and which ultimately act as a binding force in a society to foster peaceful co-existence. Postmodernism in their estimate presents a very fundamental problem because with such a weakening of the common morality, people find themselves wandering aimlessly in the world in a state of anomie. Anomie is the lack of moral or social standard of conduct in an individual and by extension, in the community especially when these standards previously existed. Fredric Jameson, an American critic in his book, 'Postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism' <sup>11</sup> wrote that two significant features of postmodernism are 'pastiche' which means a work of art, a piece of writing and so on that is created by deliberately copying the style of something or somebody else, and 'schizophrenia' which means a mental illness in which a person becomes unable to link thought, emotion and behavior, leading to withdrawal from reality and personal relationship.<sup>12</sup> Here, postmodernism as a movement has been seen as a social malady where people inflicted with the illness are emotionally unstable and are frequently changing their minds or holding opinions that seem to oppose each other thereby creating a disintegrated and relativistic society.

Some thinkers also have in various ways analyzed and criticized some forms and tendencies in postmodernism. Critics have posited that postmodernism can be meaningless, obscure and relativistic so much more that it destroys sound judgments. Culturally conservative writers such as Charles Colson submits that postmodernism is characterized by ideological agnosticism and replete with moral relativism or situation ethics.<sup>13</sup> Many philosophical movements reject postmodernism as healthy states of being because of its rejection of natural truths and its emphasis on material and physical pleasure which lead to rejection of inner balance, peace and spirituality. Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler are also against the abandonment of objective truth which is an unacceptable feature of postmodernism. They define postmodernism as ‘a worldview characterized by the belief that truth doesn’t exist in any objective sense but is created rather than discovered’.<sup>14</sup> The concept of relativism of truth as held by the postmodernists is also criticized by Francis Wheen in his book *How Mumbo-Jumbo Conquered the world*. According to Wheen, it will be ‘wrong’ to criticize practices like honour killings and female genital mutilation in some cultures by simply claiming that we cannot judge others by our own standards.<sup>15</sup>

The question “how can we tackle relativism?” looms high, since according to the postmodernists every culture determines what is good and proper and we cannot go out of our own human society to query the sense of right and wrong as it is being held in another human society. It has been mentioned that with relativism, one is not morally equipped to cast aspersions on some practices like honour killing, female genital mutilation and early girl-child marriages since each society’s practices are fully justified by its own standard of rationality. The practice of senilicide by the Inuits may be worth reflecting on.

According to the popular conception, Eskimos (Inuits) must work so hard to survive that they simply cannot manage to support adults who are no longer contributing to the well-being of the group. Thus, when old-age strikes, rather than waiting around as they dwindle towards death eating food their companions fight to catch and clothing their companions struggle to construct, the elderly Eskimos are taken to sea, and set adrift on a floating iceberg to inevitably freeze or starve to death. Even during times of famine, an



elderly or infirmed member of the group might ask a family member to kill him. This practice seems odious, but to the Inuits, its rationality is justified.

However, this form of practice is borne out of desperate human situation in which there is lack and the quest for survival of the fit at all costs. This is a sort of situational ethics where the end justifies the mean. The end result is getting off the old and weak out of the way so that hard earned and acquired resources will be sufficient for the fit. We should however note that this rare practice does not exist in modern Eskimo culture, as pressure from missionaries, and national governments, as well as improved economic conditions, have eradicated the dire circumstances that might lead to such practice. The last reported case of senilicide was in 1939.<sup>16</sup> One can also argue that this practice will fail Kant's categorical imperative which enjoins universalization of moral acts.

We may attempt to solve the problem with situational ethics with Kant's Categorical Imperative which enjoins us to apply the rule of universability. However, this does not totally remove the tension between moral subjectivism and moral objectivism. The point is being made that humans are defined by certain universal aspects of culture which makes consensus inevitable and therefore lends waves for moral objectivity. Wiredu in his book, *Cultural Universals and Particulars* (1996) maintains that it is possible to arrive at concept of universal relevance. The Universals of concepts make them intelligible with different cultural groups.<sup>17</sup> Universals are ultimately based on human nature which is common to all. Therefore, virtues as honesty, truth, straight forwardness, sanctity of human life cannot be relativized.

Noam Chomsky has argued also that postmodernism is meaningless because it adds nothing to analytical or empirical knowledge. He asks why postmodernist intellectuals fail to respond like people in other fields when asked: 'what are the principles of their theories, on what evidence are the principles based, what do they explain that was not already obvious?' To Chomsky, these are fair requests for anyone to make. If they however cannot be met, then he suggests recourse to David Hume's advice in similar circumstances: to the flames.<sup>18</sup>

In all, many critics of postmodernism argue that it weakens moral values which serve as the common conscience of the society through moral laxity occasioned by individualism, subjectivity/relativism of moral values, materialism and pragmatism. The legalization and decriminalization of practices which generally are regarded as obnoxious and engaged in secretly by those whom people refer to as social miscreants and reprobates has put a question mark on our moral integrity as rational beings. Social anomalies like crossing dressing, same sex marriage, cross-gendering, gay, lesbianism, bestiality have now come to look normal and innocent. The fact that same sex marriage is legalized in some countries may be worth reflecting on. This is so because the implication may be that a court registrar who refuses to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples would have contravened the law of the country and may be liable to sanctions for the refusal.

Postmodernism like its precursor - existentialism represented arch-rebellion against established ideas and institutions.<sup>19</sup> Archie Bahm painting a picture of our postmodern world states thus:

Crimes rates are increasing, with no end to such increases in sight. The power of traditional religions to inspire moral conduct continues to decline, with nothing visible to stop such decline. Wars, i.e. little wars persists even when there is no world war, and military budgets grow despite capacity for overkill. Politicians, legislators, administrators, police and judges seem ever tempted by bribery, and expose of corruption in “the highest places” create doubt whether honesty in government is possible. Industrial pollution, planned obsolescence, misleading advertising, deceptive labelling, crooked insurance adjusting, unfair wages, crime syndicates, illegal gambling, forced prostitution, hijacking, tax loopholes for the wealthy and faked claims by welfare clients all exemplify prevailing trends... Few areas in life remain untouched by growing demoralization. If we look to scientists for help, we find many of them claiming helplessness and innocence.....some scientists, namely anthropologists, have reached, and teach, ..... cultural relativism including moral relativism. “Rights and wrong are relative to cultures, there are no universal rights or wrongs”.... After World War II, some rebellious youths proclaimed “a new freedom, “namely, “freedom from responsibility”. This means freedom from duties. What

then happens to correlative rights? Is this another way of ending ethics?<sup>20</sup>

From Bahm's submission we can see that science is unable to help solve the problem birthed by postmodernism. Instead, the teaching of cultural relativism, moral relativism and moral subjectivism has only festered the degradation of moral values. The consequences of which are not far-fetched but stare at us in the face and call for urgent attention. It is on this basis that a return to the tenets of *Omoluwabi* becomes imperative. From previous chapters we have seen that the tenets of *Omoluwabi* which revolve around moral objectivity promote a stable society and a renaissance may be what we need to fetter the hydra-headed dragon of corruption and vices in our present society. The Yoruba believe that cultural practices may actually be different from one culture to another but the sense of right and wrong, good and bad, virtue and vice are essentially related or akin. A Yoruba proverb says, "*bi a tin se ni'bi eewo ibo miran; bi ka fi ori omo titun mu eko lode ko,*"<sup>21</sup> the translation is that what we do freely here may be a taboo in another clime, but not like using a baby's skull to drink pap in the public. The meaning of this proverb is that ways of life (e.g. dressing, food, religion, festivals, conduct of ceremonies etc.) may be different from one culture to another but judgment about what is good, right, virtuous, acceptable, moral, legal is essentially the same.

The *Omoluwabi* from our analysis in Chapter two can be referred to as 'a good man', 'a man of good and impeccable character', 'a man with a high moral background', 'a morally upright person' or 'an embodiment of morality and virtue'. He / She is not egoistic but altruistic. Human beings are naturally egoistic but the *Omoluwabi* through training and re-orientation has been able to overcome the egoistic instinct by becoming altruistic and putting the interest of others before his own. We can include to the glossary of *Omoluwabi* as the person who subsumes his personal will into that of the community. He stands for the common good and when self-interest conflicts with common good, the overriding consideration is to de-emphasize self-interest. This point is very vital because we have had occasions when political thugs launched mayhem on the people all in the name of acquiring political power. We remember the era of "operation wetie" in the first republic of Nigeria when properties of and people who were believed to be in the opposition were wet with petrol and set on fire. This crisis plunged the Western region of

Nigeria into crises occasioned by wanton destruction of human life and property. *Omoluwabi* knows that whatever ambitions he nurses whether political, economic, social, academic do not worth the blood of others. The *Omoluwabi's* hopes, aspirations, ambitions are such as are embedded in the welfare of the community. He does not seek a goal that is contrary or inimical to the collective interest, and what he aims to be as much as it would benefit him would also be beneficial to the community. Lastly, the way of life of an *Omoluwabi*, his actions and reactions must be morally exemplary in such a way that one could rationally will that the principles on which he acts becomes a universal law for all to follow.

### **3.5 Ethnographic Account of *Omoluwabi***

An ethnographic account of *Omoluwabi* from people of Yoruba speaking states goes as follow:

*Omoluwabi* is a well-bred person. An entire family or compound (*agboole* or *agbo ile*) can be known and referred to as *Omoluwabi* because of their good character traits. When asked, 'which family is he/she from?' and the reply is given as so and so family. It may then be said that, 'o, they are *Omoluwabi* (good people) in that family or they are *eniyan kenian* (rascals, scoundrels) in that family.

In traditional Yoruba setting, the above analysis becomes paramount when choosing a wife or when considering the proposal of a suitor and not nowadays when marriage are contacted on social media. The first criterion is 'are they *Omoluwabi*' in that family? other considerations are secondary. It is however possible that there may be deviants in such families. Such a person is labelled as the 'black sheep of the family'. His wrongdoings are not covered up or explained away but he suffers or is reprimanded for his moral failings. Parents may sometimes wait till festive periods to reward good children by buying new clothes and shoes for them while scoundrels or lazybones get none. They have to wear their old clothes and tattered shoes during festivals or because of shame are forced to stay at home while the good ones freely move in conviviality from places of worship to relatives' and friends' houses enjoying the spirit of the festival. The Yoruba

will say “*ni ojo odun ni oro ndun ole*” meaning that it is during festive period that the matter painfully affects the lazy person.

Individuals usually strive not to tarnish the image or bring to disrepute the good name of their families. The Yoruba believe that ‘*oruko rere san ju wura ati fadaka lo*’, that is, a good name is of greater value than gold or silver. Whatever business that can destroy the reputation of a family regardless of how lucrative it may be is usually shunned by the *Omoluwabi*. They also will say, “*eniti o nwa owo lo, ti o pade iyi lona ko yara pada si ile*” meaning that he who embarks on a journey in search of riches and meets honour on the way, should simply go back home. The Yoruba are of the opinion that honour is greater than riches and he that has honour should not belabour himself or herself looking for riches because riches without honour is empty.

Parents should be concerned and careful of the company that their children keep because ‘*egbe buburu maa nba iwa rere je*’ – bad company corrupts good manners and ‘*aguntan ti o ba b’aja rin a je’gbe*’ – the sheep that keeps company with the dog will eat faeces. This is to establish the fact that peer pressure is a major determinant of the behaviour an individual exhibits. It is difficult to keep company with some people and one is not influenced whether positively or otherwise by them. This is the reason Yoruba parents will intently say to their children especially when they leaving home e.g. for studies, that, ‘*ranti omo eni ti iwo nse*’ – always remember the child of whom you are. This is to mean that although the parents cannot physically be present with the child as he/she leaves home but the child still has the obligation of maintaining the good name of the family. While in a foreign land he/she is enjoined to desist from behaviours like examination mal-practices, thuggery, promiscuity, stealing, drug trafficking and the like that may mar the family name. In essence, he/she is to be a good ambassador of the family. Parents keep reminding children of this in letters, during phone calls or when they have opportunity to visit the child where he is in the foreign land. They also hand over the child to people they are acquainted with who happen to reside in such a place as parent in locum to the child. However, a person to be designated as parent in locum must be of proven character. This is in all the bid that the child should not lose the *Omoluwabi* traits that the parents through training had inducted into him/her. The Yoruba believe that

anyone without *Omoluwabi* character traits will become a menace to the society by perpetrating nefarious activities as pick-pocketing, armed robbery, Internet fraud, prostitution, kidnapping and abduction, black – mailing etc and brings shame to his family. A child who holds fast the tenets of *Omoluwabi* is a pride to his parents as everyone praises him as ‘*omo ti a ko, ti o si gba eko*’ a child that is well trained and takes to the training and not an ‘*a bii iko, a ko, i gba*’ - an ill-bred child.

When asked if *Omoluwabi* is still relevant in our present world, this respondent replied in the affirmative. He buttressed his response by citing the example of his daughter who schooled at a University in Edo State and got married about five years ago. The Monday after the wedding ceremony that was celebrated on Saturday, he said, he was surprised to see the father of the groom and some of his relations alighting from a vehicle in front of his house with a basket containing pounded yam and soup. As a seasoned and experienced Yoruba man he quickly understood what that meant which was that his daughter was a virgin. The respondent said he was overjoyed because his daughter had brought honour to him in particular as the father and the entire family. He further said that as a retiree he should by now be begging from people for his livelihood, but because of the *Omoluwabi* character traits especially hard-work and honesty that he exhibited while in government service, people are still always ready to engage him for one service or the other. He concluded that at old age, he was not forlorn but could conveniently take good care of himself and his family all because of his *iwa Omoluwabi*.

Another respondent believes that *Omoluwabi* is based on *ihuwasi* (manner of behaviour) and (*ibasepo*) relationship with people around and not on material or wealth acquisition. An *Omoluwabi* displays good character everywhere he finds himself, at work, at place of worship, in the neighbourhood. To this respondent, greeting is a vital part of being an *Omoluwabi*. The *Omoluwabi* knows what form of greeting that is appropriate for the hours of the day, circumstances and conditions. An *Omoluwabi* socializes and relates well with people (young and old) around him. He does not behave like an island, ‘*abata ta kete bi eni pe ko ba odo tan*’.

The *Omoluwabi* does not engage in the use of vulgar words and does not employ harsh words or tone even when expressing an opposing view. He does not offend in speech. He

has ‘*ogbon atinu da*’ – native intelligence and knows ‘*agbekale oro*’ tactfulness in speech. He always does not take anyone who shares opposing view as an enemy. He can be relied upon as an effective emissary because of his well cultured speech. He does not seek to downgrade or speak ill of others. An *Omoluwabi* is an encourager, he is a supporter of noble cause and an excellent team player. An *Omoluwabi* always tell the truth. He is not ‘*agabagecious*’ or ‘*alagabagebe*’. Literally, *alagabagebe* means someone who is trying to climb the ladder and also climb the ridge at the same time. *Alagabagebe* is a sly and mischievous person who speaks with both sides of the mouth and pretends to be who he is not. He can be likened to a wolf in sheep’s clothing. When discussing matters deserving high level secrecy or discreteness, an *alagabagebe* must not be around as one cannot be sure that the secret will remain intact if he were to be present.

When asked if *Omoluwabi* is still relevant in this present age where the ‘get rich’ syndrome is the order of the day, this respondent said that the *Omoluwabi* is still very relevant. He said that *iwa Omoluwabi* singles out one for blessing, recognition, promotion, honour and all positive things. He further enunciated that he lives in a rented apartment, but that one day, one of the residents in the area (a landlord) after they had exchanged pleasantries as he was wont to do asked him why he had not been attending the landlords’ meeting. He then told the man that he was a tenant in house and not a landlord. This man said that our respondent though not yet a landlord but by the virtue of his *iwa Omoluwabi* qualifies to be attending the landlords’ meeting because the gathering requires people who are resourceful, intelligence and peaceable. The honour accorded to this respondent is supported by this Yoruba proverb that ‘*ti omode ba mowo we, a ba agba jeun*’ – when a child washes his hands clean, he can dine with the elders.

A respondent said that *Omoluwabi* is an easy-going person. He/she does not foment trouble and avoids violence. He conducts his affairs with the fear of God. It is one’s character that makes one an *Omoluwabi* and not position or material gain. An *Omoluwabi* can get angry but quickly checks himself, he is not an *aja’jagbula* (someone who cannot be pacified) or *jagidijagan* (brawler or troublemaker). Ayinla Kolington sang thus, ‘*omo kan a ba bi ire ma i ja ja gbula ni le oko*’ – a well-bred lady does not engage in brawling in her husband’s house. *Suuru* (patience) to this respondent is the hall mark of

*Omoluwabi*. She believes that the *Omoluwabi* waits for God's time and does not engage in 'ohun owo mi o to, maa fi gongo fa – what is not within my reach, I will employ whatever means to get it'. This has become the bane of our society. People are ready to employ whatever means to get what they desire. There are shrines where people engage in rituals in order to get rich quickly or acquire power at all costs. However, *Omoluwabi* believes that 'omi ti eniyan ba ma a mu, ko ni san koja eniyan' – the water that someone will drink will not flow past the person.

*Suuru* is indispensable in inter-personal relationship as *onisuuru nii fun wara kiniun* – it is the patient person that can milk the lioness. Who can dare to perform this feat? Definitely not the mighty, the strong, the brave but the patient. The story surrounding this proverb was concerning a woman who was having a tough time in her marital home and also with her in-laws. After a long time when it seemed that the problem was not abating, her friends recommended to her a renowned *babalawo* (herbalist). She told the *babalawo* her predicament, and was expecting him to prescribe for her huge (*ebo*) sacrifices to be taken to various (*orita*) crossroads, and (*onde*) amulets to be worn round her limbs and (*agunmu*) concoction in (*ado*) gourds to be mixed with her husband's meal. The *babalawo* told her that he would make a special charm for her and the major ingredient for the charm is the milk of a nursing lioness. The *babalawo* further said that in order for the charm to be potent she must be the one to milk the lioness herself. What a task?! After a long time and seeing that her marital troubles were escalating she decided to go on this mission. An experienced hunter told her of a forest where there was a pride of lion. She bought a sheep, cut it into parts and roasted it. She went to this forest and found a nursing lioness. As the lioness sighted her and was coming towards her she started throwing the roasted meat to her. The woman did this on several occasions and it was as if the lioness was always waiting for her each time. A day came while the lioness was feasting on the roasted meat that the woman moved close and milked her. The *babalawo* was deeply surprised to see the woman with the lioness' milk. He then told her that indeed he did not need the lioness' milk but that if the woman could use a fragment of the patience she used to get the lioness' milk, she would enjoy untold marital bliss. The woman yielded to the advice of the sage and soon was able to gain her husband and in-law's favour. This is to show that *suuru* is the chief of all virtues- *Suuru ni baba iwa*.



Ebenezer Obey sang this song – ‘*agba to ni suuru ohun gbogbo lo ni*’ – the elder that has patience has all things.

*Omoluwabi* to her is ‘*oninurere*’ a kind-hearted fellow and also ‘*eni ti o lawo*’ a generous person. She gives to others who are in need and is not happy to see others around her in misery. S/he does not engage in ‘*bamu bamu mo yo, emi o mo pebi npomo eni kan kan, bamu bamu mo yo*’ – I am full to the fullest, I am less concerned if others are hungry, I am full to the fullest. S/he is altruistic and empathises with others who may be witnessing one setback or the other. She readily stretches out a helping hand to people in need. She is a volunteer in positive endeavours. This respondent cited the example of Dorcas in the Bible <sup>22</sup> who was an almsgiver and was always making clothes for the needy. Dorcas died and the congregation of God’s people sent for Apostle Peter to come without delay. When Apostle Peter arrived the widow were crying and showed him the garments Dorcas had made while alive. Peter prayed for Dorcas and she was raised back to life. This is a reward for being kind-hearted, empathic and generous. These are also attributes of the *Omoluwabi*.

An *odu irete-meji* tells a story to warn people against selfishness. The story concerns Orunmila who was selfish and became despicable to his neighbours. One day, he fell into a ditch (a miry bog) and he needed someone to pull him out. However, no one was willing to help him because of his selfishness. The following conversation ensued between Orunmila and his neighbours.

Orunmila: *Okunrin Are:*

*Obinrin Are:*

*A-t’oni m’oni,*

*A- t’ana m’ana,*

*Erungbon ijeta;*

*Alade mbe ninu ofin, Onyi gbiri!*

Men of Are!

Women of Are!

It has been all day today,  
It has been since yesterday,  
It is now practically the third day,  
The crowned one has been in the pit,  
Rolling about!

People of Are:

*Igbati o nje apa aja*  
*T'alo ke si?*  
*Igbati o nje ige agbo,*  
*Talo pe?*  
*Igbati o nf'apa obuko wa 'ko mu*  
*Talo ri o?*  
*Nje okunrin Are!*  
*Obinrin Are!*  
*A-t'oni m'oni,*  
*A-t'ana m'ana,*  
*Erungbon ijeta;*  
*Jeki Alade joko sinu ofin,*  
*K'o ma yi gbiri!*

When you were feeding on dog's arm,  
Who did you invite?  
When you were eating ram's breast,  
Whom did you call?  
When you were having corn-porridge with a he-goat's arm,  
Who saw you?  
Now "Men of Are!

Women of Are!  
It has been all day today,  
It has been since yesterday,  
It is now practically the third day”  
Let the crowned one remain in the pit,  
Rolling about.

A selfish man will have no one to come to his rescue in the day of calamity. The Yoruba believe that ‘*ti a ba da omi siwaju, a a te ile tutu*’ - if you pour water in front of you, you will tread on cool land. The succinct meaning of this Yoruba proverb is that one good turn deserves another.

This respondent concluded that *Omoluwabi* is still very relevant even in our present age and that parents should make conscious efforts to teach and inculcate into their children the virtues embedded in the concept of *Omoluwabi*.

Another respondent states that the word ‘*Omoluwabi*’ is derived from Noah who was mentioned in the Holy Bible as a righteous man, and anyone who behaves like or walks in Noah’s steps is a child begotten by Noah – ‘*omo ti Noah bi*’. This is so because it is largely believed that a child takes the character traits of the parents as the Yoruba proverb that says that ‘*owu ti iya gbon ni omo nran*’ – it is the cotton spun by the mother that the child will weave.

He avers that *iwa Omoluwabi* singles out one out as noble and unspotted even in an overly corrupt society. The Yoruba proverb ‘*ninu igba obi ni a ti nri ifin*’ – out of two hundred (numerous) kola nuts you will find a white one alludes to the fact that with *iwa Omoluwabi* one can stand out as the sought after for virtues and nobility. An ‘*ifin*’ is a white kolanut, the general colour of kolanuts is brownish red, but from a whole lot one can get a white one which is greatly priced.

This respondent goes on to say that *Omoluwabi* is not based or depended on material wealth or age. An elderly man may be ‘*onijangbon*’- troublemaker while a young man may be an *Omoluwabi*. *Iwa Omoluwabi* to him, ‘*maa nfi ni l’okan bale*’ – one has rest of

mind when one is an *Omoluwabi* because he/she is not afraid of an impending calamity that befalls the evil perpetrator. People like to associate with people of good character because they positively impart and translate the society by their good actions and goodwill. One's mind is at peace when dealing or relating with an *Omoluwabi* for example in business transaction as one is sure that he cannot disappoint or be fraudulent. *Omoluwabi* traits promote trust.

Parents should consciously instil *Omoluwabi* character traits into their children because '*ile ni a ti n k'eso rode*' – charity begins at home. When playing with their children, parents should be careful and watchful that such play does not degenerate into disrespect. Children should be taught to respectfully greet their parents and elders. Untoward or unseemly attitude should not be ignored but checked by timely correction before the child becomes an '*eja gbigbe ti o le kan ti a ba ka a*' – a dry fish that may break when trying to bend it'. It is believed that a child not checked will bring reproach to his parents and hence, parents should continue to correct their children when they do wrong and praise or encourage them when they do the right. The role of parents in bringing up their children as *Omoluwabi* is non-negotiable as '*agba ti ko kehun soro, a ketan sare*' – an elder who does not bellow his voice to correct the younger ones will gather strength to flee when calamity comes. A child who continues in wrongdoing and is not reprimanded or cautioned by his parents is inviting trouble for his parents since '*ti ara eni ba n je kokoro, huruhuru ko nii je ka sun lale*' -if one's child or ally is eating insect (dabbling into wrongdoing), the sighs of discomfort will not allow one to sleep at night. For this reason, the Yoruba will say that '*isu a te nu m'oro kii jona*' – the yam of an importunate fellow does not get burnt because he is always checking on the yam and the end result will be a well and evenly roasted yam while a careless or carefree person's yam will be badly burnt as he would have left it unattended to in the embers of fire.

An *Omoluwabi* is good inside out. A man wants to marry an *Omoluwabi* lady because he believes she will give him peace of mind. There will be no case of waywardness with all its grave implications. A lady also wants to marry an *Omoluwabi* man as she is sure that he will not turn out to be a wife-beater or an irresponsible father. *Omoluwabi* fears God.

When asked if *iwa Omoluwabi* should be upheld in our present world, the respondent was quick to reply in the affirmative. He adumbrated the fact that *Omoluwabi* positively translates his world because he avoids anything that can cause trouble and is always ready to promote peace. He cited an example of the day of his mother's burial in Ondo State, that two of his older sisters were involved in an imbroglio, he started to beg and appease the two warring sisters. He was able to pacify them after sometime. He could have added to the duel by supporting or taking sides with either of the two sisters but he appealed passionately to the two of them to allow peace to reign. Unknown to our respondent, the video man captured the scene and the respondent was later referred to as an *Omoluwabi* when the video was seen by people.

Another respondent in her own words said that integrity is the hall-mark of *Omoluwabi*, '*ka wi be, ka se be ni iyi omo eniyan*'. An *Omoluwabi* keeps to his words and performs his oaths. He is not an '*odale*' – a traitor. When he makes a promise, he keeps to it. *Omoluwabi* is always truthful and does play hanky-panky games. People can always vouch for him. One can easily stand as his guarantor as one is sure he will not default. He is not proud and does not arrogate to himself things or positions that do not belong to him. He does not tell lies to earn respect, *se puro n niyi, ete nii mu wa* – a person that tells lies to earn respect will soon be disgraced when the truth comes out. He is concerned about his good name and so desists from all forms of ills even if such things will earn him temporarily or momentary privileges. *Omoluwabi* is not a '*faworaja*', a *faworaja* pretends to be an important or wealth person, he or she claims to be the owner of this and that and that his parents are so and so. Queen Salawatu Abeni, a wakaa singer sang this song:

*Iya mi l'oni stadium*

*Baba mi l'oni airport*

*Alagbari l'oga mungun*

*Mugun ko rowo mu o*

*Ao f'owo Mugun j'ofada*

*Ao f'owo Mugun j'aroso*

*A f'owo Mugun s'alubarika*

My mother owns the stadium

My father owns the airport

The brainy lords it over the foolish

Mugun (fool) is not a smart fellow

We will use Mugun's money to eat ofada (local) rice

We will use Mugun's money to eat aroso (imported and polished)  
rice

We will prosper with Mugun's money.

(Translation is mine)

The *faworaja* is a scammer and a 419ner, he is sweet-tongued. He lures the simple and unsuspecting into fake businesses and dupes them. He lives big and drives flashy cars on the sweat and tears on the innocent who foolishly trust him. He betrays their trust in him. He comforts himself of his wrongdoing by saying that he is using 'agbari' – brain to get what he wants. He calls his victims 'mugun' – fools and believes that he would prosper with their money. Not realizing that 'a o le fi owo ekun ra oja erin'- you cannot use tearful money to buy cheerful goods, and that sooner or later nemesis will catch up with the fraudster. He also pretends to be a good, nice and promising suitor in order to date or marry rich ladies. Parents always warn their daughters to be wary of fellows who are only out to milk daughters of wealthy and well-connected people. This is also one of the foremost reasons why parents in the traditional Yoruba setting were always so concerned about the character of the prospective suitor, whether he is an *Omoluwabi* or a worthless fellow.

An *Omoluwabi* conducts his affairs with the fear of God. He is not covetous (*olojukokoro*) though he aspires for higher and better condition of living, but does that with the fear of God. He does not keep grudges and is not ill-conceited.

*Omoluwabi* is premised basically on one's character and not position attained in life. To be referred to as *Omoluwabi* is not dependent on accumulation of houses and cars. Even if he possesses numerous resources, an *Omoluwabi* still retains his unassuming and godly character.

The respondent asserts that *iwa Omoluwabi* is still relevant to our present day society. She believes that the *Omoluwabi* character traits that is lacking is what is making the society to become depraved as it is now. She attributes loss of *iwa Omoluwabi* in our society to be the cause of not only depraved and chaotic society but also the cause of some diseases and illnesses because of '*iwa iworapapa*' (ravenous desires, greed, must get it at all cost attitude). Parents who buy marks and examination questions for their children are not helping such children to grow up as *Omoluwabi* because obviously they themselves are not *Omoluwabi*. To her such parents have only succeeded in corrupting and disillusioning their children. She added that such students are usually rusticated from higher institutions of learning due to academic incapability.

She counsels that people should imbibe *iwa Omoluwabi* although we live now in a world where the old and young want to get rich, achieve and 'arrive' quickly as an *Omoluwabi* will triumph over evil-doers on the long run.

### **3.6 *Omoluwabi* and Aristotle virtue ethics**

The Yoruba concept of *Omoluwabi* can be further illuminated by the Aristotelian virtue ethics to show that it attains, promotes and sustains 'the good'. To Aristotle, virtues are a manifestation of internal dispositions, a reflection of the mind where virtuous actions spontaneously spring as a matter of habit. Simply put, one can say that virtues are positive moral character traits. For an individual to transcend the bounds of being a mere man or a base fellow to becoming an individual with the inner dispositions inclined towards doing good, that is, virtuous actions, the individual must have been well groomed and trained in the persistent practice of good actions until the practice becomes a habit <sup>23</sup>.

The Yoruba in tandem with Aristotle's submission on virtues believes that virtuous actions which means *iwa rere* – good character should be habitually carried out so that *iwa rere* becomes the inalienable character of such individual. *Iwa rere* (good character) defines an individual as a true human being (*eniyan*) and not a brute (*eranko*) in human clothing. Aristotle did not see ethics as something different from politics on the grounds that politics is the science of how to create a good society with the express intention of providing the best opportunities for its citizens to live the good life.<sup>24</sup> He insists that ethics is not a theoretical discipline to merely acquire head knowledge but a practical one that seeks to develop a deeper and fuller understanding of such concepts as 'good', 'bad', 'moral', 'immoral', 'right', 'wrong' .... in order to maintain peace and tranquility and to transform turbulent areas to safe and peaceful haven.

The study of ethics is essentially to improve our lives in relationship to our environment and much more to people whom we come in contact with. Some virtues that we exhibit maybe to experience inner peace and spiritual balance but many go beyond the personal peace to maintaining peace and equilibrium in the society. The human being is a social, political and gregarious being, therefore means must be devised to ensure peaceful and productive co-existence. An individual who shows signs of being always withdrawn in a cocoon is suspiciously regarded by the Yoruba and derogatorily referred to as '*ada nikan gbe'nu palo bii eranko*' – he who stays all alone like an animal. Aristotle is of the opinion that virtues are central to a well-lived life personally and collectively and the Yoruba also believe that virtues should be internalized and habitually displayed in dealings and relationship with others. Aristotle avers that the virtuous life is concerned with the individual's relation with other people and the state. It is in this communal interaction that a person grows in goodness (virtue) and exhibits moral qualities.<sup>25</sup> In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle maintains that the highest good is happiness. Following Pythagorean classification of types of men, Aristotle says that persons of low tastes (which are usually in the majority) hold that the greatest good is pleasure, the business man thinks it is wealth and 'the gentleman' holds that it is honour. But these common conceptions are not wholly satisfactory for in each case the supposed good are merely instrumental to an end beyond themselves. All other goals as the ones listed above even including good health, good friends, genuine love are subsidiaries in that they only



promote or may add up to happiness but are themselves not ‘happiness’. He thus avers that the highest good to which humans aspire is happiness and by ‘happiness’ Aristotle refers to an active kind of well-being and well-doing which he calls ‘*eudaimonia*’ meaning a flourishing state of the soul.<sup>26</sup>

The reason why happiness is the aim to which human aspire according to Aristotle is because human beings are rational creatures and their main task (*ergon*) or quality that distinguishes them from other beings is the ability to reflect and make choices. Human beings are in particular capable of thinking about what is their ultimate interest. Happiness is in everyone’s ultimate interest because it is desirable for its own sake and all other goods are merely instrumental in helping to bring happiness about, whereas happiness is complete and self-sufficient. The appeal to man’s rationality is an important feature of Aristotle’s view, because to be human is to reason – more particularly, to employ practical reason in thinking of how to live. Aristotle describes such a life as one lived ‘in accordance with virtue’.

Virtue, (*arête*) to Aristotle means what reason will choose as the middle path or mean between the opposing vices or extremes. Aristotle recognizes people as having both rational and non-rational desires and sees virtue as being the condition in which reason governs the non-rational desires. Man is part of the natural world in that he ingests nutriment and reproduces himself, he moves about, perceives and has desires. But in addition, and among all beings, man is rational and this is his defining mark or essence.<sup>27</sup> Aristotle opines that the person who lives according to practical wisdom that is, he who through wisdom determines what the golden mean is between an excess and deficiency attains *eudaimonia* (a flourishing state of the soul) and is counted as virtuous, where virtues are such positive traits of character as courage, temperance, liberality, justice and honesty. These virtues enumerated by Aristotle are also very important in Yoruba moral sphere and which an *Omoluwabi* is expected to have internalized and to exhibit habitually. Moderation holds a very vital position in Yoruba ethical theory and is akin to finding the mean by reason of rational thinking which is what Aristotle advocates for. An *Omoluwabi* is not be an extremist but one who by reasoning judges when to hasten or control. An *Omoluwabi* by rational enquiry judges when to go ahead and when to stop, he

does not overkill or over flog issues. He believes that a word is enough for the wise – *aabo oro ni a nso fun Omoluwabi* and does not pour out a Niagara of words through which he may offend, or complicate an issue or implicate himself as ‘*oro pupo iro nii mu wa*’ – lies are not wanting in much talk.

Aristotle emphasizes also that virtue is a matter of habit or consistency, for example, a machine that is only occasionally functional cannot be said to be effective or perform its function well. Likewise, the human who exercises his/her rational capacity only occasionally cannot be said to be virtuous. If such a person happens to exhibit a virtuous act, the people are skeptical and instead of arrogating the good deed to have come from him, the Yoruba will say, ‘*o kan bo si lowo ni*’ – it just happened by chance. On another hand, they may be suspicious since he has not been known to be virtuous and are wary of the good deed which they may term to be a bait. Therefore, from the view of virtue ethics the fundamental ethical question is not so much what one ought to do but rather what kind of person one ought to be.

Aristotle is of the opinion that good parenting and good company is vital to one becoming virtuous to which Yoruba *Omoluwabi* concept also alludes to. Aristotle still goes ahead to declare that we ourselves as moral agents also have the responsibility of acquiring virtues and bringing such forth into action which point the Yoruba strongly agree with. It is believed that the child after being nurtured and groomed in the *Omoluwabi* way has the responsibility to keep to this way and to also further groom himself/herself in this way. Yoruba usually say that ‘*ki a bi ni ko to ki a tun ara eni bi*’ – to develop oneself is of greater significance than to just being born’ and ‘*alagemo ti bimo re naa, aimo jo ku s’owo omo alagemo*’ – the chameleon has given birth to an offspring, if the offspring fails to master the dexterity of dancing, it is the offspring’s fault. We are called moral agents because we possess the reasoning capacity to determine that which is right or wrong and this gift of ‘reasoning’, that is, rational thinking bears upon the moral agent the responsibility of doing the good and refraining from the evil.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*,<sup>28</sup> Aristotle describes virtue as a state of character, concerned with passions and actions in which excess and deficiency are a form of failure and in which choice lies in a mean. This implies that virtue is a mean between two vices,

two extremes. It thus takes wisdom and rational enquiry to be able to determine correctly what the mean of two extremes will be. Aristotle however makes us to realize that not all actions or passions that choose the mean can be labelled virtue. Already, some actions like murder, suicide, theft, duping, promiscuity and emotions or passions like hatred, inordinate affection, lust, spite imply badness and their excesses or deficiencies do no longer matter since they are inherently bad. So, choosing a mean with regards to these bad passions and actions will only mean a futile exercise as it will be a mean of excesses and of defects. This of course is of no benefit in the moral sphere. The table below shows some of Aristotelian virtues, the corresponding vices and the rationally chosen mean.<sup>29</sup>

<b>EXCESS (BADNESS)</b>	<b>MEAN (GOODNESS)</b>	<b>DEFECT (BADNESS)</b>
Irascibility	Gentleness	Spiritlessness
Rashness	Courage	Cowardice
Shamelessness	Modesty	Diffidence
Profligacy	Temperance	Insensitiveness
Envy	Righteous Indignation	Malice
Prodigality	Liberality	Meanness
Boastfulness	Sincerity	Self-depreciation
Flattery	Friendliness	Surliness
Subservience	Dignity	Stubbornness
Luxuriousness	Endurance	Hardiness
Vanity	Greatness of Spirit	Smallness of Spirit
Extravagance	Magnificence	Shabbiness
Rascality	Wisdom	Simplicity

In Aristotle virtue ethics, liberality is the mean between prodigality and meanness. As the Yoruba regard a mean person as a miser and one to whom no honour is accorded as depicted in this proverb, *agba ti o je ajeiweyin yio ru igba re dele*- an elder who eats all without leaving for others will carry his calabash all the way home by himself without the offer of assistance from others, likewise the Yoruba accords no honour to a prodigious fellow who spends money with no thought of the future or are even suspicious of him, believing that his over-generosity may for an ulterior motive. They caution such by saying, ‘*oore ni won*’, - kindness should be in measure so that one’s good is not evil spoken of.

The Yoruba also advise on being frugal in spending and to cut one’s coat according to one’s size. This implies that people should try to live within their means instead of going a-borrowing (*jije gbese*). Kola Akinlade in this Yoruba *ewi* admonishes that going a-borrowing does not befit an *Omoluwabi*:

*Se bi o timo*

*Eeyan ti nkiri wa owo ya*

*O fe ba ara re ninu je ni*

*O fe kan ara re ni abuku*

*Ko si l’oruko ti owo nje*

*Egberun mewa naira wa labe beedi*

*Won a si wi fun o pe owo po l’owo awon*

*Leyin ti o ti so asiri re fun won tan*

*Se bo o ti mo elewa Sapon*

*Dipo ti waa maa ya owo ra agbada titun*

*Wo buba too ni ninu ile*

*Dipo ti waa ya owo ra moto*

*O o si gun keke fun igba die na*

*Eni ba so ile nu, o so apo iya ko*

*Eni ba pa ise ti, o gbe apo ebi*

*Eni ba nwa owo ya kiri*

*O nko leta si ibanuje*

*Ore, se bo o ti mo.*<sup>30</sup>

### **Be Moderate**

The person that goes about requesting for loan

Wants to make himself unhappy

And wants to ridicule himself

‘There is none’ (It is not available) is the name that money bears

Yet ten thousand naira is tucked away under the bed

But they will tell you that they do not have

After you have divulged your secrets to them

Be moderate, the bean seller of Sapon

Instead of looking for loan to buy *agbada* (Yoruba men full regalia)

Wear the *buba* (Yoruba men moderate attire) that you have at home

Instead of requesting for loan to buy a car

Why not ride a bicycle for a while longer?

Anyone who forgets his source is bearing a bag of woe

The one who neglects his work will bear a bag of hunger

The one who goes about requesting for loan

Is writing a letter to sorrow

My friend, be moderate. (Translation is mine)

There is a story behind the Yoruba cliché ‘*se bo o ti mo, elewa Sapon*’. Once upon a time in Abeokuta town, there was a woman that used to sell cooked beans in Sapon. This form of beans was greatly appreciated by many people. She used to sell large quantity and made lot of profit on daily basis. Her cooked beans was so loved by the people that when they run out of cash, they buy more on credit. It got to a point that the credit sales was affecting the business a lot. In order to prevent this, she devised a method to curb people from buying on credit. Whenever somebody ran out of cash and wanted to buy more beans on credit, she would tell them in Yoruba that *se b’otimo* (don’t buy more than you can pay for now). As time went on, people got used to her new style. Before they ask for more on credit, they already knew her response. As a result, people eulogized her with this Yoruba statement ‘*se b’otimo, elewa Sapon.*’<sup>31</sup>

Moderation is also required in verbal expression. A silent and reticent person is regarded as churlish by the Yoruba especially as you cannot predict him because of his reticence – *adake ma fohun, a ko mo teni to n se-* too quiet and reserved, you cannot decide on whose side he is. Likewise, a lousy person is regarded as an uncouth fellow whose company is not sought by any honourable person. The Yoruba regard such as *agba ofifo* (empty barrel) although empty but makes the most noise.

The *Omoluwabi* standard is the habitual display of good actions and positive character traits like patience, kindness, loyalty, hardwork, which Aristotle refers to as ‘virtues’. However, there are times when there are exceptions to the grand rules. We may consider the question, “when is it good to be bad?” by noting that anger is a negative emotion but Aristotle considers anger as an emotion capable of great power and good effect if wisely directed. “It is easy to fly into a passion”, Aristotle remarks, ‘anyone can do that; but to be angry with the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, in the right way, with

the right aim; that is not easy'. Aristotle thinks that knowing how to be appropriately angry is an essential part of the moral life – providing that it does overthrow reason and become destructive in consequence.<sup>32</sup> It is interesting to know in Yoruba moral space that there are instances when anger is also permissible. When insults and despicable words are being hurled at one's parents, lineage, spouse, children, or when someone in whom we repose much trust betrays us, one can be angry but the anger should be to rectify the issue and not to complicate it. The Yoruba will say that '*omo ale nii r'inu ti kii bi, omo ale ni a sin be ti kii gba*', the translation of this proverb is that it is a vagabond that will see a cause to be angry and not be and it is also a vagabond that we try to pacify but will not relent.

Being able to determine the mean will among other benefits help in curbing religious fanaticism which has become a bane not only of our country's wellbeing but of the world as a whole. Nefarious activities like killing, bombing and destroying of places of worship will be eradicated when people through the exercise of their reasoning capacities adjudge, attain and imbibe the mean(s) of excesses and deficiencies in their relationships.

Aristotle equally identifies the virtue of courage as the mean between cowardice and rashness and a Yoruba adage to caution against rashness says that '*moja mosa la a m'akin, akin to ba moja ti ko ba mosa, iru won maa nba ogun lo*', the interpretation is that to display prowess in the war-front and to know when to retreat or find cover, a hero is revealed, but a warrior who only knows how to fight without knowing when to duck will perish at the battle field or be captured as a slave. In the same vein, a coward who is overly fearful will not take any meaning step to better his lot or make any remarkable positive impact on his society, the Yoruba will say, '*mi o le wa ku, kii j'oye ile baba re*' – 'I can't kill myself' will not get to the throne of his fore-fathers. Chieftaincy titles in some communities may be fraught with prolonged and cumbersome processes especially where there are more than one royal family, a royal child who is qualified to ascend the royal stool but withdraws on a perceived notion that the process may become precarious is usually regarded as a coward. The relevance of this is that a person who has the endowment to achieve and transform the society positively but develops cold feet is not regarded as a hero or heroine. Examples abound in Yoruba history of men and women

who showed courage, displayed prowess, delivered their people and land from invaders and made names for themselves. These were leaders like Obanta of Ijebu-Ode, Lishabi of Abeokuta, Ogedengbe Agbogunbora of Ilesha, Bashorun Ogunmola of Ibadan, Kurunmi of Ijaye, Timi Agbale Olofa ina of Ede, Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan, Moremi Ajasoro of Ile-Ife.

Courage also involves speaking the truth and standing for the truth even at very grave cost. In recent times we have leaders like Michael Imoudu who was a Nigeria Labour Union President in the 1940s, he fought vigorously for the emancipation of and increase in wages for government workers. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968) was also a notable black man who displayed uncommon courage and advanced the cause of combating racial inequality through non-violent resistance in United States of America. The positive effect of his achievement has rippled throughout the world. Nelson Mandela (1918 – 2013) too courageously challenged the status quo of his time by fighting against apartheid in South – Africa, he was imprisoned for 27 (twenty – seven) years for political offences but he remained firm and unflinching in his resolution that apartheid must be abolished and eradicated in South Africa. He later became the country’s president in 1993.

A courageous person is someone of high integrity and will always do that which is right even when the odds are against him. He has a keen conscience that ‘the right’ must be done even if it makes him unpopular and an object of ridicule. J. F. Odunjo told a story of a man nicknamed *Aworawo* in *Alawiye Apa Kerin*. *Aworawo* was a poor man who was in servitude to wealthy Ola. *Aworawo* used 5 (five) days in the week to work for Ola as a means of repaying the loan he took from him. *Aworawo* in this story was referred to as ‘*eniyan atata*’<sup>33</sup>– a worthy person because of the good character traits he habitually displayed though he was poverty stricken (*otosi*). *Aworawo* one day, while working on Ola’s farm came across a pot of money hidden away in the ground. This was *Aworawo*’s decision concerning the pot of money:

*Nitori naa, o pinnu ninu okan re pe ohun ti o*

*dara ju nipe ki oun gbe owo yi lo fun Ola Olowo oun*



*ki okan oun le bale. Lotito akuise ni oun, sugbon oro  
ti oun yio ni ti yio ba Omoluwabi oun je,  
oun ko gba adura lati ni iru oro bee.* <sup>34</sup>

Therefore he (Aworawo) made up his mind that the best thing to do is to carry the pot of money to Ola his master so that he (Aworawo) can have peace of mind. Truly, he is a pauper but the wealth that he will acquire that will dent his image as an *Omoluwabi*,  
- he does not pray to have such wealth. (Translation is mine)

Clearly here, Aworawo has shown that not denting one's *Omoluwabi* is of greater value than the accumulation of wealth. *Iwa Omoluwabi* also ensures a peaceful state of mind, because one is not in fear or trepidation and unduly perturbed that there will be an impending judgement or '*ajalu*'- sudden calamity, *esan*- repercussion premised on wrongdoing. The Yoruba believe that '*ko si asegbé, sugbon asepamo l'owa*' – there is no action without its corresponding retribution. While some will see the money as a windfall, or a god-sent or good fortune and appropriate the money to themselves but Aworawo took the pot of money to Ola. Ola only gave Aworawo a coin from the pot of money. When the people of the town heard what Aworawo did, they mocked him believing that he must be out of his mind to have found money hidden away in his master's farm and still brought the money to him. In fact, they composed a catchy song that says:

*Aworawo r'owo he, o si tun fihan Ola (fihan Ola)*

*Titi aye re o ko tun le la mo o* <sup>35</sup>

Aworawo stumbled upon money

And he went to show it to Ola

Till the end of life, you can never become prosperous (Translation is mine)

The money that Aworawo saw in the farm was thrice the money he owed Ola and for which he was in servitude. Some thought that Ola should have cancelled off Aworawo's debt because of his exemplary display of truthfulness, honesty and integrity but what he got was ridicule. The taunt was so much that Aworawo had to leave the town for another town.

Aworawo became a water-boy (*aponmita*) in the town where he went to seek refuge from shame. A water-boy is he that fetches water from the stream or public taps and sells in gallons to people. It happened that the king of the town died and when the oracle was consulted as to who would emerge as the next king, the oracle declared that an honest water seller would be the one to be crowned as the next king. The elders and the kingmakers thereafter sent for all water sellers in the town and told them each to pick a gourd at the palace backyard and go and fetch water from the stream for the celebration of the funeral of the departed king. Unknown to the water sellers, the kingmakers had hidden money in all pots. When the water sellers separately saw the money in their gourds they thanked their stars for the windfall believing that it was accidentally forgotten in the pot. Aworawo on his own part was confused. Should he show the money to the kingmakers or just pocket it and seal his conscience especially bearing in mind the experience he had with his master Ola? Will the people of the town and his colleagues not castigate him if he returns the money? Will the reaction of the kingmakers be positive or negative to his returning the money he found in the gourd? Can he endure another bout of taunts and ridicule from the young and old? However, the virtues of *Omoluwabi* had become deeply ingrained in Aworawo that he felt so uncomfortable to do otherwise. It was his inbuilt and habitual character to be honest and not gather wealth in a fraudulent way (*ona eeru*). Aworawo however needed to be courageous not knowing what would be the aftermath of his returning the money – of rebuke or of praise. He however summoned up courage and told the kingmakers that he found money in the gourd he picked at the back of the palace and he gave the money in its full measure to them. The kingmakers were overjoyed and installed Aworawo as the new king.<sup>36</sup>

The stories, songs, anecdotes, proverbs explained in the Chapter are a way of establishing the fact that the Yoruba concept of *Omoluwabi* seeks to promote moral uprightness in the

society. The virtues embedded in *Omoluwabi* are such that encourage people as moral agents to always be good and to do ‘the good’. At the beginning of the Chapter we were able to affirm that *Omoluwabi* tends to legislate the right course of behaviour thereby engendering and promoting a peaceful and orderly society. The analysis of ‘good’ in Chapter one with regards to other African societies establishes the fact that the conceptions of good in these communities is largely related to the tenets of *Omoluwabi*. Aristotle is a major figure in the history of Philosophy and a careful examination and analysis of his virtue ethics shows that it bears a deep resemblance to the *Omoluwabi* tenets. The virtues identified by Aristotle for the attainment of ‘good’ are closely related to the virtues intricately woven in Yoruba proverbs, lores, stories, anecdotes, *ifa* corpus. Aristotle pre-occupation of deciding what the mean of excesses and deficiencies are (because doing the ‘mean’ and eschewing the excesses and deficiencies) will promote a harmonious community is essentially what *Omoluwabi* is premised on. *Omoluwabi* tenets is practically based on moderation in order to foster peaceful, harmonious, orderly, sustainable and productive society, anything devoid of this leads to a chaotic, precarious, unproductive and mirthless community. Therefore, using Aristotle Virtue Ethics as framework, one may conclude that *Omoluwabi* attains the ‘good’.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The attainment of the good is the goal of life. The ‘good’ promotes a life devoid of troubles, a life of peace and tranquility. A sophisticated life filled with new inventions and possibilities but subject to and fraught with insecurity, lack of trust, moral depravity, and infamy is still a life of misery. Condition of living in this scenario is miserable, harrowing, worrisome and pensive. No wonder, Aristotle proposes ‘*eudemonia*’ – the flourishing state of the soul as the highest form of happiness to which all rational men and women aspire. However, only men and women of virtue (*arête*) who through reasoning, that is rational enquiry which is the primal function (*ergon*) of human beings are able to determine the mean between opposing vices or extremes thereby attaining to the state of peace, stability and flourishing.

From the analysis and ethnographic account in the chapter, one infers that *Omoluwabi* concept attains to the ‘good’. The *Omoluwabi* teaching is innocuous and at the same time

sagacious. It is not offensive and it seeks to bring out the humanity in humans while taming or fettering any bestial manifestations. A community where people exhibits bestial instincts and fly at each other's throat and are each other's trail to launch attack or reprisal is a worthless and precarious life. *Omoluwabi* condemns wrongdoing and encourages the 'good'. The oral tradition taught in Ifa corpus, lores, anecdotes, stories, proverbs are never in support of negative behaviour. There is no story told, song composed or proverb uttered that does not teach good moral covering the scope of honesty, uprightness, chastity, kindness, courage, respectfulness, altruism, self-control, temperament, hospitality, generosity, hard-work, humility, gentleness and much more. Attitudes springing from wrong value system like pride, parsimony, selfishness, dishonesty, treachery, inordinate affection, lying and the like are promptly rebuked. Offenders do not go unpunished even in storyland, there are forms of pillorying or punishments meted out to offenders in degrees while good people are usually praised and rewarded. Our burden in the next Chapter will be to examine the postmodernist's critique of grand-narratives.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE POSTMODERNIST CRITIQUE OF GRAND NARRATIVES

#### 4.1 Introduction

Postmodernity can be described as the economic, socio-political or cultural state of Western society which is said to exist after modernity. According to this usage, the word 'post' can be viewed as that which is beyond, over or above. This explains that there is a marked paradigm shift in the ways things have been done (over time) and that there has been a radical rupture of the society because modern society has been replaced by a post-modern society.<sup>1</sup>

Postmodernity can also be viewed as a new historical epoch that is supposed to come after the modern period. This usage is chronological, and it implies that the modern period is ending or has ended and we have entered a new historical epoch of postmodernity. However, common to these two usages is the fact that something new and different had happened in recent years that can no longer be described by the term 'modern' because new concepts are replacing modern realities.

Postmodernism can manifest in diverse forms, for instance, there is postmodernism in the pluralistic sense and postmodernism in the relativistic sense (also called the subjective sense). Pluralism in postmodernism holds that there exists a form of irreducibly de-centred plurality/multiplicity of coexisting cognitive and cultural paradigms, without anyone of them being uniquely dominant or central.<sup>2</sup> This sense is against epistemology, moral and political tyranny. Postmodernism in the relativistic sense promotes diverse points of view such that there is no standard but that views are relative to differences in perception and consideration. There is no universal, objective truth according to relativism, rather each point of view has its own truth. Both senses cited are however at variance with grand-narrative which is believed to be oppressive, old-fashioned and irrelevant.

Our focus in this work is on relativism in postmodernism especially as it affects and undermines moral values which are the binding forces uniting the society. Relativism is the view that truth and falsity, right and wrong, standards of reasoning, and procedures of

justification are products of differing conventions and frameworks of assessment and that their authority is confined to the context giving rise to them. More precisely, 'relativism' covers views which maintain that some classes of things like behaviours have properties of being morally good but only relative to a given framework of assessment. It supposes for example, that, local cultural norms, individual standards and truth of claims attributing these properties holds only once the relevant framework of assessment is specified or supplied. Relativists insist that if something is relatively so, then there can be no framework, that is, independent vantage point from which the matter of whether the thing in question is so can be determined.

Swoyer Chris sees it as a harbinger of tolerance and an ethical and epistemic stance worthy only of the open-minded and tolerant. Detractors dismiss it for its alleged incoherence and uncritical intellectual and moral permissiveness,<sup>3</sup> especially as this permissiveness and jettisoning of adherence to moral standard has become a bane to sustainable development in the society. Exploitation of the 'permissiveness' inherent in postmodernism has led to the erosion and undermining of values like honesty, chastity, integrity, contentment that are essential for achieving a happy and safe society.

#### **4.2 The Two World Wars**

Some had proposed that the world began to move from modernity to postmodernity after the first and second world wars that took place between 1914 – 1919 and 1939 – 1945 respectively. In fact, Arnold J. Toynbee maintained that our own post-modern age has been inaugurated by the general war of 1914 – 1919 while Oka Obono also noted that the two world wars were the final antecedents of shift in perceptions and the moral fabric of society, undermining the status quo in a surrounding spirit of existentialist inquiry. <sup>4</sup> It was recorded that ten million men from thirty-two countries died fighting in the first World War that erupted between the countries of the central power of the world which are Germany, Austria, Hungary and countries of the allied power which are Britain, France, Russia and USA. The World War I helped to ignite World War II which has been described as the most terrible war in history. World War I had ended in defeat for Germany in 1919, and this made the Germans bitter and disgruntled. They believed that they had been unjustly blamed for the war and were being made to make payment to



victorious Britain and France and were also instructed not to rebuild the nation's army. Their bitterness for what they see as injustice led to the beginning of the Second World War in which about fifty – five million people were killed most of whom were civilians also, nearly six million Europeans Jews were murdered by German's Nazi Government.

During the World War II, Europe was threatened by material and spiritual destruction. People were appalled by the enormity of the destruction of human lives occasioned by the two world wars. The optimism of the age of Reason became less relevant and gave way to a growing philosophical focus on the fragility of human existence. Hegel had argued that Reason is the Sovereignty of the World and therefore that the world presents us with a rational process. He proposed Reason as the substance of the Universe by which all reality has its being and subsistence also, that Reason is the Infinite Energy of the Universe and the Infinite complex of things, their entire essence and truth. This means that Reason or Idea is the True, the Eternal, the absolutely powerful essence that reveals itself in the world.<sup>5</sup> The import of this is that every occurrence in the world can be objectively rationalized and intricately linked together to form a sensible whole. However, with the gory World Wars people realized that there was no generally construed reason that could be proffered for the wanton destruction of lives. There was then the rejection of the objectivity of human experience for subjectivity and it was proposed that focus should be shifted on the individual in his confrontation with the world in order to find meaning or value in a world that seems irrational and beyond total comprehension. Universality should also be rejected for relativity as this will give greater opportunities for a diversity of voices and opinions to be heard which will automatically enhance the society. It is like saying that 'let a thousand flowers bloom'. This new line of thinking, this new orientation which is characterized by skepticism, subjectivism, relativism and an acute suspicion of reason is what can be referred to as postmodernism and it is the adoption of postmodern philosophies or traits in arts, literature, culture and society.

As the off – shoot of the two World Wars, postmodernists are greatly cautious of meta-narratives. Postmodernism may be viewed as incredulity towards meta-narratives,<sup>6</sup> that is skeptical and doubtful towards meta-narratives. Meta-narrative or grand-narrative is a

narrative about narratives of historical meaning, experience and it seeks to propose to the society what is legitimate or the authorized way of doing things through the expected or anticipated result /completion of the master idea. Postmodernists are of the opinion that meta-narratives try to give general or grand explanation to issues without taking note or putting into consideration the fragments. This according to them can stifle diversity and enforce conformity. Meta-narratives can also inject bitterness and suspicion in communities who before were cordial and incite them to wage war against each other. The example of Adolph Hitler who told the German people that the Aryan race of Germany was supreme and that Germany as a nation was destined to rule the world was cited. This meta-narrative given by Hitler spurred the German army to relentlessly fight in the war which as mentioned above had a death toll of about fifty – five million people in addition to the holocaust of the Jews in Germany. Postmodernists have thus argued that the form of society where grand totalizing (global narrative scheme which orders and tries to explain knowledge and experience) and meta-narrative are predominant is a dictatorship system of government. A dictatorship is a form of authoritarian system of government characterized by a single leader or group of leaders with either no party or a weak party, little mass mobilization and limited political pluralism. <sup>7</sup> A common aspect that characterized dictators is taking advantage of their strong personality, usually by suppressing freedom of thought and speech of the masses, in order to maintain complete political and social supremacy and stability. Dictatorships and totalitarian societies generally employ political propaganda to decrease the influence of proponents of alternative governing system. <sup>8</sup>

Postmodernism in contrast to meta-narrative or grand-totalizing works for the emancipation of all individuals as single, unique and distinct entities who have the right to freely express themselves in ways they find convenient. Postmodernists opine that each human being is differently “wired” and that to prescribe rigid rules of doing things and maybe with some form of punishment for deviants to these rules may be heartless or perhaps thoughtless. In essence, postmodernism can be viewed as the dethronement of authority and the release of power, freedom, self-expression and autonomy to individuals.

### 4.3 Industrialization

Postmodernism is also traceable to Industrialisation which is the period of social and economic transformation from agrarian society into an industrial one and this involved the extensive re-organisation<sup>9</sup> of the economy for the purpose of manufacturing in large quantities. The industrial revolution took place from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century in some parts of Europe like Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, France and also in North America.<sup>10</sup> This has generally been referred to as the First Industrial Revolution. The Second Industrial Revolution took place about the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century after the refinement of the steam engine, the invention of the internal combustion engine<sup>11</sup> electricity, canals and railways. Coal mines, steel workshops and textile factories replaced homes as the place of work.<sup>12</sup> The shift from agrarian society where people used simple implements to work on farms and produced for themselves and perhaps to sell to neighbours to industrial society where goods are produced *en masse* and workers offered their services for wages had tremendous and lasting social consequences on the society. Some of these consequences are urbanisation, changes in family structure and capitalism.

Urbanization was one of the immediate resultant effects of Industrialisation. As mentioned, factories, industries and offices replaced homes as places of work. People had to leave their homes and at other times their villages and towns to places where goods were produced. Large cities grew from the concentration of men and women who offered their labour at the factories and those who hoped that their services might also be engaged at these factories. This invariably led to over-population in the cities and people had to scamp and compete for the limited available amenities. In such situations, crimes and vices were wide spread. The most common word then would have been, "I'm in a hurry" since people were always in a hurry to keep appointments, catch a bus or a train, get to work before the red line on the attendance register was drawn and to get back home on time at least to catch a bit of repose and begin to prepare for next day's work. Values which ordinarily parents or guardians should pass and inculcate into their children or wards had become muffled by the diffusion of various cultures characterised by city-life and the struggle for sustenance. Parents would even think that it was a dis-service to

children to insist that old ways of life however virtuous they were should be adhered to when life in the city was a feat for the fittest.

Changes in family structure: The family structure also witnessed changes with industrialization. Talcott Parsons noted that in pre-industrial societies there was an extended family structure spanning many generations who probably remained in the same location for generations.<sup>13</sup> In China, for instance, there are houses with numerous rooms housing extended family members from one generation to the other. However, with industrialization, the chain had been broken because many family members had to leave the ancient villages in search of 'greener pasture' to the cities which are characterized by unfamiliar relations and competitive behaviour.<sup>14</sup> In industrialised societies, the nuclear family consisting of only parents and their children are common and extended family bonds became less pronounced and weakened. This strengthened the subjective nature of the postmodern life where the desires, wishes of the individual are not dependent on the collectivity. Members of the nuclear family may not have to take into consideration the reactions of members of the extended family when taking decisions. The ceremonies and usual rituals that were held as worthwhile and performed jointly by extended family members were jettisoned and many of such ceremonies had naturally withered away. A narration of a chief of the Digger Indians recorded by Ruth Benedict in her book 'Patterns of Culture' is here quoted, "in the beginning, God gave to every people a cup, a cup of clay, and from this cup, they drank their life. Our cup is however broken". She further said that those things that had given significance to the life of the people, the domestic rituals of eating, the obligations of the economic system, the succession of ceremonials in the villages, their standards of right and wrong-these were gone and with them, the shape and meaning of their life.

Capitalism: Capitalism is a main feature of industrialization. The industrial society witnessed a massive exploitation of labour and natural resources. Natural resources which were the raw materials for production at the factories were vastly exploited by the capitalists (bourgeoisie), also the labourers or workers who in the words of John Locke 'mix their labour with the product' were also being exploited as the product they mix their labour with is not their own. Rather, these products are the properties of the factories

owners. According to Karl Marx, the capitalists obviously must sell what their workers produce for more than they pay the workers to make it or mix their labour with.<sup>15</sup> From the Industrial age, there had emerged a class struggle between the ‘possessors of the means of production’ the bourgeoisie and the proletariat who mix their labour with the products and earn wages for doing this.<sup>16</sup> There is a suppressed hostility between these two economic classes which sometimes culminated into workers’ protests and strikes on the part of the proletariat and mass retrenchment as a weapon wielded by the bourgeoisie. The society and its values had thus metamorphosed from that where each person was his brother’s keeper to that where one’s brother is someone to be exploited either as a worker who offers his service for the production of goods for which he will receive a wage that is not commensurate to (less than) the price the capitalist will sell the goods or as a buyer/consumer who will pay more than the production price of the good.

#### **4.4 The modern age and the postmodern age**

One cannot think about postmodernism without thinking about modernism, the movement from which postmodernism seems to grow or emerge.<sup>17</sup> Modernity which precedes postmodernity refers to a historical period called the modern era, and modernism as the socio – cultural norms, attitudes and practices that arose in post-medieval Europe or the culture that arose out of enlightenment and has developed since in various ways and at various times around the world.<sup>18</sup> The age of enlightenment began with the emergence of Universities which gave people access to formal education. Also, during this period, the lord/serf order was broken. Before, serfs who occupied a plot of land were required to work for the landlord. The serfs in return were entitled to protection, justice, and the right to cultivate certain fields within the manor to maintain their own subsistence. Serfs were not required only to work on the lord’s fields but also in his mines and forests.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the children born to a serf inherited the status of the parent, and were considered born into serfdom at birth. By taking on the duties of serfdom, individuals bound not only themselves but their future progeny.<sup>20</sup> But in the modern age, the order was broken and the practice withered away. In place of the serfs were free men and women who received wages for services rendered to the lords and ladies.<sup>21</sup>

The defining characteristics of modernity include the following:

- i. Bureaucracy – impersonal, social hierarchies that practice a division of labour and are marked by a regularity of method and procedure.
- ii. Rationalization – the notion that the world can be understood and managed through a reasonable and logical system of theories.
- iii. Commodification – the reduction of all aspects of life to objects of monetary consumption. The transformation of goods, services, ideas and people into commodities or objects of trade. <sup>22</sup>
- iv. Urbanization – the movement of people to large towns and cities because of industrial revolution.
- v. Objectivity – the belief that truth – claims can be established by autonomous information which is accessible to all.
- vi. Universalism – application of ideas/claims to all cultures/circumstances regardless of local differences and distinctions. It also connotes that universal facts can be discovered and applied universally without prejudice to other distinguishing factors.
- vii. Industrial Society – societies formed around the industrial production and distribution of products. The period also featured mass production of goods.
- viii. Homogenization – the social forces that tend toward a uniformity of cultural ideas.
- ix. Totalitarianism – a political concept where the state does not restrain the authority it wields and strives to control every aspect of public and private life of the citizenry. A distinctive feature of totalitarian governments is an elaborate ideology, a set of ideas that give meaning and direction to the whole society. <sup>23</sup> According to Benito Mussolini, this system politicizes everything spiritual and human: “Everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state”. So, totalitarianism encourages a form of central governments that suppress free expression and political dissent.

Postmodernism as a divergent concept to modernism distrusts any form of universal philosophy, while insisting that there is no single theoretical discourse that can offer an

explanation for all forms of social relationships or for every mode of political practice. Postmodernists strongly believe that each case should be judged on its own merit bearing in mind its peculiarity at that point in time and that a general rule should not sway in judgment over all cases. Lyotard, in particular, was critical of Marxism because he believes that the individualistic and fragmented society we have today (in our postmodern world) is here to stay.<sup>24</sup> According to the Marxian theory, the class conflict or struggle between the bourgeois and the proletariat will culminate in a proletarian revolution and this will eventually lead to the establishment of socialism which is communal ownership of means of production. Socialism which is a socio-economic system based on social ownership of means of production infers that distribution of resources will be based on one's contribution to the economy. As the productive forces continue to advance, Marx hypothesizes that socialism will ultimately transform into a communist society: a classless, stateless, humane society based on common ownership and the underlying principle: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs".<sup>25</sup> Lyotard however believes that the Marxian theory wishes to create a homogenous society which can only be brought about through the use of coercion which automatically will hamper the freedom of individuals.

Postmodernism is characterized by broad skepticism, subjectivism, or relativism; a general suspicion of reason and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power. Indeed, many of the doctrines characteristically associated with postmodernism can fairly be described as the straightforward denial of general philosophical viewpoints that were taken for granted during the Enlightenment period. Some of these viewpoint which postmodernism is averse to are as expressed below:

1. There is an objective natural reality, a reality whose existence and properties are logically independent of human beings or their minds, their societies, their social practices or their investigative techniques. Postmodernists dismiss this idea as a kind of naïve realism. Such reality as there is, according to postmodernists, is a conceptual construct, an artifact of scientific practice and language.

2. The descriptive and explanatory statements of scientists and historians can, in principle, be objectively true or false. The postmodern denial of this viewpoint which follows from the rejection of an objective natural reality is sometimes expressed by saying that there is no such thing as Truth (or universal truth).
3. Reason and logic are universally valid, that is, their laws are the same for, or apply equally to, any thinker and any domain of knowledge. However, for postmodernists, reason and logic too are merely conceptual constructs and are valid only within the established intellectual traditions in which they are used.
4. There is such a thing as human nature; it consists of faculties, aptitudes, or dispositions that are in some sense present in human beings at birth rather than learned or instilled through social forces. Postmodernists insist that all, or nearly all, aspects of human psychology are completely socially determined.
5. Language refers to and represents a reality outside itself. According to postmodernists, language is not such a “mirror of nature” as Richard Rorty characterized the Enlightenment view. Inspired by the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, postmodernists claim that language is semantically self-contained, or self-referential. The meaning of a word is not a static thing in the world or even an idea in the mind but rather a range of contrasts and differences with the meaning of other words. Because meanings are in this sense functions of other meanings – which themselves are functions of other meanings, and so on- they are never fully “present” to the speaker or hearer but are endlessly “deferred.” Self-reference characterizes not only natural languages but also the more specialized “discourses” of particular communities or traditions. Such discourses are embedded in social practices and reflect the conceptual schemes about moral and intellectual values of the community or tradition in which they are used. The postmodern view of language is due largely to



the French philosopher and literary theorist Jacques Derrida, the originator and leading practitioner of deconstruction.

6. Human beings can acquire knowledge about natural reality; and this knowledge can be justified ultimately on the basis of evidence or principles that are, or can be, known immediately, intuitively, or otherwise with certainty. Postmodernists reject philosophical foundationalism asserting that knowledge claim cannot be universal and that what counts as knowledge is construed to a large degree by one's socialization.
7. It is possible, at least in principle, to construct general theories that explain many aspects of the natural or social world within a given domain of knowledge, even if these theories are never perfectly attainable in practice. Postmodernists dismiss this notion as an unhealthy tendency within Enlightenment discourses to adopt "totalizing" systems of thought or grand "metanarratives" of human biological, historical, and social development. To the postmodernists, these theories are misleading not merely because they are false but because they effectively impose conformity on other perspectives or discourses, thereby oppressing, marginalizing, or silencing them.<sup>26</sup>

One can glean from the statements above that postmodernism is antagonistic to objectivity, universality and generalization but accepts pluralism and heighten awareness of social difference in order to bring to light the claims of minority and disadvantaged groups. Some fundamental objectives of postmodernism include emphasis on localism, development of an idea of anti – expertise, flexibility, fragmented and democratic organization environment. These stand in contradiction to the concepts and tenets of modernism which is based on the idea of universal rationality, universal humanity and universal methodological assumptions.<sup>27</sup> Sartre in "Being and Nothingness" asserts that individual's existence is prior to the individual's essence and establishes the fact that man possesses free-will.<sup>28</sup> Jean Paul Sartre advocates that man's actions should not be subjected to the scrutiny of values but that he should be given the opportunity to fully and freely express himself as a free entity with a free-will. The belief is that man is the measure of all things and that anything inimical to his freedom to express himself without

any form of restraint be it in the form of moral values, practices, customs and tradition should be totally eradicated and taken out of the way. Although, Sartre is not a postmodernist but an existentialist, however, one can draw postmodernist implications from views expressed in his works.

The status of knowledge is also altered as people have discarded objectivity for subjectivity in the postmodern age. For example, the history of epistemology has been a search for truth derived from incorrigible foundation of knowledge and philosophers predating Socrates have even searched for these incorrigible foundations. They have looked everywhere for the unshakable bedrock on which the entire structure of knowledge might be built. However, in the postmodern age, philosophers have begun to question whether knowledge actually requires foundations at all to qualify as truth. Following Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida and Rorty, among others, postmodernists have come to question such foundations for knowledge as was required in the modern time, believing that they tend to privilege some groups and downgrade the significance of others, and also that they give some groups power and render other groups powerless. Rorty in his book, 'Philosophy and the mirror of nature' argues that beginning in the seventeenth century, philosophers developed an obsession with the notion of representation. They compared the mind to a mirror that reflects reality. In their opinion, knowledge is concerned with the accuracy of these reflections, and the strategy employed to obtain this knowledge – that of inspecting, repairing and polishing the mirror belongs to Philosophy. Rorty criticizes this imagery and argues that questions about truth posed by Descartes, Kant, Hegel and modern epistemologists couldn't be answered and were in any case irrelevant to serious social and cultural inquiry. <sup>29</sup> Rorty opines that it is erroneous to think that our ideas can mirror reality as it 'really is'. He claims that we approach reality from different conceptual perspectives, and we cannot 'step outside' our perspectives to see if they do indeed mirror reality as it really is.

Postmodernism emphasizes the relativism of values and knowledge and it seeks to question authority and, at the same time, maintains that there are no set of universal rules valid for all times and places. Postmodernism also seeks to point out the limitations of modernism. Lemert asserts that postmodernism is a "culture" that emphasizes that there

is a better world than the modern one.<sup>30</sup> While modern social theory sought a universal, a historical and rational foundation for its analysis and critique of society,<sup>31</sup> postmodern thinking rejects this foundationalism and tends to be relativistic, irrational and nihilistic. Postmodernism is also against any grand totalizing and meta-narrative theory,<sup>32</sup> that is, any theory that proposes single, general or summary approach to issues that affect man and the society. Postmodernist thinkers are in opposition to any form of grand theory and so their ideas are fragmentary and extol non – argumentative procedures<sup>33</sup> but procedures that can enable man to live according to them a meaningful and purposeful life.

Postmodernism therefore describes a movement that encompassed a broad range of ideas which marked a departure from modernism. Postmodernism is typically defined by an attitude of skepticism, irony and distrust towards grand theories and meta-narratives. It denies the existence of an objective natural reality whose existence and properties are independent of human beings – of their minds, their societies, their social practices, or their investigative techniques. It asserts that claims to knowledge and truth are products of unique social, historical or political discourses and interpretations and so are contextual and constructed to varying degrees. Postmodern thought is thus characterized by tendencies to epistemological and moral relativism, pluralism and self-preferentiality.

#### **4.5 Grand Narratives**

Grand or meta-narrative is knowledge in the form of story-telling (meta is Greek word for ‘beyond’). This word was brought into prominence by Jean-Francois Lyotard who claimed that the postmodern was characterized by a mistrust of grand-narratives that had formed an essential part of modernity.<sup>34</sup> In olden days, myths, superstitions, legends and sublime stories formed the basis of most of knowledge claims. The narrative not only explained but legitimated knowledge<sup>35</sup> and it was a taboo or practically unheard of for such knowledge to be queried or challenged. Separating the two words, grand may refer to something magnificent, imposing in character, size or style, large, ambitious or impressive in scope or scale while narrative may refer to a spoken or written account of connected events in such a way as to reflect or conform to an overarching set of aims or values.<sup>36</sup> Thus, grand-narratives when applied to the social relations of each society, these fabulous, imaginary and extraordinary stories function as a legitimization of

existing power relations. One may then say that grand narrative is a coherent system of interrelated and sequential organized stories that share a common rhetoric desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations according to the known trajectories of its literary and rhetorical form.<sup>37</sup>

The concept of grand narrative and in particular what Lyotard called the “emancipation narrative” concerns the kind of meta-narrative which describes not just one thing after another, but sees some kind of interconnectedness between events, an inner connection between events related to one another, a succession of social systems, the gradual development of social conditions.<sup>38</sup> What grand narrative strives to achieve is to make sense of history, to give an objective explanation of different happenings in history and connect them in such a way to make a sensible whole. Lyotard is however of the opinion that in the postmodern period, people no longer believe in grand narratives, and consequently .... “grand narratives” are old fashioned and oppressive.<sup>39</sup> Oppressive here may imply that such explanations exclude the opportunity for reasoning since they are usually fraught with a fear of looming and impending danger for anyone who holds a contrary view. This may be described as “fallacy ad baculum” which is propounding arguments that try to establish conclusions by creating fear in the minds of those who hold divergent views. Lyotard believes for example, that norms or civil laws are man-imposed through the process of legitimization by which a legislator is authorized to promulgate such a law.<sup>40</sup>

Lyotard highlights the increasing skepticism or cynicism of postmodernism toward the totalizing nature of metanarratives and their reliance on some form of “transcendent and universal truth”<sup>41</sup> which may appear unquestionable. Lyotard believes that attempt to construct grand theories tend to unduly dismiss the naturally existing chaos and disorder of the universe.<sup>42</sup> He explains that this will only succeed in ignoring the heterogeneity or variety of human existence. The world is full of diversities and to propound a narrative that tend to summarily explain different events while wittingly connecting them is quite misleading and maybe untruthful. He proposed that metanarratives should give way to more modest and localized narratives which can throw off the grand narrative by bringing into focus the singular event.<sup>43</sup> Postmodernists attempt to replace metanarratives by

focusing on specific local context as well as on the diversity of human experience. He argues for the existence of a “multiplicity of theoretical standpoints” rather than for grand all-encompassing theories.<sup>44</sup>

Michel Foucault is also antagonistic to grand theories. For him, genealogy (a historical technique in which one questions the commonly understood emergence of various philosophical and social beliefs by attempting to account for the scope, breadth or totality of discourse, thus extending the possibility of analysis)<sup>45</sup> does not commit one to a universal theory.<sup>46</sup> Genealogy to him does not provide any theory to explain what is going on, it simply evokes the small practices and social habits that constitute you and us. Genealogy is not prescriptive, but descriptive.<sup>47</sup> Foucault is clearly against the theory of Hegel that Reason is the Sovereignty of the World and that therefore the world presents us with a rational process which implies that Reason is the absolutely powerful essence that reveals itself in the world. This assertion by Hegel means that every occurrence in the world can be objectively and generally rationalized. Foucault however see history as a series of discontinuities, one following the next.<sup>48</sup> Towing the path of Foucault, Jacques Derrida also maintained that there cannot be any claim to final interpretation.<sup>49</sup> To him, history is a gradually evolving process and there is no basis for making myths into a fixed, coherent system<sup>50</sup> in the bid to explain, rationalize and justify history. Derrida asserted that philosophers cannot be ‘engineers’ who find unifying elements within the myths. Myths to Derrida have no single unitary source, but are rather a product of imaginations. One can therefore see through the eye of Derrida how grossly superfluous it is to employ grand narratives in the interpretation of history.

Thinkers like Arthur Schopenhauer, Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche also have strong disaffection for the optimistic idealism of Hegel because to them such philosophy as that of Hegel ignores human diversities and predicament. The theory of idealism, according to Hegel attempts to achieve unified conception of all reality and this conception according to him gives meaning to each and every aspect in relationship to the sum total. Hegel asserts that everything is a construct of reason. In this way, the entire system of thought and reality, is an integrated whole in which each proposition is logically interconnected with the rest.<sup>51</sup> However, Arthur Schopenhauer and his group

believe that the universe including the inhabitants is rarely rational and that philosophical systems that seek to make everything rational are hypocritical and futile attempts to overcome pessimism and despair to which man has been sentenced to.<sup>52</sup> Albert Camus in his “Myth of Sisyphus” also states that universal reason, practical or ethical determinism that try to explain everything (grand narrative) are false.<sup>53</sup>

Richard Rorty also argues that there is no universal human nature. To insist that there is a universal human nature to him is just being dogmatic and unrealistic, that is failing to come to terms with the diversities of human nature. It is also to erroneously say that human nature is constant and remains the same at all times and in all places.<sup>54</sup>

The belief of the postmodernist is that our world is continually evolving, and thus it will be wrong to insist on institutionalizing final interpretations to issues. Thus postmodernists are always out to decry any theory that proposes rationality, universalism and objectivity believing that such theories limit the individual and also that the sincerity of such claims is questionable.

Grand narrative to postmodern scholars limits and decreases the worth, the potentials, the urge to explore, to query the already settled matters, to unravel the sealed and the power to evolve in man.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The instance of meta-narrative or grand-narrative cited above of Adolf Hitler stating that the Aryan race of Germany was superior to other races and that Germany was destined to rule the world is a negative meta-narrative. This is so because it is unethical to see other races as inferior to one’s and also because this meta-narrative led to the decimation of a huge number of people and the holocaust of Jews during the World War II. However, there are positive meta or grand narrative that are ethical in nature. The concept of *Omoluwabi* which is a form of cultural grand-narrative is positive as it proposed and legislated the right course for a good society in the traditional Yoruba society. The aim of this study is to seek for the rejuvenation of *Omoluwabi* concept and to propose it as a moral blue print for global society. This is however dependent on the ability of *Omoluwabi* – a grand theory to overcome the critique of postmodernists. How viable is

the critique or argument of the postmodernists against a positive grand-narrative that promotes the 'good' like *Omoluwabi*? Can the critique of the postmodernist obliterate the Yoruba concept of *Omoluwabi*? How relevant is the *Omoluwabi* concept in our postmodern world? These questions will be resolved in the next chapter.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE POSTMODERNIST CRITIQUE OF *OMOLUWABI*

#### 5.1 Introduction

The major task in this Chapter is to establish *Omoluwabi* as a form of grand-narrative evolved in Yoruba culture and to put it under the searchlight of the critique of the postmodernist. The definition proffered by John Stephens that grand-narrative is a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience” lays credence to this point of *Omoluwabi* being a cultural narrative that is deeply embedded in Yoruba culture. In critical theory, and particularly postmodernism, a grand-narrative (sometimes referred to as master- or meta narrative) is an abstract idea that is supposed to be a comprehensive explanation of historical experience or knowledge. The prefix meta means “beyond” as noted in Chapter four, it can also mean “about” while a narrative can mean a story. Therefore, a meta narrative is a story about a story, encompassing and explaining other ‘little stories’ within totalizing schemes.<sup>1</sup> So much about the Yoruba depends on stories which had been passed down through generations by oral tradition. These stories play a powerful role in questions of identity, values and the understanding of life.<sup>2</sup>

#### 5.2 *Omoluwabi* as a cultural grand narrative

The point of *Omoluwabi* being categorised as a grand-narrative is clearly visible in the story behind its source and meaning in Yoruba oral tradition. The term *Omoluwabi* etymologically is a fusion of the expression *omo-olu-iwa-bi* meaning ‘a person born, nurtured and trained by someone of good character, that is *olu iwa* (chief of character) or the child begotten of Oniwa that is, *oni- iwa* (owner or possessor of character). It is believed that such a child having the privilege of being raised by the possessor or custodian of good character will grow up as a person with good character. The *odu ifa* divinatory verses which are Yoruba philosophical literary corpus are replete with stories which highlight the strong moral code that prescribe acceptable standards of right and wrong in the society into which children were socialized early in life. According to *Ifa* corpus, good character is all that is required to live a joyous and successful life. *Iwa rere*

is linked to someone's destiny on earth. Yoruba mythology has it that human beings before coming to the world would choose *ori* (head). The quality of the *ori* whether good or bad determines the lot of each individual on earth. A good choice of *ori* translates to a successful and prosperous life while a bad *ori* spells a gloomy and turbulent life for its owner. The narrative does not terminate here but goes further to say that one's success or happy life in this world is not entirely based on choosing a good *ori* (head) but by imbibing good and humane character as that of the *Omoluwabi*. This is a kind of grand narrative providing myths and mystical explanation or reason why someone's life is pleasant and the other's life is full of unpleasant situations and summing it up on the undebatable need to imbibe virtues elaborated in the *Omoluwabi* moral code. *Olodu Ejiogbe* in this short stanza admonishes gentleness and kindly behavior for a happy, fruitful and satisfying life:

*Iwa pele ni ng o maa hu,*

*Ki ng ma baa f'ogbon ologbon sogbon*

*Iwa pele ni ng o maa hu,*

*Ki ng ma baa f'owo olowo s'owo*

*Iwa pele ni ng o maa hu,*

*Ki ng ma ba file onile se ile*

(Translation)

For me,

It's gentleness and kindness

That I may be truly rich

It's gentleness and kindness

That I may be truly wise

It's gentleness and kindness

That I may have houses and all good things of life

Nothing else, but gentleness and kindness.<sup>3</sup>

The above emphasise the need for standard in morality and point to the fact that the individual according to *Omoluwabi* concept is left with no option than to make good character his watch word in order to live a worthy life.

### **5.3 *Omoluwabi* as a prescriptive moral concept**

*Omoluwabi* as a prescriptive moral concept tends to prescribe the right ways of doing things. It prescribes norms and mores that should be imbibed by the people in order to channel the right course in the society. Not only does the *Omoluwabi* concept prescribes what is right and pronounces what actions and in-actions that are wrong, also, it seeks to prescribe various forms of reward to persons who adhere to the 'right' and punishments to persons who deviate from the 'right' course.

As a concept that assigns value judgment to actions, *Omoluwabi* concept attempts to categorically state that some actions because of their 'rightness' ought to be done while some because of their 'badness' ought not to be done. Howbeit, the rightness of an action for the Yoruba does not inhere in the end result but in the intention or motive of perpetrating such action. Thus, a night marauder who while prowling in order to steal suddenly notices a fire outbreak and informs the people of the compound where he intends to steal; thereby saving their lives cannot be said to be justified of his intention to steal because he saved the lives of the people in the compound. The act of robbery is always wrong and hence cannot be justified even if something as noble as saving lives while on the mission to rob is eventually attributed to the robber. The point is that if the robber has another opportunity to steal he will still do so. The Yoruba will thus attribute the scenario to a God – ordained deliverance and not a deliberate intention to do good on the part of the robber. The Yoruba will say '*Olorun lo kan fi se sababi won*', God just used him to save them'. 'In this expression, "*sababi*", there is a trace of Arabic language that has found its way and entrenched itself into Yoruba language due to cross-cultural

influence. Other of such words may include “*alubarika*” – prosperity, “*alubosa*”- onion, “*abere*”- needle, “*anfani*”- usefulness, “*talaka*”- poor and many more.

Also, the action of a kind-hearted child who has a good intention of helping, for example, an aged woman to procure some items from the mart but was waylaid and robbed of the money given him by the old woman cannot be said to be bad because of his intention which is to help a helpless and aged person.

From the instances cited above, what accounts as good and right or bad and wrong swing between two major ethical theories namely: teleological theories and deontological theories: Teleological theory states that the basic or ultimate standard of what is morally right, wrong and obligatory is the non-moral value that is brought into being. Teleological theory also stresses the goal or end result of an action as the ultimate in deciding what actions are good or bad. For an action to be adjudged to be good the final appeal directly or indirectly must be to the comparative amount of good produced or the comparative balance of good over evil produced.<sup>4</sup>

The utilitarian ethical concept is an example of teleological theory. This theory propounded by John Stuart Mill states that the rightness of an action is identical with the happiness it produced as its consequences. Therefore, actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness and wrong as they tend to produce the reverse or opposite of happiness. Happiness according to this theory refers to the intended pleasure and the absence of pain while unhappiness is pain or privation of pleasure. Thus, any action that causes pain or that produces a comparative balance of pain over pleasure is bad.<sup>5</sup> The concept does not take into consideration the motive or intention of the moral agent so long as the act yield positive result, or when the end justifies the means, even if the means is not so desirable.

Mill defines happiness as pleasure and the absence of pain, and promotes the general principle referred to as ‘principle of utility’ which states that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. Some opponents of utilitarianism charge that the pursuit of pleasure is an unworthy ideal (“a doctrine worthy of swine”). Mill defends his principle by

distinguishing higher and lower pleasures. He explains that one pleasure is higher than another and that people who have experienced both usually prefer the former. In fact, most human beings prefer the higher pleasures that tasks their higher faculties, for example, listening to a good music or solving a jigsaw puzzle over the lower pleasures like debauchery, gluttony and drunkenness of the lower faculties which they share with swine. According to Mill, “few human creatures would consent to be changed into any of the lower animals, for a promise of the fullest allowance of a beast’s pleasures....”<sup>6</sup>

Utilitarians have also come to argue that many of our actions do cause pleasure and pain not only to ourselves, but also to other human beings, and sometimes perhaps to animals as well. They state that the effects of our actions, in this respect, are often not confined to those which are comparative direct and immediate, but that their indirect and remote effects are sometimes equally important. However, in order to arrive at the total quantities of pleasure or pain caused by an action, utilitarians opine that we should have taken into account absolutely all the beings, capable of feeling pleasure or pain, who were at any time affected by it. Not only ourselves, therefore, and our fellow-men, but also any of the lower animals, to which the action might cause pleasure or pain, however indirectly. We also include any other being in the Universe, if there should be any, who might be affected in the same way. It may be that God and some disembodied spirits may be pleased or pained by our actions. If this is so, then, in order to arrive at the total quantities of pleasure or pain which an action causes, we should have to take into account, not only the pleasures or pains which it may cause to men and animals upon this earth, but also those which it may cause to God or to disembodied spirits. This is not unlike the account in the Holy Bible of God being angry with the inhabitants of the earth in Noah’s time because of their sins which caused God to be grieved (or pained) in His heart.<sup>7</sup>

A Sunday-School song stated below may drive home this point that actions taken by men may cause pleasure or pain to God.

*Nigba ti ese omo araye po*

*Inu Olorun baje si won pupo*

*O si ro ojo pa won*



*Sugbon nitori Noah je Omoluwabi*

*Nitori naa ni ko se ba won ku*

When the sins of the inhabitants of the earth became so great

God was grieved in His heart

He then sent a deluge to destroy them

But Noah was an *Omoluwabi* (a righteous person)

That was why he was spared from the destruction

(Translation is mine)

Deontological ethical theory on the other hand, asserts that there are other considerations that may make an action or rule right or obligatory besides the goodness or badness of its consequences. An example is Kant's duty ethics which stresses the motive or intention behind an action. Thus, what determines whether an action is good or bad is the intent with which it is taken.<sup>8</sup> An action is right according to this theory if it is done with good intention even if the consequences turn out to be bad.

Traditionally, in moral philosophy, a moral action is taken to be one that is based on principles devoid of self-centredness,<sup>9</sup> and R. M. Hare has described as non-moral any action that is motivated by "self-interest"<sup>10</sup> where the intent of the heart of the perpetrator is egoistic, that is, the desire to always want to satisfy self (self-interest) even at the expense of others. The same way we think of some politicians who promulgate policies that are only beneficial to themselves and their immediate caucus without any regard for the masses whose votes got them to the esteemed and advantageous positions.

Deontological theorists have come to argue that pleasure itself is not the sole good<sup>11</sup> in determining a good action and that we cannot be satisfied with the principle of utility as our sole basic standard of right and wrong in morality.<sup>12</sup> This is because the morality of right and wrong does not count the satisfaction of desire as the overriding value. Rather the integrity of persons, as agents should have priority over the attainment of the goals.<sup>13</sup> Acting on principles is to act from a detached position, a position not influenced by personal feelings and attitudes. Kant's theory states that moral principles are absolute

commands of reason that permit no exceptions and these principles are related to neither pleasure nor practical benefits.<sup>14</sup>

Kant believes that ordinary moral consciousness, or conscience reveals to every man that moral precepts are universal and necessary and that they are valid for all rational beings. Universal obligation, according to Kant cannot be discovered by studying such empirical data as human desires or inclinations, for these vary from one person to another. The universal basis of morality in man must lie in his rational nature, since this alone, is the same in everyone. No so-called moral law is valid if it is not rational, that is to say, if it cannot be applied to all rational beings without contradiction. Or, putting it another way, a moral principle must be such that a man can will that all men, including himself, should act upon it. Kant uses the test of consistency as the core of the fundamental moral law, which he calls the categorical imperative: those actions are right which conform to principles one can consistently will to be principles for all men, and those actions are wrong which are based upon maxims that a rational creature could not will that men should follow.

Through the categorical imperative we are enabled to distinguish right from wrong actions. However, Kant tells us that not only does categorical imperative helps to distinguish right from wrong actions but that it is also the unconditional directive for behavior. It is binding upon everyone because every rational person acknowledges his obligation to follow reason. The categorical imperative is, in fact, according to Kant, the only basic moral law that is not affected by the fact that it is probably not employed or made use of in actual conduct. He explains that moral laws holds whether or not men actually follow it.<sup>15</sup> Its validity is not dependent on whether men follow it but simply because it is the categorical imperative, the rational or reasonable way to go.

#### **5.4 *Omoluwabi* as a Universal Moral Concept**

The *Omoluwabi* concept completely aligns with Kant's duty ethics which states that you should do your moral duty unconditionally and categorically simply because it is your moral duty. Kant avers that moral principles should hold without exception. For example, if it is wrong to rob and dispossess innocent people of their possessions, then it will be

wrong for anyone, at any time to do so. If it will be wrong also to tell a lie or be untruthful, then it will always be wrong for everyone at everytime to tell a lie or be untruthful. The *olodu ejiogbe* portrays truth as a positive directive for living:

*S'otito, s'ododo*

*Enito s'otito*

*Ni 'Malee gbe.*

Meaning,      Speak the truth,  
  
                    Be truthful always  
  
                    For the gods or divinities  
  
                    Favour only those who  
  
                    Speak the truth

The ifa lines above are not without an injunction and warning that people should desist from being untruthful because untruthfulness makes a man to run out of favour of the divinities and even renders spiritual power ineffective and impotent. This is an enormous repercussion for telling lies and dealing fraudulently as all of the Yoruba traditional life was majorly dependent on the disposition and benevolence of the divinities. *Irete Meji* reveals that:

*Bi o l'opo oogun*

*Bi o leke*

*Ko nii je.*

Meaning,      If you have spiritual power  
  
                    But you are untruthful in its application  
  
                    The power ceases to be a power  
  
                    And thus renders you impotent. <sup>16</sup>

According to Kant, because a moral rule is something that holds without exception- that is, holds universally, one should therefore act only on principles that can hold universally.

Kant advocates universality based on morally acceptable principles as supported by reason. For example, this principle ‘to obtain the favour of the interviewers, it is acceptable to tell lies’ cannot be held universally since it would be irrational for anyone to want it to hold or apply universally. Thus, if it is irrational for a principle to be held universally because it is irrational and morally improper, then the action should not be carried out by anyone. However, if the principles are such that are morally and rationally acceptable then everyone ought to hold them, put them to action and also propagate them. These morally and rationally acceptable principles are standards of behaviours with which human conduct should conform. They are guides of human conduct, indicating certain things or certain ways of behaviour which should be avoided and other things or ways which should be adopted. <sup>17</sup>

Thus for Kant, the supreme prescription of morality which he calls the supreme categorical imperative is to act always in such a way that one could rationally will the principle on which one acts to be a universal law. Kant states that categorical imperatives are different from hypothetical imperative which states that one ought to do something if such and such an end is desired <sup>18</sup> This is taking a stand against teleological theory or what can be termed as situational ethics that proves an action to be justified if the end result is desirable regardless and not minding the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of the action or the motive of the perpetrator. A moral imperative then to Kant commands obedience for the sake of no other end but its own rightness.

*Omoluwabi* concept also asserts that moral laws should be based on principles that can be held universally. Credence is lent to this by the fact that attainment to the *Omoluwabi* standard is not based on material acquisition, educational background, social status or physical built but on *iwa rere* (good character) which is the habitual exhibition of virtues like honesty, kindness, truthfulness, chastity and others even if there seems to be no immediate reward for such. The only reward may just be a good conscience that the action perpetrated is such that can be a universal way of behaving. In Yoruba moral sphere, actions which are seen as morally good and commendable are unchanging, and applies to everyone universally. The ways and manners of living that will warrant a free born to be regarded as *Omoluwabi*, are also such as are required for a slave to be referred

to as *Omoluwabi*. Yoruba will aver that *'ibi ko ju ibi, bi a se bi eru ni a se bi omo'*, meaning that the pains of giving birth (labour) to a free born is the same as that of the slave. The child of socialite who steals is a thief, and also the child of the poor who also steals is also a thief. The Yoruba will say *"nkan ti ko dara ko loruko meji, a fii 'ko dara"* meaning that what is wrong does not have two names but one which is 'wrong'.

For Kant, moral principles should be such that can hold universally and not because of the effects or consequences. He believes that the consequences of one's action cannot be the determinant of the rightness or badness of the action since the outcome of one's action are not totally in one's control. What is within our control as moral agents is the intention with which we acted. Kant goes on to assert that to violate the supreme principle of morality is to be irrational. In essence, Kant believes strongly in universality of moral ethical values and proposes that overarching principles as categorical imperative should be adhered to. *Omoluwabi* concept is very much akin to Kant's duty ethics which argues that one should do one's moral duty because it is one's moral duty as both seek to debunk the claims of situation ethics that base the rightness or wrongness of an action on its end result. Kant's duty ethics and *Omoluwabi* concept pointedly bring to the fore that the motive and intention of one's action should be the premise on which the value judgment is situated and not on the consequences of the action.

A point of divergence however from Kant is his idea that universality of morally acceptable principles is premised on rationality or derived from reason alone. According to Oyeshile there are many origins apart from rationality that may account for morality. Some of these are religion, prudence, societal custom and habit, and need for peaceful co-existence in the society. However, further to the observation made in the second chapter of this work, the universality (that is, the general acceptance and adherence to) of moral principles premised on or derived from religious background holds more strongly since it concerns the Divinity, whose punishment for deviating may be perpetual.

### **5.5 *Omoluwabi* as an 'Unconditional' Moral Concept**

*Omoluwabi* concept is also an unconditional moral concept. This infers in the moral sense that the criteria for measuring or determining what is good or bad, desirable or

undesirable is absolute or unconditional. In essence what constitutes morality is not subject to an individual's whims, mood swings or caprices because moral virtues that constitute the core of *Omoluwabi* character are unchanging. Moral values are standards set to regulate man's behavior in the society.<sup>19</sup> There is a need for such standards to be unconditional in nature because experience has shown that every man/woman is egocentric and always want to satisfy his own interest above that of others. To curtail the egocentric nature which Thomas Hobbes describes as "a state of anarchy, a ceaseless war of all against all .... in such a state, there was no progress, no development, no agriculture, no navigation, no industry, no knowledge .... no account of time, no arts, no letter, no society and individual life is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'" moral standards must be absolute. If moral standards are such that are not absolute and can be twisted or bent to individual's likes or dislikes, how anarchical the society will be.

Moral standards which are the yardsticks to describe what are virtuous, just, good, right and proper are figuratively like the bank of river to curtail the excesses of the river. This is to avoid overflow and the damage it may do to the environment and the danger it may also pose to human lives. To the Yoruba, the society can be likened to a wooded forest where laws have been made that no one should arbitrarily fell trees until a certain period. This was to allow the land to fallow and for young saplings to grow to maturity whereby increasing the wealth and enhancing the economic wellbeing of the people overtime. Now, if individuals in the society refuse to abide by this law and demand why the law should be absolute and thereupon flouted this law by cutting down trees indiscriminately and also cultivate the land at will. Then, the forest will be exposed to soil erosion and become depleted of its nutrients. The consequence of this is that the soil will not yield good harvest which can cause famine in the land. This is an ill wind that blows nobody any good in that everyone in that society will have to suffer for the action of the deviants. To save the entire society from this kind of catastrophic situation, moral values according to *Omoluwabi* concept should be unconditional and absolute in nature.

The story of *Oro Hunuhunu*, *Orunmila's* friend who afflicted *Orunmila's* household with diverse maladies in *Orunmila's* absence may serve as a reason why moral values must be absolute at all times and under any condition and not mood dependent. The name '*oro*'

literally means ‘fairy’ and it is used to refer to the lesser supernatural forces or spirits who are believed to dwell in rivers, trees, rocks, caves, hills and mountains. Since some of these lesser supernatural forces are not physically well-formed (for example, some of them are believed to have one eye, one leg, two heads etc), they do not like being ridiculed because of their physical malformation, and any attempt to ridicule them usually leads to violence. In this story, *Oro*, a good friend of *Orunmila* and his family became annoyed when he was ridiculed and laughed at because of his funny and strange ways, although it would appear that he provoked the inhabitants of *Orunmila*’s house into laughter. However, when *Oro* noticed that the people of *Orunmila*’s house were completely absorbed in the laughter and amusement, he dropped some poisonous medicine on the floor and the result was instant trouble for all of them. Some people were afflicted with stomach aches, and some cold while others were suffering from epilepsy and mental disorder. The following poetic verses illustrate the crust of the story:

*Bi awon ara ile Orunmila ti rii (Oro hunuhunu)*

*Won bere sii rin erin*

*Won ndokoko*

*Won si nro luraa won.*

*Nigba ti Oro rii pe*

*Erin naa wo won lara tan,*

*Titu to tu apo*

*Ado buruku lo mu jade*

*Lo ba da oogun sile*

*O si ba tie lo*

*Ko i tii rin jina*

*Ti gbogbo ile Orunmila fi daru*

*Elomiran nku waapa*

*Elomiran nsinwin*

*Elomiran nse alako aaganna*

*Inu nrun elomiran*

*Ori nfo elomiran*

*Otutu o je ki elomiran o gbadun*

*Iku waa fi ile Orunmila se ode*

*Arun fi ilee re se odede.*

(Translation)

As soon as the inmates of the house of Orunmila saw him (Oro hunuhunu)

They started to laugh

And they were crowing like a cock

They were falling on each other in amusement

When Oro noticed that

They were well absorbed in the laughter

He opened his bag,

And brought out his evil medicine gourd,

He sprinkled the ground with medicine,

And went his way.



He had not travelled very far  
When Orunmila's home was thrown into confusion.  
Some people were afflicted by epilepsy,  
While some suffered from neurotic complaints,  
And some were behaving like mad men.  
Some people had stomach-aches  
And some had headaches.  
Some of the inmates suffered from severe cold.  
Death pitched its camp outside Orunmila's house,  
While disease pitched its own camp inside his home.

*Orunmila* upon his return was however able to plead with his friend *Oro Hunuhunu* who accepted his apology and gave *Orunmila* some sand from the ground. He instructed *Orunmila* to sprinkle the sand on his people. *Orunmila* did as he was ordered and his people became well again. <sup>20</sup>

Yoruba moral codes are absolute in nature and one of the moral teachings is that one should not ridicule others especially physically challenged or unfortunate people under any circumstance even if they present an awkward and laughable sight. This is to avoid embarrassment to the physically challenged and the ill-feeling this may cause between the two parties which will automatically engender a turbulent society. Children are taught not to stare at those who are badly formed and not to call them names like hunch-back, lame, blind, deaf and dumb, that is, *kii a ma fi eebu ara bu eniyan*. A Yoruba adage says, "*a kii ti oju elese mesan kaa*" – don't count the toes of a nine-toed man in his presence.

## 5.6 *Omoluwabi* as a Totalitarian Moral Concept

*Omoluwabi* has also been seen as a totalitarian moral concept whereby the community tends to control every aspect of public and private life of the people all in the bid to ensure that moral standards at no time are compromised. Totalitarian moral concept in this wise supports communitarianism, which is derived from the community and it refers to any philosophical standpoint that defines a person in terms of social bonds and cultural traditions rather than through individual traces. It is argued that communal relationships form the fabrics of all human societies and so it is only proper for people to subsume their individual rights in the central community. As a member of a community, each person belongs to a network of family and social relationships and he/she is defined by this membership. Also, each person seeks personal fulfilment through participation in the evolving social structure of this community. Communitarians further have argued that not only is the communitarian conception of the person a more accurate description of human life but that it is the cultural ideal informing our policies and institutions, strengthening community bonds and reinforcing the character of its members. Some communitarians are also of the view that community is the most natural and highest form of life for human beings.<sup>21</sup> They assert that community is a basic human need and frustration of this need leads to alienation, addictions, crimes, ineffective families and consequently a depraved society.

Among the Yoruba, the socio-cultural concept of *Omoluwabi* is held in high esteem to the extent that any act done by an individual that is considered unethical is frowned at, and such people are regarded as “*omo lasan, ekeji aja*”. That is, someone who is as worthless as a dog.”<sup>22</sup> *Iwa* (character) determines the personhood of a person to the Yoruba. To analyse this to the extreme, people with good character are ‘*eniyan*’ (human being) while people with bad character are ‘*eranko*’- animals or brutes. They will say, *omo naa ma se eniyan o*, this depicts that they are impressed with the character traits exhibited by that individual and thus pronounce him an ‘*eniyan*’- a human being whilst, on the other hand, they will say ‘*eranko lasan lasan ni omo yen*’ to an recalcitrant person to show the worthlessness of that individual because of lack of good character. The Yoruba likens people with untoward behavior to these animals:

“*Ofon, a je loju onile*”. *Ofon* that steals right in the presence of the owner. *Ofon* is a small specie of rat that is so perfect and fast at stealing.

“*Ijakumo kii rin losan, eni a biire kii rin loru*”. The jackal does not walk in daylight, a well-bred person does not go on night marauding.

“*O buru ju ehanna lo*”. He is wicked than the hyena.

“*Ako aja, a bi irin are lese*”. The promiscuous dog.

“*O mu emu ju itun lo*”. He is a habitual drunkard like the *itun*. *Itun* is an insect that lives in the palm tree and always have access to palm wine.

“*Oro inu re ju ti ojo lo*” The concentration of poison in him is greater than that of a snake.

However, the Yoruba may also refer to a gentle person as ‘*oniwa tutu bii adaba*’ – as gentle, easy-going as a dove. Jesus Christ also enjoined His disciples to be harmless and innocent as doves.<sup>23</sup>

It is so important to the Yoruba that they bring their children up not only to recognize and admire the principles of being an *Omoluwabi*, but to also strive to be one.<sup>24</sup> Miscreants and deviants are labelled as black sheep and no one will want to have dealings with them since it is believed that anyone who keeps company with a thief, a liar, a cheat or a promiscuous person must also have such debased character traits. Yoruba wisely say, “*egbe eye ni eye nwo to*”- birds of the same feather flock together, and “*fi ore re han mi, maa so iru eniyan ti o je*”- show me your friend and I will tell you who you are. Parents will sternly warn their children to part ways with miscreants so that they will not be badly influenced and also as not to share in the nemesis or repercussion of the miscreants’ deeds when the time of retribution comes. A child who although did not partake in armed robbery but was accidentally present when the robbers were sharing the booty and were rounded up by the police had inadvertently landed himself and his parents in huge trouble.

Parents will even dissuade their children from being friends with those who play truancy at schools or places of trade. They will say that “*iya nbo fun omo ti ko gbon, ekun nbe fun omo to nsa kiri*” meaning that suffering awaits a foolish child, tears and anguish await a truant. The Yoruba believe in punishment and reward system and that no evil-doer will ever go scot-free. They allude to the fact that sooner or later, perpetrators of evil will surely reap the fruits of their misdeeds by saying that - “*ohun ti a ba gbin ni a maa ka*” – whatever one sows, one shall surely reap. Even when it seems that evil is triumphing over good, and evil-doers are having a field day, the Yoruba still on their firm belief in punishment and reward system will conclude that “*bi oba aye ko mu o, oba orun yoo mu o*”, that is, if the earthly king is not capable of bringing you (evil-doers) to book, you cannot escape the punishment of the heavenly King. This is buttressed by an oracle that was cast for a thief who went to steal in the night and who said that the king of the earth could not see him. The response however is, ‘but if the king of the earth does not see you, do you not know that the eyes of the King of Heaven are upon you?’<sup>25</sup>

### **5.7 Taboos in Yoruba Thought System**

From the above, we have been able to establish the fact that *Omoluwabi* as a cultural and moral concept is prescriptive, universal, all-encompassing and totalitarian in nature for it seeks compliancy of all with the *Omoluwabi* moral codes in order to maintain a peaceful, orderly and tranquil society (*aye ti o gun rege*). *Omoluwabi* concept can thus be regarded as a grand narrative by its attributes raised above. Apart from these attributes, the Yoruba have also highlighted taboos (do not do or else...) that people who are deemed to be *Omoluwabi* must not do even when the reasons for not doing such things are not explicitly made known or when the reason why such an act should not be perpetrated seems ambiguous. According to Odejobi, taboos and superstitions were introduced to regulate the moral order of the society. They took their origin from the fact that people discerned that there were certain things which were morally approved or disapproved by the deity.<sup>26</sup> These are not contained in any written law but are preserved in the tradition. The following are some of the taboos in Yoruba land:

- i. One must not play *ayo* game in the morning to avoid being blind.
- ii. Dreams should not be relayed in the afternoon.

- iii. A pregnant woman must not eat in a soup cooking pot; so that her child's buttocks will not be black.
- iv. A woman should not dip her hand into the pocket of her husband, so that her children will not be stealing around.
- v. Women must not enter the *Oro* grove to avoid being incarcerated by *Oro*.
- vi. We must not throw salt into fire so that one's body may not become speckled.
- vii. A child must not look at the elder by the eye.<sup>27</sup>
- viii. A child must not talk at the same time when the elders are talking.
- ix. One must not use the left hand to give or receive things especially from an elderly person.
- x. People should not whistle at night because whistling invites the presence of evil spirits.
- xi. Suicide is an abomination. A dangling body must not be lowered down from the noose until appropriate sacrifices are made.

The idea of taboos and grave repercussion for flouting them also remain a major reason why we may refer to the *Omoluwabi* concept as a grand narrative. The term grand or meta narrative had been delved into in Chapter four, but briefly we will want to remind ourselves that grand – narratives have been described as knowledge in the form of story-telling and that in the olden days myths, superstitions, legends formed the basis of most of knowledge claims. The grand-narrative not only explained but legitimated knowledge and it was a taboo or practically unheard of for such knowledge to be queried. Grand narratives also strive to make sense of history, by giving an objective, general and universal explanation of different happenings in history and connecting them in such a way to make a sensible whole. So, these taboos create a form of dread and mortal fear in the minds of people and since the alleged repercussion for flouting is usually very fearsome, no one is ready to query or go contrary but simply conforms.

*Omoluwabi* concept whose philosophy is framed in terms of the common good, social practices and traditions, character, solidarity and social responsibility is however not without its critique especially from proponents of postmodernism. Postmodernists are of the opinion that human beings should be free and moral sense should be subjective. They

aver that a community centered political philosophy could lead to government intrusion in private affairs and suffocating conformity in social life. Postmodernists also are of the opinion that a philosophy in which the fundamental good resides in the community would legislate features that are unacceptable in a democratic society e.g. authoritarian culture, social hierarchy and male dominance. They believe that this could lead to the submerging of the individual where there is a tendency towards political and social totalitarianism with its reduction of personal responsibility and its evaluation of personal value in terms of service to the collectivity. <sup>28</sup>

### **5.8 The Postmodernist Critique of *Omoluwabi* grand theory**

The concept of *Omoluwabi* to the postmodernists will only create a scene where the individual loses his distinctness and dissolves into the mass of crowd. This is so because *Omoluwabi* advocates conformity to its tenets and when an individual does otherwise, he/she is branded as abominable and sanctioned. Michel Foucault in his book, *Discipline and Punish* rejects the disciplinary society where officials have the privilege of surveillance over the people and so curtail their freedom. Foucault attempts to chart the power relations by which societies exclude, lock up, look down on, and show disdain to the insane, the prisoners and the homosexual - those persons society defines as “other” because their behavioural patterns do not conform to the convention. These people are not to be excluded from the society by either being locked up in asylum or prison, and in Foucault’s thinking, society should be able to tolerate the margin of differences exhibited by these people. Jean-Francois Lyotard on his own part asserts that our moral leaning should be one that helps to refine our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate those who overtime were termed as the ‘other’. It is a call to look on the ‘other’ with benevolence and tolerance and see the good inherent in them. Everyone should be given opportunity to live and freely express himself since two individuals are never the same. This he opines will give greater opportunities for a diversity of voices and opinions to be heard which will automatically enhance the society. Lyotard urges that “let us wage war on totality..... let us activate the differences”, that is, that an end should be put to concepts that advocate totality, universalism, objectivity, absolutism like *Omoluwabi* while subjectivity, relativity and individuality should be activated.

Richard Rorty also debunks traditional claims of objectively knowing the truth. Rorty is of the view that objectivity is but a fiction and the idea of 'truth' is a myth, because to him, there is no universal method of knowing when one has reached the truth or when one is close to it.<sup>29</sup> We live in a relativistic world<sup>30</sup> and according to Rorty, every culture has its own standards of what counts as evidences, reasonableness, knowledge and truth. This ultimately means that there is no universal method of knowing what is true and no one can claim whether he or she has reached the truth except in the sense of truth as it is held in one's own culture. The import of this is that what accounts as truth cannot be universal, because what is held as 'truth' in one clime may not hold as 'truth' in another clime. This concept of truth seems to imply that different and perhaps conflicting beliefs could equally be true as long as they are fully justified relative to alternative standards of rationality.

Rorty further alludes to the fact that truth can never be found using universal principles since according to him, truth is a subjective concept. Hence, we should not be insistent on dissipating our efforts at striving to achieve this. He says that truth in the subjective sense which is achievable should be put into productive use by helping to extend people's horizons and possibilities. He asserts that what matters is our loyalty to other human beings by enabling them to develop their innate potentials and not the hope of getting things right by adopting a set of rules. We are not to create robots out of men or put them in straitjackets of history and culture.

Rorty insists that it is wrong to assume that our ideas can mirror reality as it 'really is'. We approach reality from different conceptual perspectives, but we cannot 'step outside' our perspectives to see if they do indeed mirror reality as it really is. To step outside our ideas is impossible. He argues that there is no universal human nature, and instead the 'self' is a 'decentred contingency'. The self is decentred because it has no central defining essence that transcends its social and historical location in a particular society. As there is no such transcendental human nature, the self is not distinct from its changeable identity. This means that the self is contingent upon the prevailing social norms and customs that constitute its identity. In other words, there are as many 'human

nature' as there are different human societies. What is to be human is defined and realised in different ways in different places at different times.

Different cultures have different ethics, and there is no universal ethical system by which we can judge different culture neutrally (without being bias). Rorty says that what it is to be human, and what sense of (right and wrong) is, depend on one's location within a particular society. There are different societies which have different perspectives on what is normal and good; and we cannot go outside these perspectives to see a single fixed human nature. Therefore, the way we go on in one society will be different from how others go on in their different societies. But to insist on universal human nature (as proposed by *Omoluwabi*) will be to assume the status of an authoritarian society that imposes an identity alien to its subjects on them, thereby humiliating its population.<sup>31</sup>

It is construed to a very large extent that many of the taboos and imposed cultural practices which may be supposed to make of an individual an *Omoluwabi* are in actual sense enacted to promote patriarchy –dominancy of men in social or cultural systems. Furthermore, it is observed that many of the taboos in the Yoruba moral sphere are actually to place women and children as second class citizens in the society. They are portrayed as people that should be seen but not heard, whose voices should not be heard when important decisions are being taken even when such issues concern them.

Utopian philosophers envision societies in which all members are social equals and one part is not substandard or subservient to the other, but where every part of the whole enjoy mutual respect and sense of worthiness. A society where education is reformed to promote the development of “benevolent” or “humanistic” feelings of mutual care and concern, and where property is redistributed to the benefit of all members of society. Anna Doyle Wheeler, a utilitarian philosopher refutes arguments for male superiority and encourages women to work together to create an organization to obtain the removal of the disabilities of women and the introduction of a national system of equal education for the infants of both sexes. Women to her should not be seen to have lower fundamental worth than men. She collaborated with William Thompson on a famous essay titled “The appeal of one half of the human race, women, against the pretensions of the other half, men, to restrain them in politics, and thence in civil and domestic slavery”. They argue that



denying rights to women is in fact contrary to the interests of the whole of society and that such is unjust.

Harriet Taylor also thinks that the non-physiological differences between men and women are socially constructed to the detriment of women and of society in general. She argues that we cannot make arbitrary distinctions between groups of people without giving good reasons for doing so, and that no good reason could be given for giving special privileges to men and denying women of such privilege, for example, the privilege to vote and be voted for. To her, a reason must be given why anything should be permitted to one person and interdicted to another. Taylor argues that the differential in freedom between men and women is so drastic, including not only political liberty but personal freedom as well. She believes that the division of mankind into two castes, one born to rule over the other is in all cases an unqualified mischief, a source of perversion and demoralization, both to the favoured class and to those at whose expense they are favoured. She points out that this form of partiality produces none of the good which it is the custom to ascribe to it, but that it forms a barrier to any really vital improvement, either in the character or in the social condition of the human race.

Kate Millet, a feminist gives a systematic analysis of how women are oppressed by patriarch institutions. She queries why women should not occupy top ranks in industry, the military, technology, academia, science, politics and finance. Millet directs attention not to personal relationships but rather, to the structure of society. She looks at the socialization process and observes that the characteristics systematically encouraged in women- passivity, ignorance, docility “virtue” were those that made them convenient subordinates. Philosopher and novelist Simone de Beauvoir while lending her voice for emancipation of women rights, focuses less on the public world of laws, rights and educational opportunities and more on the cultural mechanism of oppression which left women in the role of Other to man’s Self. De Beauvoir undertakes a sweeping analysis of all the ideas and forces that conspired to keep women in subordinate position relative to men. She opines that culture shapes individuals and that it is very hard to overcome cultural conditioning but that we can always transcend our own immanence, create ourselves anew and overcome the straitjackets of history and culture.<sup>32</sup>

De Beauvoir defines women as the 'second sex' because women are defined in relationship to men. Aristotle says that women are "female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities". She however asserts that women are as capable of choice as men, and thus can choose to elevate themselves by moving beyond the immanence to which they were previously resigned and reaching transcendence, a position in which one takes responsibility for oneself and the world, where one chooses freedom. She argues that 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman'<sup>33</sup> and that this category of womanhood is imposed by civilization (in the case of *Omoluwabi*, this categorization is imposed by tradition). With this famous phrase, Beauvoir first articulated what has come to be known as the sex-gender distinction, that is, the distinction between biological sex and the social and historical construction of gender and its attendant stereotypes.<sup>34</sup> The fundamental source of women's oppression is its historical and social construction as the quintessential Other.<sup>35</sup> Men has set up women as Other since men have the political and social power.

In De Beauvoir's book, "The second sex"<sup>36</sup> she alludes to the fact that men had made women the "Other" in society by application of a false aura of 'mystery' around them. She argues that men used this as an excuse not to understand women or their problems and not to help them, and that this stereotyping is always done in societies by the higher in the hierarchy to the group lower in hierarchy. She avers that a similar kind of oppression by hierarchy also happens in other categories of identity such as race, class and religion, but she claims that it is nowhere more true than in which men stereotyped women and used it as an excuse to organize society into a patriarchy. Beauvoir notes that women who do not follow the domestic norm are looked down on in society since the norm has always being that women should be docile and forever accommodating. Man represents both "the positive and the neutral" which doesn't need to be explained or defined. Thus humanity is male and man defines woman in relationship to herself but as relative to him, she is not regarded as an autonomous being. Men are seen as the default setting and women are considered a recessive gender. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other.<sup>37</sup>

## 5.9 Conclusion

The allusion above has made the concept of *Omoluwabi* to be viewed as undermining the freedom of the individual and postmodernists like Lyotard had urged that war should be waged on totality and that an end should be put to concepts that advocate totality, universalism, objectivity, absolutism like *Omoluwabi* while subjectivity, relativity and individuality should be activated. The concept of *Omoluwabi* however was the defining characteristic of the Yoruba person. It distinguished a worthy person from a worthless one in Yoruba traditional society because it centres mainly on promoting good character. It charted a map for people in the community to follow in order to live a life of peace, progress and tranquility. *Omoluwabi* does not in essence support subjugation of women, Moremi was a good example of a Yoruba woman who saved her town (Ile-Ife) from marauders and many of the Regents in Yoruba land are female. Although unwritten, *Omoluwabi* systemic codes and values into which children were exposed to early in life made them cultured, socially courteous and economically prosperous. Having lost the *Omoluwabi* traits there has been a clarion call for its retrieval and sustenance. We should however bear in mind that we live in a postmodern world, and values throughout the world have changed. The world has imbibed the postmodern culture which is being continuously dispersed to every clime through the window of the Internet. According to the words of the Newworlders,

Globalization is inexorable and unstoppable, it is homogenous. From it there is no hiding place: in it, no room for local ways of life with which its imperatives are in conflict. To think otherwise is to succumb to sentimentality or nostalgia. It is even more foolish to seek to protect local ways of life from its incursions

we are able to deduce that trying to protect the old or local way of life is only being sentimental or nostalgic. The *Omoluwabi* concept must thus grapple with the critique of the postmodernists who view *Omoluwabi* concept as a form of grand theory. The postmodernists have argued against ‘fixities’, ‘totalitarianism’ ‘universalism’, ‘objectivity’ and other concepts that propose general, summary and statutory

explanations to life issues which they believe will stifle diversity and enforce conformism. Howbeit, from the virtues of *Omoluwabi* illustrated in chapters two and three, one is convinced that it can serve as a mediating agent and panacea for promoting an ideal society.

*Omoluwabi*, a cultural grand theory that seeks to propose and prescribe the right ways of doing things and legislate moral norms and mores in the quest for a morally stable and peaceful society aptly aligns with what constitute the 'good' in many other cultures, (some of which were analyzed in the Chapter one) and clearly reflects and perfectly fits into Aristotle virtue ethics (chapter three). The inference is that the postmodernist critique cannot obliterate or negate *Omoluwabi* since aside its conformity with what count as 'good' in some other cultures and conformity with Aristotle virtue ethics it also seeks to promote a good, peaceful, socio-politically and economically stable society which is the goal of life.

Our burden in the next Chapter which is the last will be to propose a new world order using the the Yoruba concept of *Omoluwabi* as a blue-print.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### TOWARDS A VIABLE MORAL ORDER IN AFRICA

#### 6.1 Introduction

Our mission/objective in this Chapter is to propose a viable moral order in view of the notoriety and precarious situation our world is today. Degenerated morality reveals itself in nearly all aspects of our present life and alarmingly, it seems that very few areas are intact and not affected by this cankerworm. Thus, the clarion call for a new moral order since it is obvious that we cannot carry on like this unless we are heading back to the Hobbean hypothetical state of nature. Thomas Hobbes had painted a very gory and frightful state of nature which was supposed to exist before the institutionalization of the civil society. Life in the state of nature was precarious, solitary, brutish and short and it was a life of survival for the fittest. A moral agent with a sound mind will not under any guise advocate for a return to the state of nature. Being at peace with oneself, one's neighbours, one's environment and one's God is what every right thinking individual strives for. Aristotle calls this '*eudaimonia*' which means a flourishing state of the soul. *Omoluwabi* – which attains the good as analysed in Chapter three is akin to Aristotle virtue ethics has been proposed as a panacea for solving the myriad of ills and problems of our contemporary world.

The question may however be asked that “is Africa at large and Nigeria in particular in the postmodern age or era?” To this question we will take a recourse to Afolayan who states that for

the detractors, there is a certain conceptual absurdity in the idea of postmodernism in a continent that is just grappling with the exigencies of modernity. This implies that Africa cannot be postmodern before being modern. On the other hand, the champions of the necessity of postmodern theorizing in Africa believe that postmodernism offers an avenue to escape out of the *cul de sac* of intellectual nativism that has precluded Africa from the benefits of global open space of ideas. Afolayan concludes by stating that “the strategy has the advantage of giving African



philosophers a leeway- beyond the mere critique of Eurocentrism for confronting the twin problem of African identity and African development.”<sup>1</sup>

In this thesis, we have established the fact that the good is worth pursuing because it is the bedrock upon which a happy society is based. Also, the point has also been established that *iwa* replicates the good in Yoruba society and *Omoluwabi* is the agent through whom or vehicle by which *iwa* is being transmitted. *Omoluwabi* has been established also in this thesis as a grand narrative and that postmodernism, especially from the relativistic perspective which is the point from where postmodernism is being addressed in this work cannot obliterate or whittle down the potency or efficaciousness of *Omoluwabi* as a grand narrative that is desirable. In other words, our submission is that *Omoluwabi* cannot be relativized by the relativism inherent in postmodernism. This submission can help us to engender a stable moral order in Africa.

Chaotic situations in many African countries effected by unemployment, lack of infrastructural development, high level of illiteracy, poor and inaccessible medical facilities, inept leadership, political instability and also crave for emergency wealth, ostentatious lifestyles, material and wealth accumulation have led to the erosion of values, and subsequently, the achievement of a viable moral order has become a daunting task. A new moral order in Africa can however be achieved if both the leader and the led in Africa imbibe the humane attributes of *Omoluwabi* such as honesty, straightforwardness, patience, consideration for others, contentment, hardwork and shun vices like money worship, greed, misguided conformity, cyber crimes, wanton crave for political power and wealth. The virtues embedded in *Omoluwabi* serve as necessary foundation for the development of any society.

Howbeit, morality itself is necessary but not sufficient in engendering a stable society, hence, political, legal, socio-economic and the religious institutions should all be strengthened to effectively function as character-moulders and reward/punishment promulgator so that *Omoluwabi* will have a conducive environment to flourish. For instance, *Omoluwabi* cannot flourish where rule of law is not adhered to and where there are no sanctions for erring members of society. Therefore, the aforementioned institutions

complement morality in achieving a viable order in Africa. The points listed below are also major determinants in achieving a viable moral order in Africa.

## **6.2 Guided Technology Transfer: Effective Tool for Viable Moral Order**

Makinde describes the 20<sup>th</sup> century as an age of automation, electronic wonders, great affluence and yet an age of great insecurity, fear of unemployment in increasingly affluent societies. It is an age of unparalleled human exploitation, electronic surveillance and erosion of human privacy. An age of the armed rather than human race and above all, of fear of the destruction of the human race and civilization through the most horrible products of technology-nuclear weapons. If the 20<sup>th</sup> century has being described in this wise, how frightening has the situation in our present day 21<sup>st</sup> century become! It therefore appears that the advancement of science which led to high technology is now being viewed with mixed feelings.<sup>2</sup>

Technology is defined as the systematic application of collective human rationality to the solution of problems by asserting control over nature and human processes of all kinds<sup>3</sup> and because of its link to modern science which has high prestige and demonstrates practical utility, modern technology is said to enjoy a lofty status in the constellation of contemporary social values.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this every nation feels it is a bounden duty to transfer or import wholesale the technologies of the developed nations into their countries in order to become relevant, acceptable and up to date.

Charles Cooper defines technology transfer as the transfer or exchange from advanced to developing countries of the elements of technical know-how which are normally in very short supply or totally absent in developing economies. Makinde however raises these questions amongst others on the so-called “technology transfer”, one, what effect would technology transfer have on a people’s (that is, the recipients) values, cultures and ways of life? two, can technology be transferred from one cultural setting to another in ways which are more beneficial than destructive? <sup>5</sup>

To these questions, one may say that technology transfer can subtly and yet significantly alter or disrupt the customary and cultural ways of life. It can effect a disorientation and

change in the value system of a people. Some of the times these changes may be in the positive sense but at some other times, are not quite in the positive sense. Although the workability or effectiveness of such technology may not be in doubt, the problem may however be the moral implication usually visible in the aftermath of such practices. For example, in the past cultural setting of the Yoruba race and mostly all societies in Africa, marriage is seen as sacred and different reverent steps were taken by both families, that is, the families of the prospective groom and bride that would culminate into marriage. These carefully-followed codes at that time ensured the stability and sanctity of marriages and spared the societies the worrisome effects of broken-homes. However, with technology transfer, the institution of marriage is de-mystified. Marriages are contracted wantonly and unguardedly via social media, the effects of such union are no secret in our societies. This may be just one example of the dereliction of values occasioned by technology transfer to Africa.

Makinde proffers a solution that what is needed is for the Africans themselves to go beyond mere importation of technology by using their native scientific intelligence as Japan did to acquire particular kinds of technology relevant to their needs and not in conflict with their value systems.<sup>6</sup> Before the advent of modern technology and development, societies used to solve some of their problems in accordance with certain ideas, techniques and values. All societies express their practical skills in various kinds of technologies, from agricultural tools, building plans, transportation, to other human problems, including health problems.<sup>7</sup> Attesting to this, Walter Rodney in his book 'How Europe Underdeveloped Africa' maintains that development in human society is a many-sided process. Every people have shown a capacity for independently increasing their ability to live a more satisfactory life through exploiting the resources of nature. Every continent independently participated in the early epochs of the extension of man's control over his environment-which means that every continent can point to a period of economic development (and if I may add technology development). Rodney further stresses that Africa was a major participant in the processes in which human groups displayed an ever increasing capacity to extract a living from the natural environment.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, technology is not alien to Africa, and the continent might have significantly advanced in technology if the West had not bereft her of human resources through slavery. The Africans were not naked savages when the West swooped on them, they had been able to grow cotton and spin flax to make coverings for themselves. The Yoruba in an adage says, ‘*owu ti iya gbon ni omo nran*’ meaning that it is the flax spurned by the mother that the child will sew. This age-long Yoruba saying exposes the fact that clothing was not a recent introduction to the African race through colonialism. Even when expressing to friends, relatives or colleagues how long a time they have seen one another, the Yoruba in the traditional setting would say, “*e ku ojo gbogboro bii owo aso*” meaning literally that it has been a long time like the length of a cloth that we have seen one another. Africans were equally splendid metal smiths. Extracting iron-ore from the earth and processing it to farm utensils like cutlasses, hoes et ce te ra are not mere chores, but that which required technology to achieve. The *amulu-odu Ogunda-Yeku* cited below clearly shows that the Yoruba knew ‘*irin*’ metallic iron and ‘*oje*’ metallic lead. They also knew that the iron is stronger than the lead and that the strength of the earthen mud can not be equaled with the strength of the lead.

*Tokio, Ija gidi-gidi awo Arandun*

*Akoni nii jogun ohun gbogbo*

*A dia fun irin, a bu f’oje*

*Nwon n ti ikole-orun bow a s’ikole-aye*

*A dia fun irin, a bu f’eboto (ole)*

*Ti nwon n ti ikole-orun bow a s’ikole-aye*

*Nwon ni ki won (awon meteeta) o rubo:*

*Oje gbo ebo o ru die*

*Eboto (ole) gb’eru bee ni ko teru*

*Koko-irin lo rubo ai-ku ara re*

*Ogun a-jo wewe waa ba won loko,*

*Eboto (ole) pare lale-egan*

*Oje lo tie la-lo-kanle*

*Ako irin duro gan-gan-an gan fun won loko:*

*Bi n tii pa ako, bee lo npa abo.*

Tokio the priest of Arandun,

Akoni, also a priest,

Consulted the Ifa oracle on behalf of Metallic Iron and Metallic Lead

On the day they were leaving heaven for earth

The Ifa oracle was consulted on behalf of Metallic Iron and Earthen Mud (the lazy one)

On the day they were leaving heaven for earth

The three were requested to make propitiatory sacrifice

Metallic Lead heeded the advice but only performed the rites by halves

Earthen Mud (the lazy one) listened to the oracle but failed to perform the rites

Only Metallic Iron performed the propitiatory sacrifice in full

On their way to the earth, slave raiders waylaid them

Earthen Mud (the lazy one) fell flat before the raiders and was completely destroyed

Metallic Lead melted itself away

Only Iron withstood the onslaught

And completely vanquished the enemies.

(Translation is mine)

The Edo people of old Benin Empire were renowned for bronze sculpturing. These artifacts were so alluring that they were carted away by the colonialists. The Benin gold are a group of more than a thousand metal plaques and sculptures that decorated the royal palace of the Kingdom of Benin. The collection formed the best known examples of Benin art, created from the thirteenth century onwards by the Edo people. The collection also included other sculptures in brass or bronze and some famous portrait heads and smaller pieces. In 1897 most of the plaques and other objects were taken by the British during a punitive expedition to the area as imperial control was being consolidated in Southern Nigeria. Today, a large number are held by the British Museum.<sup>9</sup> Other notable collections are in Germany and the United States.

The Benin Bronzes led to a greater appreciation in Europe of African culture and art. Initially, it appeared incredible to the discoverers that people “supposedly so primitive and savage” were responsible for such highly developed objects. Some even concluded that Benin knowledge of metallurgy came from the Portuguese traders who were in contact with Benin in the early modern period<sup>10</sup> which is an erroneous assumption considering the Benin Empire was in itself a hub of African civilization before the Portuguese traders visited.<sup>11</sup> Today, it is clear that the bronzes were made in Benin from an indigenous culture. Many of these dramatic sculptures date to the thirteenth century, centuries before contact with Portuguese traders.

By and large, the point being echoed here is that Africans were exposed to technology as dated back as the thirteenth century. If for some reasons the continent now seems to be technologically bankrupt and has to depend on technology transfer, a careful selection should be done so that the technology allowed in the continent space are such that would not displace its moral heritage but that which would promote good character- “*iwa Omoluwabi*”. On 10 March, 2018, a controversial South African dancer was deported from Zambia on the grounds that her performance would “undermine national values”. Zambia’s religious affairs minister stated that the erotic dancer who performs without underwear would not be allowed to perform in the country. In his words, the minister says that “Zambia is a Christian nation where morality and ethics have to be followed.

We don't expect a woman to dance without underwear. If she is ready to come with her panties, fine, we will welcome her".<sup>12</sup>

Thus any 'introduction' or 'transfer' that may undermine the good, the moral and ethical values of a people should be rejected with civility and not by violent or hostile means. Some practices in some African communities in the past like human sacrifice, killing of twins, female genital mutilation, inscribing of tribal marks have become things of the past in these communities because of the 'introduction' of enlightenment that exposed the ills and non-necessity of such acts.

### **6.3 De-entrapping Africa within The double-faced globalized world**

Another point to consider in charting a viable moral order through the application of *Omoluwabi* is according to Ogundowole de-entrapping Africa within the double-faced globalised world. Globalization is the aggressive imposition of a particular eccentric culture, eccentric value system on human civilization and world development process.<sup>13</sup> Globalization supports frailties and flexibility of moral values. It jettisons the fixed and core moral values like chastity, truthfulness, respect for elders and constituted authorities, self-control or restraint, reverence for cultural heritage that preserved sense of morality and propriety in traditional societies. Globalization aids the importation, transfer and diffusion of these frail and mundane values of 'anything goes, in so far as it works' through the Internet.

According to Ogundowole, Africa is not partially but wholly integrated into the double faced globalized world where it plays the slave consistently. The result is that Africa serves as the dumping ground for time expired goods from all over the world ranging from aeroplanes, automobiles, factory machineries, refrigerators, air-conditioners, household equipment to shoes and clothing. Yet, Africa pays for these near-worthless goods with gold, that is, hard earned foreign currency. There is poverty everywhere manifesting in poor socio-economic growth and development. Infrastructural breakdown, compounded with wars, insurgency, increased number of refugees<sup>14</sup> and internally displaced persons, hunger are obvious phenomena in the continent begging for

intervention and permanent solution. Yet several developmental programmes and strategies had been adopted to translate Africa's abundant natural resources into prosperity and deliver the continent from the throes of underdevelopment and/or undevelopment.<sup>15</sup> that yielded no significant result. This is so because the prevalence of poverty in the land can lead to dereliction or abandonment of fundamental moral values like honesty, chastity, self-control and can turn the virtuous to a vicious.

In the moral realm, the socio-cultural aspect of globalization if it continues to be as it were the prolongation and extension of the United States of America (USA) mass culture value will undermine the achievements of the world's specific human civilizations, under the pretext that 'nobody needs them, anyway. But we have come to realize how important and efficacious *Omoluwabi* is in reviving human moral values. Globalization in its neoliberal sense leads to undermining the national civilization identity of millions of people world-wide, formation of a vacuum of values and senses in their consciousness (loss of the sense of existence) and as a result marginalization of specific human culture and civilization.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, globalization can be used as a universal framework and in this wise, the *Omoluwabi* concept can find a niche. The *Omoluwabi* concept is a Yoruba heritage which should not be allowed to wither under the domination and sway of USA cultural globalization. In fact, Africans can key in into the globalization race by promoting or showcasing the golden legacies imbedded in *Omoluwabi* heritage and proposing it as a panacea for a viable world order. This can be made possible since *Omoluwabi* promotes the good which is indispensable to the smooth running of a society. However, its renaissance and re-institutionalization should begin from our threshold, *se ile nii a tii nko eso r'ode*, that is, charity begins at home.

Accentuating the need to design programs for moral rejuvenation in a polity, Dzukogi states that,

at certain turns in the life of each society comes an effort to reorder it, if there is a feeling of dissatisfaction and dysfunctionality with the existing condition, whether social, political, economic or communal. Such efforts, usually launched by modern governments aim at ethical reorientation, social rearmament and moral rejuvenation which the initiators or leaders intend to get the citizens to



inculcate towards the functionality of the community. This also serves to give the community a good image in the eyes of the outsider who may wish to engage in mutual and business transactions with entities in the country.<sup>17</sup>

#### **6.4 Hoisting Rebranding Strategies with a Human Face**

In Nigeria, over the years various programmes had been put in place by the Government which revolve around the *Omoluwabi* principles. Examples are Mamser, WAI, Rebranding et ce tera.

MAMSER, inaugurated on July 25, 1987 was an acronym for Mass Mobilization for Self Reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery. It was an exercise in political orientation in Nigeria undertaken by President Babangida as one of the recommendations of the Political Bureau headed by Dr. Samuel Joseph Coockey. The bureau's task was to consult with thousands of Nigerians and recommend to the Armed Forces Ruling Council, a respectable and methodical transition program. The ruling council also wanted a national orientation to enunciate the abstract ideas in its economic policy and promote value orientation.

The central goal of MAMSER was to cultivate support for the transitional program of the government. It was also an avenue to educate the citizens about the political process, mobilize them to participate in up-coming elections and political debates, and inculcate a dependence towards locally made goods and Nigerian products. Some of Mamser's official policies were as follows:

1. Re-orient Nigerians to shun wastages and vanity
2. Shed all pretenses of affluence in their lifestyle
3. Propagate the need to eschew all vices in public life, including corruption, dishonesty, electoral and census malpractices, ethnic and religious bigotry.<sup>18</sup>

WAR AGAINST INDISCIPLINE (WAI) was a Nigerian military government controlled mass mobilization corrective response to social maladjustment within the country. The measure began in March 1984. The measure was programmatic in design and broader in scope than previous measures. It aimed to attack social maladjustment and widespread

corruption. The takeoff of WAI was announced in March, 1984 by Tunde Idiagbon, the Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters<sup>19</sup> and the launching was held at Tafawa Balewa Square, Lagos. The military government in which Idiagbon was a participant had seized power on December 31, 1981 and a key underlying reason given for the coup was unprecedented rampant corruption and indiscipline within the political class. Prior to the coup, newspapers wrote articles alleging corrupt practices during the then administration including fraud in the housing ministry and Nigeria external communication agency. Bribes were given to Central bank officials to obtain foreign loans and government allegedly supported the hoarding of rice.<sup>20</sup>

Government officials and the politicians lived in luxury while the civilian administration began an austerity fiscal policy. Thus support for a coup that will correct the excesses of political class was growing.<sup>21</sup> When the military took over government, the government set up measures to impose order and discipline within the country. One of those measures was War Against Indiscipline - a comprehensive program to correct many social ills that the new military ruling class perceived to afflict the Nigerian polity. The primary goals of WAI were to strengthen national unity, promote economic self-sufficiency and instill cultural, personal and moral discipline so as to control indolence, corruption and criminal practices. The military government showed commitment to the success of the plan, decrees were announced that placed harsh punishment on crimes and socio-cultural vagrancy.

The organizational structure of the program had federal and state level committees. Each state managed its own program and made monthly report about its progress. The Ministry of Information was in charge of the administration at the federal level, within the ministry was a WAI department headed by a director, this department was advised by a central WAI committee. Advertising and the media was constant means of promoting the tenets.

## Phases of WAI

### 1. Orderliness

The first phase was launched on the same day as the program. The phase was about the desire of the government to instill and promote orderliness and respect for fellow

Nigerians within the polity. Instead of chaotic entry to buses at bus stops or jumping lines at airports or in banks, Nigerian were told to queue and wait their turn. At some locations, uniformed men were on hand to enforce queuing.

But this had vocal critics who felt it was a simple attempt to cure a deeper problem caused by scarcity. Critics opined that controlling queues if the supply of foodstuff and transportation is lower than demand fails to address the need of the people. In addition, disorderliness was defined as a national malaise committing the fallacy of hasty generalization even though most towns and rural areas were not chaotic and disorderly as the urban areas. The scenario of armed men disciplining people who were not ‘orderly’, that is those who disrupted the queue at a public water tap was played out in a domestic fiction book ‘Under the Brown Rusted Roofs’ written by Abimbola Adelokun. However, when the queue was re-set and before it was the turn of one of the book’s character the water ceased. The emphasis should not be ‘making people to be orderly’ but addressing the causes or reasons responsible for people behaving in a disorderly manner. In the scenario referred to above, if water supply was constant and people were certain they could access this indispensable commodity any time they got to the tap then there would had been no queue in the first place. If however there was a queue it would had been orderly if the people were sure they would be able to get water regardless of their position on the queue.

## 2. Work Ethic

In television adverts to promote phase two, contrasting scenarios were created such as an office worker doing her nails while the phone rang and another worker fast asleep during office hours. Both situations were contrasted with a hardworking baggage handler and an efficient traffic control officer.<sup>22</sup> This phase was an attempt to eradicate truancy, lateness, laziness and to improve work ethic and productivity.

## 3. Patriotism and nationalism

Phase III was programmed to promote genuine national unity. Nigerians were asked to forgo statism and tribal affiliations and to embrace open-mindedness in making decisions. Cultural and political nationalistic practices that raised cultural consciousness in clothing,

food and everyday purchases was also a major target of phase III. Nigerians were enjoined to appreciate national symbols like the national anthem and the flag. This phase led to the ubiquitous presence of the national flag in public offices and the singing of the national anthem in schools.

Like the program in general, critics attacked the measure because those found wanting in reciting the national anthem were given uncommon punishment such as civil servants being suspended without pay. However public policies that were at variance to the preaching of the Government like federal character and out of state school fees (the practice of students from other states paying higher school fee than indigenes of the state: can this foster nationalism?) were still in effect.

Federal character is enshrined in the constitution to prevent tribal or regional domination of any government or its agency. Nasiru Nash Haruna Esq in his write-up “Federal Character: Effective Economic Tool of Ethnic Domination”<sup>23</sup> however notes that its inappropriate application creates mediocrity, inequality, corruption, lack of transparency and/or competition and above all tribal dominance by the major ethnic groups. Federal character ordinarily protects minorities but under the constitution it is operated to protect the major ethnic groups lack of will of competitiveness and open-mindedness. The leading ethnic groups have exploited this constitutional provision to their benefits in the areas of contract award, infrastructural development and appointment into strategic government institutions. Such actions create a few rich and powerful individuals, increase poverty, and ensure uneven regional development and high incidence of graft among civil servants.

With this policy and so many others being practiced, people were confused and cynical about the intention of the leadership to integrate and foster patriotism and nationalism in the country. This further widened and deepened the gorge between the leadership and the led as a result of non-synchronization of the ideologies of various Government policies and in-ability to lend a human face to their execution and enforcement.

#### 4. Corruption and criminal activities

This phase was a measure to tackle specific criminal activities such as oil bunkering and pipeline tampering, smuggling, fraud, currency counterfeiting and drug peddling.

#### 5. War against filth

This measure was to clean private and public environment. It included an environment sanitation program to clear refuse and illegal structures in public. This also earned many critics as a result of displacement of street hawkers and street vendors such as mechanics. WAI was initiated during a period of economic downturn and people were struggling to earn a living. The displacement derailed the means of income of street vendors. An austere economic policy initiated by the government gave legitimacy to critics who view the administration as poor in understanding the depth of the country's social and economic problems.

In spite of all the policies of the Government, we still could see that cases of corruption continue to plague the country. When the verdict of Transparency International about the worsening corruption situation in Nigeria was announced, the then Minister of Information, Professor Dora Akunyili was at a loss and said she was oblivious of the criteria used by Transparency International to rank the 180 countries out of which Nigeria ranked 130<sup>th</sup>. It may be that the rebranding slogan "Good people and a great nation" is an empty mantra. As a result of the decrepit educational system about 39 million Nigerian graduates are unemployable while more than 75 per cent of the 140 million population live below the globally acceptable poverty threshold. If poverty is harassing the stomachs of a great many of people, perhaps the rebranding should start by abolishing hunger. The Yoruba say that "*ti ebi ba ti kuro ninu ise, ise bu'se*" meaning that when hunger is taken away from poverty, then poverty is eradicated. If people are hungry Dora's message of rebranding may fall on deaf ears, in fact the message may even incur the odium (hatred) of the hungry masses. The Yoruba also state that "*ebi kii wo'nu ki oro miran wo*" - hunger cannot be in the stomach and another matter will also enter the stomach. This adage means that a hungry person cannot concentrate to listen to or consider other matters.

As noted above, identifying, examining, and analyzing the root causes of actions that constitute social menace with a view to procuring lasting solution to them is very germane. The issue of hunger in the land should be squarely addressed as a hungry man is an angry man. It takes strength of character to be hungry and yet refrain from crimes to satiate oneself, but then for how long? Other needs may be a luxury but food is not. The Yoruba regard the throat, the passage through which food descends into the stomach as a path way to heaven, *ona ofun*, *ona orun*, and starvation may lead to death. A musician brings the message home in this piece:

*Jedijedi o m'alakowe o*

*Ona ofun ko mo Sunday*

Pile is non-respecter of anyone, even the educated

The throat does not understand that it is Sunday.

(Translation is mine)

The social menace inflicting the Nation may be well addressed if government policies, decrees, enactments and rebranding strategies wear human faces and seek to address the root causes of problems rather than attempting to treat them on surface level.

### **6.5 Good Leadership and Zero Tolerance for Corruption**

Lack of trust and uncertainty of the future may be some of the reasons why the citizens are reluctant to yield wholly in obedience to Government policies. Trust is part of the key infrastructure of all relationships or human dynamics. It is also a key ingredient needed to develop an operational indigenous model of organization that will drive sustainable development into this country. The issue of trust frames the Nigerian dynamic like no other value. It is an absence or low level of trust that has shaped the brightest and the best among the populace into a hyper-competitive mob whose members use the inevitable fault lines in the organization processes of the country to their consumptive benefit. The insecurity that emanates from this low level of trust breeds cynicism and encourages the

unrelenting acquisition of personal wealth and power, to the detriment of everything else.

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The heinous act of embezzlement and mis-appropriation of public fund may be greatly reduced if government workers are being paid as at when due and pensioners who have served the country in their productive years are not constrained to a miserable life of financial hopelessness with deteriorating health because of non-payment of their gratuity and monthly pension. Some pensioners who had found themselves in this condition had blamed themselves for being 'naïve' and 'not helping themselves' when they were in active service. This however should not be the case. Everyone now wants to justify crimes committed by laying claims on massive unemployment or under-employment in the country. However, without meaning to justify criminalities, it is imperative for government to look into and address the underlying factors that may be responsible for crimes and vices in our society like poverty, hunger, illiteracy, unemployment, under-employment, high cost of living, broken homes. If we fail to pay attention to these but continue to hoist different rebranding strategies, criminalities may continue to fester. Corruption has been identified to be largely responsible for many anomalies witnessed in our community. Korede Bello in an Afrobeat sound recorded this musical tract:

Hungry man is an angry man

An angry man no be criminal

Corruption is an animal

And animal is the criminal<sup>25</sup>

This musical piece depicts that the focus has shifted from the perpetrator of crime and the bulk or blame passed to an 'animal' called corruption. Corruption is thus the hydra headed monster responsible for all forms of moral, economic and socio-political depravity and pervasion. All forms of decadence be it moral, social, economic, political appear under the bold appellation – "corruption".

It has been variously said that for a country so vastly blessed with human, natural, ecological resources and yet an appreciable percentage of her people still live at the

threshold and below poverty line, the problem could only be that of leadership. Uzodike a Professor of political and analytical institution laments that 60 per cent of Nigerians live below poverty line. He says that many intellectuals and academicians leave en masse for overseas in search of greener pastures. He identifies poverty to be linked to the way our political economy is structured. He further says that Nigerians are leaving the country in droves because the leaders are not making things conducive in the land. He adds that Nigerians lack for example, medical doctors because doctors trained in Nigeria prefer to practice abroad where they could be better remunerated.<sup>26</sup>

Prince Benny also highlights bad leadership, corruption and mismanagement as the root causes of poverty and underdevelopment in Africa. Going down memory lane he says that the Independence of African states from colonial rule began from the middle part of the twentieth century. This period signaled strong prospects and hope for a better and prosperous continent. However, the hope never stand the test of time because today, that hope is dashed by bad leadership, corruption, and mismanagement. Thus, after decades of independence Africa is still home to majority of the world's poorest irrespective of the availability of abundant human and material resources.

The continent is unarguably one of the most endowed and fertile regions of the world and the richest continent on earth in terms of natural resources but today, the image of the world's most resource rich continent has been damaged by corruption, mismanagement and bad/inept leadership. Abject poverty, inadequate health facilities and unemployment pervade the land and these are borne out of the failure on the part of leadership, mismanagement and corruption. Despite the high influx of development aid, both in kind and financial from donor nations and international financial institutions, Africa's economy remains abysmally weak and accounts for less than 1.2 per cent of the World's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) according to 2006 World Bank record even though more than 10 per cent of the world's population calls it home.<sup>27</sup>

The rich resources of the continent are not well harnessed or fully utilized and the proceeds from the ones being put into use are in the hands and domain of a very few who by the virtue of their economic power seek to control and dominate the patterns of life politically, socially, psychologically of the people. Instead of diffusing this wealth and



channeling it into causes and projects that will be beneficial to all, the small circle that possess the wealth hoard it and keep in the hope of bequeathing it to their children and their generations yet unborn! Walter Rodney, the author of the book “How Europe underdeveloped Africa” is quite right in some senses but then for long are Africans going to wallow in the quagmire and morass of self-pity and self-deceit?

Fifty years ago, the city-state of Singapore was an undeveloped country with a GDP per capita of less than US \$320. Today, it is one of the world’s fastest-growing economies. For a country that lacks territory and natural resources, Singapore’s economic ascension is nothing short of remarkable. Lee Kuan Yew, was the founding father of one of Asia’s smallest but most developed economies. Lee led Singapore after its separation from Malaysia to emerge as one of the world’s most powerful financial centres. The tiny nation, whose main industry was manufacturing at independence in 1965 saw its GDP per capita skyrocket under Lee to one of the highest in the world. Singapore flourished on the inherited advantages and foresightedness of Lee to transform into the ranks of New York, London, and Switzerland as a global financial hub. As a key port in British Empire, Singapore was in a strong position for trading activity. Lee built on this as the country had no natural resources of its own to exploit. Even though Lee was criticized by many for leading the country in an authoritarian style that stifled political dissent and press freedom, his firm grip on power and maintenance of stability gave little scope for corrupt financial practices.

The orderliness that Singapore became known for was attractive to foreign investment – billions of dollars poured in ensuring the country’s success.<sup>28</sup> In his infamous booklet written in 1983, “The trouble with Nigeria”, Nigeria’s years of political instability feature yet again as a canvas. The author, Chinua Achebe brazenly discusses fundamental areas that cripple and inhibit Nigeria as a state, people and nation. Achebe pools his varied experience and excerpts from daily newspapers to prove, indeed, that the “only thing Nigeria has learnt from experience is that we learn nothing from experience.”<sup>29</sup> A country that fails to learn from experience or history will always repeat the same error and find itself in a vicious cycle or a labyrinth of nothingness.

## **6.6 Revisting Awolowo’s mental magnitude: Ruler ruled by reason and not passion**

Chief Obafemi Awolowo in 1951, with Bode Thomas launched a political party—the Action Group of Nigeria — of which he was subsequently national President. It was the first group to call for self-government for Nigeria. From 1954 to 1959 Awolowo served as Premier of the Western Region which became the most progressive region of Nigeria. He was one of the architects of Nigeria’s independence from Britain which came in October, 1960.<sup>30</sup> For effective leadership, Awolowo proposes an ideology called “mental magnitude”. Awolowo’s theory of Mental Magnitude harps on a person’s ability to subvert the human desires that crave selfish interest and crass materialism. Basically, the theory is about good governance which is defined in terms of transparency, accountability, social justice, fairness, equity and selflessness. It says that leaders engage in corrupt practices and selfish acts because they lack complete education, which he links with the development of mind, body and brain, an embodiment of mental magnitude. It is the belief that leaders need to tame their appetite and emotion, and embrace discipline as a value in order to achieve effective governance and development in the society.<sup>31</sup>

Awolowo identifies man as a ‘political’ or ‘gregarious animal’, and that one of the human instincts is to be social. Since the individual person is an agent of social, political, economic and scientific changes, the overall achievement of a society depends on the achievements of its citizens, individually and collectively. Mental magnitude is, then, the goal to which every individual in a society must aspire, because it is a way of combating human instincts, appetites and desires. It leads to a profound metaphysical analysis of man and shows the superiority of mind over body, appetite or desire. Like Plato in his Republic, Awolowo believes that the body or appetitive must be governed by the soul or mind, and takes it to be an immutable law (unchanging or constant) that the soul commands while the body obeys.

For Awolowo, as for Plato, reason should govern the appetite or emotion. But when reason is dethroned for appetite, mediocrity, desire, or negative emotion, the inevitable result is the corruption of the mind which in turn leads to all sorts of evils like greed, bribery, nepotism, abuse and misuse of power, cheating, embezzlement, smuggling, violation of the laws of the land, violence and gangsterism.

Any society, or system of government, in whatever country, has one purpose: the evolvment of egalitarian society by which true meaning is given to human existence, individually and collectively. Therefore, for the purpose of effective governance and a just and egalitarian society, those who aspire to leadership in any society must be those who are ruled by reason rather than appetite. They must be mentally equipped, for a leader without a sound and disciplined mind cannot pilot the ship of state to success. This is to say that, for a leader to make a success of his difficult assignment of governing a state he should possess comprehension, mental magnitude, and 'spiritual depth'. A leader who possesses mental magnitude and spiritual depth is a leader who is always in control of himself. At this stage, his doctrine of mental magnitude is imbued with a typical stoic conception of life. In order to be master of others one must be master of himself, and be himself self-disciplined. Men of wisdom everywhere are unanimous in the view that only 'those who are masters of themselves become masters of others' and Aristotle also believes and expresses this in the aphorism that says 'Let him that would move the world, first move himself.'

The cultivation of mental magnitude, in Awolowo's sense, therefore, involves the cultivation of self-discipline of the highest order. Self-discipline is the tool by which mental magnitude exhibits itself by the way of curbing greed, bribery, corruption, all appetitive desires and negative emotions. Particularly, he considers it a settled opinion that the tyranny of the flesh is the worst of all tyrannies known to man. A man who rules over a city is not as great or powerful as a man who can rule over himself, his desire and emotions. Tyranny of the flesh is when an individual allows the flesh with its wanton cravings to dominate his or her life. The deeds of the flesh all lead to pain and destruction and the manifestations of the person whose flesh controls is usually not commendable. The desires of the flesh as long as they are being satiated will not cease but grow and grow until they consume a person's life.<sup>32</sup> For this reason, Awolowo argues that only those who have subdued this tyranny can successfully lead others out of the bondage of ignorance, poverty, and disease. In short, 'good leadership' involves self-conquest; and self-conquest is attainable only by cultivating, as a first major step, what some applied psychologists have termed "the regime of mental magnitude". And in explaining how this regime is cultivated, Awolowo reveals his stoic philosophy of life which, for a leader,

requires self- mortification of the highest order. Stoicism is predominantly a philosophy of personal ethics informed by its system of logic and its view on the natural world. According to its teachings, as social beings, the path to happiness for humans is found in accepting the moment as it presents itself, by not allowing oneself to be controlled by the desire for pleasure or fear of pain. It involves using one's mind to understand the world and to do one's part in nature's plan and by working together and treating others fairly and justly. <sup>33</sup>

Thus armed with the personal ethics of stoicism, Awolowo asserts that the regime of mental magnitude is cultivated when we are sexually continent, abstemious in food, abstain from alcoholic beverage and tobacco, and completely vanquish the emotion of greed and fear. Under the regime of mental magnitude, we are free from (1) negative emotions of anger, hate, fear, envy or jealousy, selfishness or greed; (2) indulgence in the wrong types of food and drink, and in ostentatious consumption; and (3) excessive or immoral craving for sex. In short, in this regime we conquer "the tyranny of the flesh", and become free.<sup>34</sup>

An apt leader who can lead a people out of the jungle or wilderness to the Promised Land is he who has overcome the base craving of the flesh, whose souls command the body and the body obeys. Such leaders realize that the flesh does not profit by any means and have through personal training and meditation subjugate the yearnings of the flesh. It is natural for the flesh to crave for base things but a leader who has a vision with a mission to accomplish also knows that succumbing to the tyranny of the flesh spells doom. A leader whose fleshly desires has not been brought to bow to the superior rule of the soul will engage in mismanagement, abuse of public office, embezzlement, misappropriation of funds, nepotism and a host of other nefarious activities. He does this at the expense of the citizenry who continue to wallow in abject poverty, whose children will not have access to sound education, where the hospitals have become mere consulting rooms and housing/ adequate accommodation are a mirage. Ecclesiastes 10 vs 16 and 17 sum it all up by stating that "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning! Blessed art thou, o land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!"<sup>35</sup>

## 6.7 Applicability of *Omoluwabi* for a Viable Moral Order

Advocating for the imbibing of *Omoluwabi* ethos does not translate to a return to the ancient way of life where education was informal, where native doctors provided health care, local midwives provided delivery services, hunters provided meat, farming was done on small scale, cowries was used as medium of business transaction, transportation was by human portage, trekking, or a ride on animals like horses, donkeys and camels and communication was effected by the towns-crier beating a gong. It may not insist on reinstating the *ebi* system of extended and large families living in clusters. The growth in urbanization has replaced the *ebi* system with the Westernized nuclear family. Although, this has meant a loss of a rich source of life skills. Its diversity of people, its competing aspirations and its framework of reciprocal relationships and the sharpening of values that it encouraged are some of the many stimulating competencies that the extended family provided but now eroded by the nuclear family setting. On the other side of the coin it also delivered from the erosion of personal space, hyper-competitiveness and scarcity mentality and perhaps most damaging of all the dependence upon and exploitation of the successful by the indolent and lazy.<sup>36</sup>

There is no doubt about the fact that Yoruba traditional culture has undergone some changes as a result of its historical contact with Western culture and the current phenomenon of globalization.<sup>37</sup> It is also true that some of the Yoruba norms and values like honesty (*isotito*), chastity (*wiwa ni mimo*), respect for constituted authority (*bi bowo fun awon alase*), hospitality (*sise itoju alejo*), kindness (*inu rere*), hard-work (*ise asekarra*) contributed to peaceful and harmonious living in Yoruba traditional society. By reviving these norms and values, the Black race and indeed the world at large will witness peace and stability which are essential conditions for development.<sup>38</sup> There are aspects of African cultural traditions which can be harnessed in the determination of what constitutes development. Of particular relevance in this regards are the areas of moral and communal development. Though not speaking in absolute terms, Bamikole believes that Africa is more developed than the West in these areas of experience.<sup>39</sup> Ajadi attests to this in his book *Omoluwabi 2. 0: A code of transformation in 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigeria* of how he was able to manage a very challenging situation through an acquired facility for

emotional intelligence, rapid cognition and effective negotiation skills from the *ebi* system in which he grew up from. Until that particular incident, Ajadi did not give it much thought or appreciated the value of such acquired skills. It was this experience that shaped his thinking about the power of living in the rich complexity of daily life in the African continent, especially in Nigeria, and about the life skills that the now eroded pre-colonial codes and social technologies deliver. Ironically, these are highly sought-after skills in the West. They answer the question of why Nigerians achieve exceptional levels of socio-economic success in environment with effective organizational frameworks. Fashioned by the complexities of daily life, people who possess these skills are conditioned to see potential and gaps in any system, boldly seize opportunities and persevere in the inevitable adversity<sup>40</sup> thereby gaining success.

It is one of the norms of healthy communal living of Yoruba society that two people who are fighting must be separated for the sake of peace and harmony. After they had been separated, either of them who remain aggressive and uncompromising will be rebuffed by onlookers and blamed even if other facts of the case are in his favour. Sometimes the mere fact that he would not yield to the entreaties or actual holding back of an elderly man or woman becomes the major issue. Owing to the strength of kinship and neighbourly solidarity, the members of the extended family and neighbours have certain reserve powers of control and discipline over juvenile members.<sup>41</sup> All these lend to strengthening the communal lifestyle in traditional African societies that in some ways are gains in interpersonal and organizational relations.

The issue of thuggery (*iwa omo isota*) especially of employing youths as political thugs has constituted a debacle to the Nation. However, *iwa pele*- 'gentleness' which is contrasted to *iwa omo isota* is a major ingredient in ensuring a peaceful and stable society. A study reveals that poverty, unemployment, financial attractiveness of elective positions, the value system of wealth accumulation and an ineffective security agency account for the incidence of political thuggery in Nigeria. Political thuggery hinders public accountability of elective officers and debar the emergence of credible candidates in elections and thus is a great threat to the achievement of democratic dividends and exercise of citizenship rights in the country. On the basis of these findings, government

should make elective offices less attractive financially. Also concerted government programs and policies should be aimed at alleviating unemployment and poverty and strengthening the capacity of security agencies. Government must consistently educate citizens and youth on the evil of political thuggery and violence.<sup>42</sup>

Another virtue of *Omoluwabi* cogent to fostering a new moral order is for everyone especially the youths to be involved in the political processes in their polities not as thugs but as reasonable (*olopolo pipe*) and responsible (*eni ti o see fokan tan*) entities. The youths in the book “Agbara Ko” written by Waheed Kolawole Akintayo were well involved in the political scene of their town as well-meaning individuals and eligible voters and not as effigies, puppets or political thugs. They showed interest (*ifokan si*) in the type of leadership that would rule over or preside in the polity. This is so because in one way or the other, policies made or enacted by the leaders would directly or indirectly affect the populace. In this book, “Agbara Ko” meaning Not by Might, the people of Ogbin-ni-Ikore including the youths voted out Bayo Aduloju who was the sitting governor although he had spent huge amount of money trying to woo the people to vote him in for a second term. Governor Bayo Aduloju did not have the welfare of his people at heart but the money spree he embarked on during the campaign period did not blind the people to his gross inadequacies. They voted in en masse a youth who has a clean slate and who has promised to faithfully (*l’ododo*) and conscientiously (*pelu eri okan*) discharge his duties.

The slogan of the youths in Ogbin-ni-Ikore was:

*Odo ni wa oo*

*A a dagba, aa ni yan ku*

*A a ju awon obi wa lo*<sup>43</sup>

We are youth

We will grow old, we will not die untimely

We will be greater than our parents. (Translation is mine)

By this choice of words which made up their slogan, a sense of responsibility as the leaders of tomorrow was already being engrained and inculcated into the youths with the prayer that they would grow old and would be greater than their parents. This delineated the fact that they had a mandate to fulfill to their community and prayed that untimely death should not be a hindrance to this. They also prayed that financially, socially, academically and in all dimensions they would be greater than their predecessors since they believed that the aforementioned would aid the realization of their goals as leaders of tomorrow.

The issue of hard-work (*ise ase kara*) is paramount to engendering a morally stable polity. A community where hard-work is adulated and emergency wealth is questioned is bound to enjoy peaceful bliss. People will be cautious of acquiring wealth through fraudulent means (*ona eeru*) when they know that instead of being praised for the wealth acquired overnight they may rather become unpopular. People will stop being dupes (*alagbeda*), cheats (*arenije*), blackmailers (*apuro mo ni gbowo*), smugglers (*onifayawo*), prostitutes (*agbele pawo*), pimps (*onigbowo agbele pawo*), kidnappers (*ajinigbe-gbowo*), penrobbers or gun robbers (*ole kalamu tabi ole ibon*) if they know that the community will not be mesmerized by their sudden wealth but rather raised their brows in askance of the means and sources of their riches. This calls for a re-orientation in our value system from praising rich criminals, fraudulent individuals and those involved in money rituals to laying emphasis on good character and hard-work.

The situation is like the scenario in a Yoruba town in the time of a certain Rev. Father Michael in Adebayo Faleti's play "*Idaamu Paadi Mukailu*". The king had called on the Regional Government to assist him in rectifying or reducing the corruption in the Local Government Council. He requested for approval to co-opt Rev. Father Michael into the council committee. After the approval had been given, the king and his chiefs went to the Reverend Father to deliver the Regional Governor's letter of approval. The king's presentation of the matter describing the pillaging of the common treasury to Rev. Father Michael was in this form:



*Paadi Mukailu,*

*Ategbe ilu atogba ilu*

*Ati mekunnu ati gbogbo eni to jolu*

*Gbogbo won ni won ran wa si o*

*Eyin naa e wolu bo ti wa ti o fara ro*

*Tomode tagba lo donise aparo;*

*Elomii ti baba re o degbaa ni lowo*

*Won o si dojiji deni lowo*

*Won a maa fa ponun-ponun*

*Kiri lowo yebeyebe*

*Leni ti ko sise kan laagun ri*

*Leni ti kojade nile lakooko iri*

*Leni ta o gboruko re nibikan ti ri*

*Nibo ni won ti rowo ti won fi deni aye n bo?*

*Akowe igbimo towo ise won ko to katakoyo loojo*

*Bi won ba ti rowo ko je tan*

*Won a maa kole kiri ni gogoro ni gogoro*

*Owo ilu ko si ninu ohun a n fowo wo*

*Iyawo oniyawo- awomowo*

*Aye baje a o reeyan re taye se<sup>44</sup>*

Reverend Father Michael

We have come to you on behalf of all in the community  
See how morally depraved our community has become  
Both the young and old have become fraudsters  
Those whose fathers cannot boast of having a dime  
Will suddenly emerge as multi-millionaires  
Flaunting wads of pound sterling about  
Those who have not labored and sweated  
Those who have not gone out in search of daily food in the dewy morning  
Those whose predecessors no one regarded  
Where do they suddenly get such riches that the world is now hailing them?  
The town council clerk who earns but a meagre salary  
After embezzling government fund  
Starts building fleets of skyscrapers  
The public fund should however not to be looted by any  
They snatch other people's wives  
The society sinks in moral decadence  
And it seems there is no one so good to help rectify the wrong  
(Translation is mine)

From the above, Faleti decries sudden or emergency wealth (*oro ojiji*) which is definitely not as a result of hard-work. Some government workers in the passage above siphoned public fund for personal enrichment and were already becoming demigods whom the people worship. Money-worship is a sort of social or moral perdition that must be curbed.

The orientation should be shifted back to how it was in the traditional setting where *iwa Omoluwabi* transcends *oro nini*. The Yoruba are never averse or antagonistic to acquisition of wealth, the emphasis however is that such wealth be acquired through hard-work and right means. People who are involved in misappropriation and embezzlement of public fund and living ostentatiously on government resources from fault-lines in government bureaucracy will also be involved in other vices for example wife snatching as cited in the passage. The *iwa Omoluwabi* (*Omoluwabi* character traits) exhibited by the elders of the town in tackling the issue headlong and not being oblivious as some will do especially when an amount of money had been given to them as bribe (*owo abetele*) are nobility (*iwa pimon ara eni le*), courage (*iwa akin*), commitment (*ifaraji*), selflessness (*airo tara eni nikan*). These pro-society mores are dwindling away but their effectiveness in combatting social ills cannot be over-emphasized. The leaders did not parley with the fraudulent government workers in order to get their own share of the ‘national cake’ but took the matter to Revd. Father Michael for an intervention. This situation is in total contrast to what Lapite the king of Jogbo did in the play, “*Saworo Ide*”. King Lapite colluded with the timber contractors to loot the treasury of the town, the youths who were antagonistic to his reign of terror and mismanagement were promptly imprisoned. King Lapite came to a bad end as he was killed by General Lagata the Chief Security Officer of the timber contractors – *agba ti o nyo le daa, ohun buruku a maa yo won se*- the treacherous elder will come to a bad end.

The elders because of their age and experience are regarded as the common conscience of the society. The Yoruba believe that what an old man will see while seated the young man will not see even when he climbs a hill. It is thus expected that elder statesmen and women should correct the upcoming ones whenever they observe any misdeed. They should be able to arrest and manage situations before they go bad or out of hands. They are to take the youth down the memory lane encouraging them to forge on in noble pursuits and cautioning them to refrain from acts that may make the polity to boil. The elders are not to become *agba-iyá* (useless elders) or kingpins of evil societies but are to be good counsellors (*oludamoran rere*) and mentors (*atonisona*) to the young ones. Useless elders are usually chided with this Yoruba saying that ‘*agba re ko to ile*’ meaning that the elder does not possess such wisdom (*ogbon*) or resourcefulness (*ogbon atinuda*)

to put his own home in order. The elders are to be unflinching in saying the truth and standing by the truth. They shouldn't because of personal aggrandizement shy away from saying the truth. If everyone is afraid of saying the truth, the elder should come out boldly to declare what is the truth. The Yoruba believes that '*enu agba ni obi tii gbo*' meaning that what people ordinarily will find hard to say, the elder should not fear to declare if it is the truth. The elders should thus impress the essence of hard-work, honesty, respect, chastity, kindness, patience, moderation, and other positive attitudes on the people for the attainment of a morally viable society.

The age-long Yoruba poem by Oloye J. F. Odunjo is still very relevant adumbrating the essence of hard-work in achieving one's goal. He counselled that one should not rely heavily on others even one's parents but rather work hard and be focused in the bid to mount onto greatness in life. Relying on others may earn one massive failure as no one is infallible. Odunjo encourages us not to put our trust or expectation in inheritance to be left by one's parents but to regard our limbs as our next of kin as *atelewo eni kii tan nii je*, -one's palm of the hand cannot deceive one. He cautions against being carried away by present adulation but to continue to wax stronger if we wish to still enjoy the praise and regard of the people. He makes us to realize that the world will only pay homage to such a one that is continuously successful and that one should be ready to face the taunts of people if tides should change. He warns very sternly against playing truancy and wasting away one's youthful period. In all, he counselled hard-work as an antidote to poverty and the many unpleasant things that are corollaries to it.

### **ISE LO'OGUN ISE**

*Ise loogun ise*

*Mura s'ise re, ore mi*

*Ise la fi ndeni giga*

*Bi a ko ba reni fehinti*

*Bi ole la nri*

*Bi a ko ba reni gbekele*

*A a tera mose eni*

*Iya re le l'owo lowo*

*Baba re le lesin lekan*

*Ti o ba gbojule won*

*O te tan ni mo wi fun o*

*Ohun ti a ko ba sise fun kii pe rara*

*Ohun ti a ba sise fun un nii pe lowo eni*

*Apa lara, igunpa n'iyekan*

*B'aiye ba fe o loni*

*Ti o ba lowo lowo, won a tun fe o lola*

*Abi o wa nipo atata*

*Aiye a ye o si terin terin*

*Jeki o deni rago*

*Ki o ri bi won ti nyin' mu si o*

*Iya nbe fomo ti ko gbon*

*Ekun mbe f'omo ti nsare kiri*

*Ma f'owuro sere ore mi*

*Mura si' se ojo nlo.*

## **HARDWORK: ANTIDOTE FOR POVERTY**

Hard-work is an antidote for poverty

So strive my friend

Hard-work leads to greatness in life

If there is no one to lean on

It seems one is indolent

And since you do not have a helper

You'd better strive hard at your work

Perhaps your mother is well to do

And your father possesses numerous horses

If you are eyeing these

You will soon come to utter embarrassment

What we have not labored for does not last

But what we acquire through our sweat

Stays long in one's hands

The arms are one's relatives

The elbows are one's siblings

If you are loved by the people today

If the wealth is still available

They will continue to express their love to you

If you occupy a noble or vantage position

The people will greet you with pleasant smiles  
If all these advantages disappear and tides change  
You will realize that you have  
Become a laughing stock  
Education can also be a ladder to greatness  
Strive hard for its mastery  
If you encounter a group of people  
Talking lightly of knowledge  
Please don't keep company with them  
Suffering and hardship await the fool  
Regrets await the truants  
Don't waste your youthful days  
Work hard for the time ticking away.

(Translation is mine)

Akofe Adeniyi in his book, "*Eni a wi fun*"<sup>45</sup> stressed the need to be hard-working, enterprising, having a job, acquiring skills and not relying on inheritance from parents. The Yoruba will say '*agboju l'ogun fi ara re f'osi ta*' – the one who relies on inheritance has given himself or herself to lack or impoverishment. Akofe established this fact very accurately through the main character of his book – Ishola. Ishola was the son of multi-billionaire Chief Olanrewaju who refused to go to school, learn a trade or acquire any skill. He believed that as the first son of Chief Olanrewaju, a huge percentage of his father's wealth would automatically come to him. Truly, after his father's death he was apportioned some of his father's possessions. But since did not have before the experience of administrating or acumen for managing resources he squandered the money

on futilities. When he was out of cash he sold the houses willed to him making true the Yoruba adage that says '*omo ti a ko ba ko ni yio gbe ile ti a ko ta*' – a child that one refused to train will sell the house one has built.' The Yoruba have expressly hammered on the need for a child to acquire a skill because a person that has a store of money and is not doing any work to add or replenish the stock of wealth will soon go into penury. Ishola, a child born with a silver spoon in his mouth had to leave his town Feyikogbon because of shame to another town called Ayeye where he became a canoe paddler '*se ise ti o le ni ole maa se keyin*' – a lazy man will on the long run do a tedious task.

The issue of hard-work, noble venture and honest gain is such that should be well advocated for in our nation where some are now making internet fraud, kidnapping and blackmailing lucrative businesses. There is beauty and dignity in labour. Odunjo has counselled also that '*ohun ti a ko ba sise fun kii pe rara, sugbon ohun ti a ba sise fun nii pe lowo eni*'- what we have not labored for does not last, but what we acquire through our sweat stays long in one's hand. It will be of immense benefit if the youths come to this realization that '*ise kii pa ni, ayo ni o maa pa ni*'- hard-work does not kill but recklessness does. The story of Adegboro who left Ibadan to Lagos in search of greener pasture is usually told to encourage the youths that there is dignity in labour and that rest is sweet after labour. Adegboro on his arrival in Lagos chose to be carrying loads on his head at Oyingbo market to earn a living. Few years after, he bought a cart from his savings and this eased the pain of carrying loads on his head for commercial purposes. The cart also increased his income and he was able to acquire six (6) more of its kind which he rented out to others. Exactly eight years in this cart pushing business, Adegboro bought a van which many called *bolekaja* and learning how to drive, he handled the business by himself. Four years into the *bolekaja* business, Adegboro had been a proud owner of six vans. Being a bonafide Ibadan son, Adegboro built a gigantic building at Oja Oba where the Olubadan palace is situated.<sup>46</sup> The story of Adegboro apart from teaching the dignity and beauty of hard-work, also teaches frugality in spending as a Yoruba adage admonishes that '*a kii fi owo mewewaa jeun*' – one should not use all the fingers to eat.



The *Omoluwabi* legacy is such that should be re-enacted and re-institutionalized for a viable moral order in this postmodern age. The world can only enjoy the dividends of the opportunities and inventions of our contemporary world when the *Omoluwabi* ideology is being introduced to stem or douse the superiority of technology over morality. The golden legacy of *Omoluwabi* should be inculcated and entrenched in the school syllabus for the children, youths and also in the scheme of service for government workers at all levels. The print, electronic and social media should be agog with clips and excerpts that promote the *Omoluwabi* legacy. The Igbimo Agba Yoruba had recommended:

- i. The use of Yoruba language at home to bring up children in the ethics of Yoruba culture.<sup>47</sup> Many of the Yoruba proverbs (*owe*) teach one moral or the other and are ways of inculcating positive values. For example, *a kii mo oko omo, ki a tun mo ale re* – you shouldn't know your daughter's husband and also know her concubine. This stresses the sanctity of marriage. The proverb adumbrates the fact that parents are to maintain a sense of propriety and should not encourage their daughters to be promiscuous or wayward. This provides a sound moral order in the society when a lady knows that she won't get any support or encouragement even from her parents if involved in adultery.

*A kii mu ise je, ki a mu ise je* – you cannot escape work and also escape poverty. This stresses the importance of hard-work. It imprints the fact that the indolent or lazy person will soon come to penury. A person who believes in hard-work will eschew nefarious activities like cheating, kidnapping or wasteful spending.

*A kii siwaju eleede p'eeede* – don't be presumptuous. A child should be trained to be courteous, not to be forward or barge into conversation he is not invited into. A presumptuous fellow displays lack of respect for others which can cause imbroglio in the society.

*A kii ti oju onika mesan-an kaa.* You do not count a nine –toe man's toes in his presence. – Warning against being abusive or disregarding the feeling of unfortunate people. Being insensitive to the feelings of others may degenerate into unwholesome and offensive relationship.

*Pipe ni yoo pe, akololo a pe baba* – it may take a long time, but a stammerer will eventually call ‘baba’. This counsels being patient with others. Everyone does not operate on the same plane and ability to be patient and bear with others will engender good neighbourliness that promotes productive and peaceful co-existence.

- ii. The conscientious implementation of the indigenous language policy in education. It is worrisome that many indigenous languages are going into extinction. This implies the disappearance or natural withering away of some indigenous languages that have been subsumed by Western languages. It is really frightening to think that Yoruba language may disappear with all its prism attributes. Thus, it is necessary that Government should make conscious efforts at implementing indigenous languages policy in education at primary school level. Year 2019 has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Indigenous Language and the IYIL website explains that indigenous languages fosters and promote unique local culture, customs and values which have endured for thousands of years. Indigenous languages add to the rich tapestry of global diversity. Without indigenous languages, it is believed that the world would be a poorer place. 2019 has thus been chosen as year of indigenous languages.<sup>48</sup>
- iii. Use of Yoruba language and *Omoluwabi*-related cultural materials on modern telecommunication gadgets including Internet, et ce tera.
- iv. Clear definition of the concept of *Omoluwabi* in relation to our contemporary contexts. That is relating the values and ideologies embedded in *Omoluwabi* to contemporary life thereby institutionalizing its relevance.
- v. Integration of *Omoluwabi* philosophy and practice into school curricula.<sup>49</sup> This can include story time when teachers and pupils tell Yoruba folklores and tales drawing out the moral lessons embedded in them.
- vi. Movies and music produced in Yoruba should always be polite and decent, and aside from entertaining should rigorously promote the concept of *Omoluwabi*.
- vii. A person identified not to be an *Omoluwabi* should not be accorded prominence and respect in Yoruba land.<sup>50</sup>

## 6.8 Conclusion

The need to imbibe the qualities of *Omoluwabi* in our present postmodern world in order to chart a viable moral order in Africa has been expressly stated. To achieve and attain a life of *eudemonism* living as *Omoluwabi* is inevitable. The government has a role to play in institutionalizing the legacies of *Omoluwabi* and intricately weaving them into the dynamism of our present world. By institutionalizing *Omoluwabi* legacy, one does not mean imposing on people or forcing them to take on measures that are uncomfortable to comply with. The government is to provide a conducive environment that makes imbibing *Omoluwabi* legacy quite easy and natural: it has been our way of life in the time past. Government too should not just pay lip service to the issue of *iwa Omoluwabi*, leaders should also make its principles their by-word. Actions or utterances that may suggest to the populace that the leaders are insincere to the cause of *Omoluwabi* should be totally abhorred. The institutionalizing of *Omoluwabi* should not be a 'shoving down the throat'. It should not be to stifle dynamism and innovation and enforce conformism but threading at the threshold of new possibilities with great caution bearing in mind the moral implication it may have on the people and addressing this before hauling this new possibility to the public domain. Sanctions however mild should be meted on those who continue to wilfully and flagrantly flout the *Omoluwabi* rules while those who habitually display the *Omoluwabi* qualities of altruism, kindness, honesty, chastity, hard-work, resourcefulness should be praised and honoured.

The Yoruba believes that *otun we osi, osi we otun nii mu owo mo*- both hands washing each other will make the hands to be thoroughly clean. Individuals also have crucial role to play in the transformation of our world to an *Omoluwabi* driven one. The institutionalizing of *Omoluwabi* legacy needs the approval and cooperation of the people. The people need to resolve to imbibe these qualities of honesty, hard-work, good-neighbourliness, courtesy in the realization of a moral viable society where robbery, kidnapping/abduction, ritual killing, political thuggery, cheating, internet fraud and other vices would be totally eradicated or reduced to the barest minimum. This all centres on our character, we should be of good character in order to brighten our future and turn the

society from a nightmare to a safe and sane place. Oloye Odunjo's timeless poem on good character admonishes us thus:

**TOJU IWA RE ORE MI**

*Toju iwa re ore mi*

*Ola a ma si lo nile eni*

*Ewa a si maa si lara eniyan*

*Olowo oni nd'olosi bo dola*

*Okun lola, okun nigbi oro*

*Gbogbo won lo nsi lo nile eni*

*Sugbon iwa nii ba ni de saree*

*Owo ko je nkan fun ni*

*Iwa lewa omo eniyan*

*Bi o lowo bi o ko niwa nko?*

*Tani je finu tan e ba sohun rere?*

*Tabi ki o tile je obinrin rogbodo*

*Ti o ba jina siwa ti eda nfe,*

*Tani je fe o sile bi aya?*

*Tabi ki o tile je onijibiti eniyan*

*Bi o tile mo iwe amodaju*

*Tani je gbe'se aje se fun o se?*

*Toju iwa re, ore mi*

*Iwa ko si, eko degbe*

*Gbogbo aye ni nfe ni to je rere*

**BE MINDFUL OF YOUR CHARACTER, MY FRIEND**

Be mindful of your character, my friend

Wealth can depart from one's lineage

Beauty can fade or become

Corrupted on one's body

The wealthy man of today may

Become a pauper tomorrow

Wealth is like the ocean,

And the ocean is like booming wealth

All these can take flight

And depart from one's lineage

But only one's character

Accompanies one to the grave

Money is void

Good character is the beauty of a mortal.

If you are rich but lack good character

Who can confide or rely on you for

The execution of a worthy assignment

If you are a beautiful and alluring lady

But your character deviates from

Commendable moral norms

Who will marry you as a wife?

If you are a fraudulent fellow

Regardless of the fact that

You are well-educated

Who will entrust you with his business?

Be of your character, my friend

Education is a waste

And a total wreck without good character

Everyone loves a person of good character.

(Translation is mine)

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## CONCLUSION

The imperative of the quest for the ‘good’ as an indispensable ideal for societal flourishing is non-negotiable. The promotion of the good is crucial in establishing a happy society globally but this has been hampered by the promotion of a postmodernist culture. Postmodernism is a departure from all forms of established ways and patterns of living in the modern era. Postmodernism as a concept advocates multiplicity and heterogeneity and states that there is no universal or general mode of knowing and living. While modern social theory sought a universal, a historical and rational foundation for its analysis and critique of society, postmodernism however rejects foundationalism and advocates relativism, pluralism and pragmatism.

Archie Bahm painting a picture of our contemporary world states thus:

Crimes rates are increasing, with no end to such increases in sight. The power of traditional religions to inspire moral conduct continues to decline, with nothing visible to stop such decline. Wars, i.e. little wars persists even when there is no world war, and military budgets grow despite capacity for overkill. Politicians, legislators, administrators, police and judges seem ever tempted by bribery, and expose of corruption in “the highest places” create doubt whether honesty in government is possible. Industrial pollution, planned obsolescence, misleading advertising, deceptive labelling, crooked insurance adjusting, unfair wages, crime syndicates, illegal gambling, forced prostitution, hijacking, tax loopholes for the wealthy and faked claims by welfare clients all exemplify prevailing trends... Few areas in life remain untouched by growing demoralization.

*Omoluwabi* (a good or morally upright person) which is a cultural grand narrative that evolved in Yoruba culture has been proposed as a panacea or blue-print for socio-political re-engineering of our contemporary society in order to attain an ideal society where incidence of crimes and vices are reduced to the barest minimum. The concept of *Omoluwabi* connotes an individual who has been trained to behave properly by imbibing qualities and virtues such as charity, truthfulness, self-control, forthrightness, kindness, hospitality and by observing the various shortcomings of others with a resolution of not running into such kind of misdeeds. The *Omoluwabi* is thus a person of integrity and one

who has won the respect and confidence of all by his impeccable character. The *Omoluwabi* is an individual who is self-controlled and thinks thoroughly of his intention before bringing it into action.

The Yoruba have established culture and customs with attendant rules. The beautiful and respectable Yoruba culture goes with Yoruba religion, coupled with sanctions for anyone who errs or transgresses. Whenever and wherever anyone betrays Yoruba ethics and culture which emphasise moral consciousness, such a person unavoidably pays for his or her failings. The importance placed on virtues and values among the Yoruba race leads to attaining peace, good neighbourliness and happy relationship among the people. Yoruba civilization highlights a strong moral code that prescribes acceptable standards of right and wrong in the society into which children were socialized early in life. Children were demanded early in life to internalize humane qualities of honesty, transparency, accountability, integrity, justice, fair play, hard work and truthfulness. The communal life of the Yoruba have also allowed *Omoluwabi* character traits to be deeply entrenched, because people are always around to correct any erring child and various methods of social control like instruction, advice, persuasion, reward and punishment are employed to instill virtues of *Omoluwabi* into a child.

All these combine to equip the Yoruba person with a built in shock proof ability to resist evil; this is called the *Omoluwabi* standard. The *Omoluwabi* resists evil habitually and not by chance or coercion. The Yoruba have a character that is both distinctively tolerant and resilient and it can be said that self-control occupies a cardinal position in the Yoruba concept of *Omoluwabi*. An *Omoluwabi* must thus be outstanding at eliciting the right type of behavior even in difficult situations. An *Omoluwabi's* actions and reactions are not subjected to mood swings and emotions since moral virtues which constitute the core of the character of the *Omoluwabi* remain constant and unchanged. *Omoluwabi* concept is both a people-centred and a personality-propelled philosophy that helps to advance the collective vision of a people. The concept of *Omoluwabi* has thus been proposed as a panacea for an all – round sustainable national and human development since it fosters a dynamic, positive, pleasant and rewarding human relation and has been able to meet the requirements of what accounts as good.

However, postmodernism is against any grand totalizing and meta-narrative theory, that is, any theory that proposes single, general or summary approach to issues that affect man and the society. Postmodernists emphasize relativism of values and knowledge and seeks to question authority and, at the same time, maintains that there are no set of universal rules valid for all times and places. Postmodernist thinkers like Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jaques Derrida, Richard Rorty are in opposition to any form of grand theory such as *Omoluwabi* and so their ideas are fragmentary and extol non – argumentative procedures but procedures that can enable man to live according to them a meaningful and purposeful life.

The concept of *Omoluwabi* to the postmodernists will only create a scene where the individual loses his distinctness and dissolves into the mass of crowd. This is so because what *Omoluwabi* advocates is conformity to tenets and when an individual thinks or behaves otherwise, he/she is branded as abominable and sanctioned. Jean-Francois Lyotard asserts that our moral leaning should be one that helps to refine our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate those who overtime were termed as the ‘other’. It is a call to look on the ‘other’ with benevolence and tolerance and see the good inherent in them. Everyone should be given opportunity to live and freely express himself since two individuals are never the same. This he opines will give greater opportunities for a diversity of voices and opinions to be heard which will automatically enhance the society. Lyotard urges that “let us wage war on totality..... let us activate the differences”, that is, that an end should be put to concepts that advocate totality, universalism, objectivity, absolutism like *Omoluwabi* while subjectivity, relativity and multicplicity should be activated.

The concept of *Omoluwabi* however was the defining characteristic of the Yoruba person. It distinguished a worthy person from a worthless one in Yoruba traditional society. It charted a map for people in the community to follow in order to live a life of peace, progress and tranquility. Although unwritten, its systemic codes and values into which children were exposed to early in life made them cultured, socially courteous and economically prosperous. Having lost the *Omoluwabi* ideologies there has been a clarion call for its renaissance and sustenance.

The concept of *Omoluwabi* which is a form of cultural grand-narrative is positive as it proposed and legislated the right course for a good society in the traditional Yoruba society. The study seeks for the rejuvenation of *Omoluwabi* concept and proposes it as a moral blue print for global society. This is however dependent on the ability of *Omoluwabi* – a grand theory to overcome the critique of postmodernists. How viable is the critique or argument of the postmodernists against a positive grand-narrative that promotes the ‘good’ like *Omoluwabi*? Can the critique of the postmodernist obliterate the Yoruba concept of *Omoluwabi*? How relevant is the *Omoluwabi* concept in our postmodern world?

Our submission is that the postmodernists’ critique of the *Omoluwabi* concept can however not be sustained because *Omoluwabi* promotes the ‘good’ which is a cogent ingredient for national building. Such attributes of *Omoluwabi* include honesty, chastity, humility, self-control, hard-work, respect for constituted authorities and a host of other positive character traits. The *Omoluwabi* teaching is innocuous and at the same time sagacious. *Omoluwabi* is not offensive and it seeks to bring out the humanity in humans while taming or fettering any bestial manifestations. *Omoluwabi* condemns wrongdoing and encourages the ‘good’. The oral tradition taught in *Ifa* corpus, lores, anecdotes, stories, proverbs are never in support of negative behaviour. Attitudes springing from wrong value system like pride, parsimony, selfishness, dishonesty, treachery, inordinate affection, lying and the like are promptly rebuked.

*Omoluwabi*, a cultural grand theory that seeks to propose and prescribe the right ways of doing things and legislate moral norms and mores in the quest for a morally stable and peaceful society aptly aligns with what constitute the ‘good’ in many other cultures like the Igbo, Fulani and cultures in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Malawi. The constituents of ‘good’ in the cited cultures revolve around honesty, chastity, self-control, hard-work, perseverance, empathy, altruism, humility, hospitality, respect for elders and constituted authority. *Omoluwabi* also clearly reflects and perfectly fits into Aristotle virtue ethics which essentially is premised on moderation in all one does. The inference is that the postmodernist critique cannot obliterate or negate *Omoluwabi* since aside its conformity with what count as ‘good’ in some other cultures and aligning with Aristotle virtue ethics

also seeks to promote a good, peaceful, socio-politically and economically stable society which is the goal of life.

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