



The Existential Implications of Evil Suppressing Measures in Yoruba Philosophy

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Abstract

Evil is an unpleasant reality which every cultural civilization grapples with. It is at the centre of the existentialist discourse, due to the fact that, in their view, it causes meaninglessness in human existence. In Yorùbá intellectual tradition, there are prescribed ways by which evil can be suppressed, including sacrifice (ẹ̀bọ), good character (ìwà pẹ̀lẹ̀) and inner head (Ori). However, these measures have certain fundamental implications when considered critically through the lens of existentialism. This is because, on a closer examination, they are ultimately ineffective in the light of the reality of some higher forces, namely the Ajogun, headed by the Witches. These forces are believed to be irredeemably evil, because they have the power to render any of those measures impotent. This power, however, is believed to have been given to them by Olodumare. Accordingly, evil becomes what human beings cannot conquer, but have to live with. Consequently, we recommend, following Albert Camus, that human beings learn to live with the reality of evil, like the stone of Sisyphus. This is because any human attempt to take evil out of existence, by appealing to those measures, amounts only to Kierkegaardian “leap of faith”, which Albert Camus describes as a “philosophical suicide.” We substantiate the above claims by critically examining some verses of *Ifá* which is believed to be the backdrop of Yorùbá philosophy.

Keywords: Evil, Sacrifice, Good character, Inner head, Existential Thought, Ajogun

Introduction

The existence of evil in the world is a very crucial problem. This problem has been engaged from various intellectual and cultural perspectives, out of which the existential perspective is notable. The problem of evil is also addressed in Yorùbá intellectual system. The Yorùbá believe that evil is real. However, they also believe that it can be prevented. The Yorùbá word for evil is *Ibi* and, where human existence is concerned, it is understood to be a negation of human happiness. Accordingly, measures by which evil can be prevented are prescribed in the Yoruba intellectual tradition.

In this paper we shall draw some existential implications of the notion of evil in Yorùbá intellectual tradition. This endeavour is particularly necessary for our purpose here considering the huge similarities between the theses of the existentialists and the Yorùbá on some themes and fundamental concepts such as freedom, choice, responsibility, death and so on, which are somehow related to, and are often mentioned in, the explanation of the reality of evil in the world. These concepts have some profound implications for human existence in relation to the problem of evil. Therefore, by discussing those implications, we will come to the understanding of the position and role of human beings in the world in which they found themselves from the Yorùbá perspective and whether or not human beings are blamable for the circumstances that befall them in their existence and their attitude to those circumstances.

Besides, this paper is preoccupied with the analysis and discussion of some seeming inconsistencies and discrepancies observable in Yorùbá ideas as regards the reality of evil in the world, the forces which are believed to have the power to perpetrate evil and the role of human beings in the mitigation of evil. This will enable us to expose the hidden biases that are inherent in their philosophy of existence so that we can come to the full knowledge of the plausibility or otherwise of the ideas we live by. This, in fact, is what H. S. Staniland describes as the major preoccupation of philosophy – “criticism of the ideas we live by” (1979, 3)! Hence, this chapter examines the plausibility of the Yorùbá philosophy on the roles of human beings in the world in the light of the view they express on the problem of evil and the existence of the malevolent forces who are believed to be capable of making human existence meaningless and miserable. However, before delving into the main thrust of this paper, it is pertinent that we take a concise survey of the tenets of existentialism and how some traits of those tenets can be found in Yorùbá philosophical system.

Existentialism in Yorùbá Philosophy

Existentialism is a philosophical approach for understanding the practical conditions of human beings in the world. It concerns itself with the concrete issues in the

world and how human beings can make meaning out of the apparent meaninglessness of the world. In addition, it is concerned with how individuals can attain freedom from the dominance of others, especially the society, thereby living an authentic life that is free from unnecessary external control. However, the struggle of individuals to escape from the heavy dominance of the society and all forms of external control confronts the stark reality of existential facticities, which are situations that are beyond human capacity.

The search for meaning in an apparently meaningless world that is garnished by predicaments and facticities – obstructive factors to the happiness and hope of human beings in existence – is further complicated by the psychological occurrences of anxiety, dread, and anguish which arise in human beings at the awareness of their finitude and temporality in existence. Accordingly, death becomes a dreadful eventuality which awaits every human being, and its reality is devastating to human beings. Nonetheless, in the face of all the existential predicaments, the existentialists maintain that human beings have choices, freedom and responsibilities in existence from which they cannot escape. This is because existence for them, precedes essence – in which case, human beings are in the world to create their own purposes – the creation of which makes responsibility inevitable. However, there are other cultural and intellectual points of view which express views that are somehow different from the position expressed by the western existentialists above. To substantiate this claim, Igbafen contends that:

Different cultures have their unique or particular ways of describing and interpreting human life and existence, its purpose, its worth, its end, and of interpreting death and other historical situations and conditions that their people experience in the world. Like other cultures of the world, Africans have their unique way of responding to existential issues, such as the meaningfulness or otherwise of human existence; the question of death; and the issues of immortality, suffering, freedom, choice, responsibility and so on. Their varying responses constitute their (African) existentialism (Igbafen, 2017, 240).

Consistently with Igbafen's claim above that different cultures have their ways of interpreting and explaining human experiences in the world and that Africans, in fact, do have their own ways too, which constitutes African existentialism, the Yorùbá, being Africans, have their own explanations for the practical conditions of human beings in the world of experience. Their own conception of authenticity does not attribute unrestricted freedom to individuals from the influence of the society because individuals are born and bred to be strongly committed to the interest of the society (Gbadegesin, 1991, 63-64). This, in fact, for them, is the mark of authenticity. However, given their teleological understanding of reality which emphasizes causality and rules out blind happenings in nature, they believe that human beings are not just thrown haphazardly into existence without any purpose or destiny to fulfil like western existentialists such as Sartre, Camus and Heidegger contend. For the Yoruba, human beings have purposes and aims which they

must fulfil in existence. This is predicated on their belief in destination and predestination. This view implies that there are essences which are meant to be fulfilled in existence. Hence, it is a counterclaim to the existentialist motto which states that existence precedes essence.

The themes of essence and existence are fundamental in Yorùbá existential philosophy. However, more emphasis is placed on essence over existence because it is believed to have precipitating implications. The priority placed on essence over existence in Yorùbá understanding of human conditions in existence is not surprising. Their philosophy of existence is deeply rooted in their ontology and metaphysics, which makes it difficult if not impossible to understand their existentialism without first understanding their ontology and metaphysics.

The Yorùbá believe that human beings are made of up three main components. These components are the determinants of human personality and they have fundamental implications for human existence. They include: Orí (the inner head), Ara (the body) and èmí (the soul) (Makinde, 2010, 110.) These three elements determine human personality and their existential conditions. Meanwhile, the component which is most relevant to our purpose here is Orí (inner head), which is the carrier of destiny. Accordingly, we shall not bother ourselves with the other two components here. Orí (inner head), being the carrier of destiny, is believed to be the major determinant of one's fate in existence. It determines whether one will be prosperous or wretched in existence.

There are different views on how Orí is acquired. These views have provoked several arguments on the notions of choice, determinism, fatalism and freedom (Orangun, 1998, 21-40; Gbadegesin, 2004, 313-323; Makinde, 2010, 120-136). However, we shall not delve into those issues here. It is also believed that one can either acquire a good or a bad Orí. However, a bad Orí will, at best, make existence intolerable, frustrating and tormenting for its bearer. Accordingly, while the possession of a good Orí dictates good fortune and comfort, the possession of a defective one dictates suffering and discomfort – which are both relevant to our discussion of the problem of evil. Besides this, there is a belief in some malevolent forces who can frustrate human existence by substituting a good Orí with a defective one through some diabolical means. These forces are known as Ajogun. Kola Abimbola describes them as “spiritualised forces that bring about the end, demise and imbalance of things in nature” (Abimbola, 2005, 62).

Nonetheless, despite the belief that there are factors and forces which are significant hindrances to human happiness in existence, the Yorùbá, like the existentialists, contend that human beings are free and are responsible for their actions (Ekanola, 2006, 81). The argument from freedom and responsibility are predicated on the availability of some measures for altering a bad Orí and averting the attack of evil forces. These measures are *ẹbọ* (sacrifice) and *ìwà pẹ̀lẹ́* (good character). These options are believed in Yorùbá thought system to always be available for anyone who is not comfortable with his

existential situation and wants to ameliorate it. Implicationally, the options of sacrifice and good character dictate choice and freedom. Invariably, both choice and freedom necessitate responsibility. Moreover, sacrifice and good character are believed to be the determinant of authentic and inauthentic lives in which case a person who makes a sacrifice and has a good character is believed to lead an authentic life while a person who does not is believed to lead an inauthentic life.

The foregoing analysis are some of the core issues in the existential philosophy of the Yorùbá and they are relevant and fundamental to the existential implications of the problem of evil which is the preoccupation of this chapter. We shall therefore discuss sacrifice and good character and see whether they are strong enough or not to serve as basis of justification to the claim of the Yorùbá that human beings have the freedom, choice and responsibility to turn their circumstances around thereby making meaning out of their existential problems in their philosophy of existence. This shall be done in light of the existence of external factors, namely the Ajogun and the witches that can, in fact, shatter all human attempts to make existence meaningful.

Èbọ (Sacrifice), Ìwà Pèlẹ́ (Good Character) Ori and Suppression of Evil

Generally, sacrifice is recommended as a way out of any existential predicament, especially from the problem of evil in Yorùbá thought system (Awolalu, 1979, 126-132; Abímbólá, 2009, xxi; Oshitelu, 2010, 226). The Yorùbá believe that once a person makes a sacrifice, all the forces causing misfortune and misery must turn back from him or her. A person who offers a sacrifice when prescribed, is believed to lead an authentic life while someone who turns a deaf ear to a sacrifice, especially when prescribed, is believed to lead a life of inauthenticity, which will ultimately be accompanied by tribulations. That is why the Yorùbá often say that *rírú èbọ ní gbe ni, àírú káì gbèyàn* (when one offers a sacrifice, it brings fortune; when one does not, it brings misfortune.) Sacrifice is also seen as a way of exchange. By offering sacrifice, one exchanges death with life. By implication, if one makes the appropriate sacrifice, diseases, death, tribulations and other unpleasant circumstances will bypass one. This view is corroborated by a verse in *Ifá* precisely in the chapter of *Ọsá Méjì*, where *Èlẹ̀pẹ̀* was told to offer a life animal as sacrifice in order to avert death. After making the sacrifice, all the evil forces that were hunting him immediately departed. The verse goes thus:

Baba gbúlú erin;
Baba kòsò èfòn;
Ọgbọnrangandan nídáhùn ọmọ-ódó;
Bá m' mádiẹẹ mi a bapá yabuge;
Yèwu kan ọso ọ le gbòkùnrun méjì;

5

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- Pààṛṣpaarṣ, awo ilé Èlẹ̀pẹ̀;
A diá fún Èlẹ̀pẹ̀;
Wón ní ó fodidi ẹran pààṛṣ ara rẹ̀
Nítorí ikú.
Ó gbọ́ rírú ẹbọ, 10
Ó rú...
- Ikú wáá f'Èlẹ̀pẹ̀é 'lẹ̀,
Orí ẹran ló mú lọ.
Pààṛṣpaarṣ, awo ilé Èlẹ̀pẹ̀;
Àrùn wáá f'Èlẹ̀pẹ̀é 'lẹ̀, 35
Orí ẹran ló mú lọ.
Pààṛṣpaarṣ, awo ilé Èlẹ̀pẹ̀;
Òfò wáá f'Èlẹ̀pẹ̀é 'lẹ̀,
Orí ẹran ló mú lọ.
Pààṛṣpaarṣ, awo ilé Èlẹ̀pẹ̀; 40
Ajogun gbogbo wáá f'Èlẹ̀pẹ̀é 'lẹ̀,
Orí ẹran ló mú lọ.
Pààṛṣpaarṣ, awo ilé Èlẹ̀pẹ̀ (Abímbólá, 2014, 116-117).
- Baba gbúlú erin;
Baba kòsò ẹfọn;
Ọ̀gbọnrangandan nídáhùn ọmọ-ódó;
Bá m' mádiẹ mi a bapá yabuge;
Yẹwù kan ọ̀so ọ̀ le gbòkùnrùn méjì; 5
Pààṛṣpaarṣ, priest of the house of Èlẹ̀pẹ̀;
They all performed Ifá divination for Èlẹ̀pẹ̀.
They told him to offer a whole animal in exchange of himself
Because of death.
He heeded the instructions of the priests 10
And offered the sacrifice...
Death then left Èlẹ̀pẹ̀
And took the head of the animal away.
Pààṛṣpaarṣ, priest of the house of Èlẹ̀pẹ̀;
Diseases then left Èlẹ̀pẹ̀ 35
And took the head of the animal away.
Pààṛṣpaarṣ, priest of the house of Èlẹ̀pẹ̀;

Loss then left Èlẹ̀pẹ̀
And took the head of the animal away.
Pàà̀rọ̀paarọ̀, priest of the house of Èlẹ̀pẹ̀; 40
All the Ajogun then left Èlẹ̀pẹ̀
And took the head of the animal away.
Pàà̀rọ̀paarọ̀, priest of the house of Èlẹ̀pẹ̀;

The above indicates the belief of the Yoruba in sacrifice as a strong way of averting evil. After Èlẹ̀pẹ̀ offers the sacrifice, the evil forces running after him immediately turn back. In addition to sacrifice, the Yoruba believe that good character can ward off evil from one's way. In fact, if a person has a good destiny and lacks good character, the good destiny can be thwarted and rendered impotent, thereby exposing the person to suffering and misery. This shows how fundamental good character is in preventing one from existential predicaments. That is why it is said in *Ifa* literary corpus that:

Iwa nikan Ọ̀soro
Iwa nikan Ọ̀soro
Ori kan ko buru Ọ̀otu Ife,
Iwa nikan Ọ̀soro.

Character is all that is requisite
Character is all that is requisite
There is no destiny to be called unhappy in ancient *Ife*.
Character is all that is requisite (Orangun, 1998, 40).

What is meant in the above is that once a person possesses good character, he or she has all it take to have an existence that is free of discomforts, tribulations, failure, and all manner of inconveniences. In fact, the possession of good character based on the above verse, could be said to automatically undermine ill fortunes that may result, for instance from one's choice of a defective or weak Ori. Nevertheless, it seems that the provisions of the Yoruba for the suppression of evil which we discussed above fully address the problem of evil in the world. On a closer examination however, those precautionary measures like sacrifice and good character turn out to be stalemate in addressing the problem of evil, especially when the Witches are involved. Wándé Abimbólá states that while all other warriors against human beings automatically turn back after their victim(s) must have offered the appropriate sacrifice(s), it is not certain whether or not the Witches will accept one's sacrifice, (Abimbólá, 2009, xxi) in which case, they do not necessarily have to accept one's sacrifice and the benevolent deities cannot compel them to do so. This means that the acceptance or rejection of a person's sacrifice is absolutely at the

discretion or mercy of the Witches. With this at the back of his mind, Abimbólá submits that “any man who is therefore threatened by the Àjé (the Witches) can only appeal to his own Orí (inner head/carrier of destiny) for support.” (Abimbólá, 2015, 238). This is also supported by a stanza of *Ọsá Méjì* which states that:

...Èrò Ìpo,
Èrò Ọffà;
Orí mi ní ó gbà mí lówó Eleye (Abimbólá, 2014, 118).

Travellers to the city of Ipo,
Travellers to the city of Ọffà;
It is my Orí that will deliver me from the attacks of the Witches.

The implication of this is that sacrifice, in the long run, is not strong enough to automatically ward off the evil forces or prevent them from unleashing evil on one. If that is true, the potency of good character as an alternative measure is also dubitable. Like sacrifice, good character does not necessarily placate the desire of the Witches to torture, torment, harm or afflict people with diseases or illness. If good character were to be effective, the Witches would not have rewarded the good gesture of Ọrúnmilà with evil. Ọrúnmilà is believed to have transported the witches from heaven to earth in his own belly while they were naked and stranded.

In the chapter of *Ọsá Méjì*, *Ifá* explains that it was only Ọrúnmilà that offered to assist the Witches to the earth after other deities have refused to do so. Being feeble and boneless, Ọrúnmilà did not have the strength to back them. However, he opened his mouth and allowed them to rush into his belly so that he could transport them all once to the earth. On getting to the earth, the Witches refused to alight from Ọrúnmilà's stomach and they started eating up his intestines instead (Abimbólá, 2015, 242-244). It could be said that Ọrúnmilà has demonstrated a good character by offering his assistance to them, however, they repaid him with evil. On this point again, good character is not strong enough to ward off evil from human existence.

What further complicates the matter is that the Witches are believed to have the power to reinforce and unleash other evil forces (death, diseases, loss, imprisonment, curse, Affliction, etc.) generally known as Ajogun, against human beings – which proves the extent of their power. It is therefore evident that sacrifice and good character can only go a little or no way to ward off evil. Another alternative which *Ifá* prescribes is Orí (inner head/ bearer of destiny). If all other measures fail, it is believed that one's Orí will never fail to deliver one from the predicaments of existence. Accordingly, Orí becomes our next

alternative. We shall therefore examine the extent to which Orí can go in preventing or delivering one from the attacks of the forces that can unleash evil on human one.

Orí and the Existential Implications of Evil in Yorùbá Philosophy

Ifá says that it is only one's Orí that can deliver one from the shackles of the Witches. This is because Orí itself is believed to be the closest deity to human beings. This view is supported by Ọ̀rúnmiḷà when, in a verse of Ọ̀gúnda Méjì, he explains to other deities that it is only Orí that will do what other deities including himself (Ọ̀rúnmiḷà) will never do for their devotees (Abímbọ́lá, W. 2015 136-143). However, one fundamental problem with the concept of Orí is that one can have a weak or bad one, which can hardly bring anything positive to one's way. Nonetheless, if one's Orí is too weak to fight one's course in existence, one can seek the intervention of Ọ̀rúnmiḷà who is regarded as the witness of destiny for the necessary rectifications (Adégbindin, 2014, 107).

Ọ̀rúnmiḷà is not only regarded as the witness of destiny, he is believed to also have the power to rectify a bad or weak Ori. That is why he is often referred to as “*A tóri ẹni tí ò sunwọ̀n se*” (the one who rectifies defective inner heads for their bearers) Again, this view is not without its problems as Ọ̀rúnmiḷà may not be interested in identifying himself with one's problems. This is corroborated by a verse of Ọ̀yẹ̀kú Méjì, where Ọ̀rúnmiḷà shows no interest at all in the problems of his devotee. The verse goes thus:

Olóòtọ́ tí n bẹ́ láyé ò pógún;
Sìkàsìkà ibẹ́ wọ̀n ò mọ́ níwọ̀n ẹgbẹ́fà;
Ọ̀jọ́ ẹsán ò lọ́ tíí,
Kò jẹ́ kọ̀ràn dun ni.
A díá fún ọ̀ràn gbogbo tí n dun akápò 5
Bẹ̀ẹ́ ní wọ̀n ò dun 'Fá.
Ọ̀ràn owo n dun akápò;
Ọ̀ràn obinrin n dun Akápò;
Ọ̀ràn omọ-bíbí n dun akápò.
Akápò wáá lọ́ sọ́ fún Ọ̀rúnmiḷà. 10
Ó ní gbogbo ire gbogbo ni òun n wá.
Ọ̀rúnmiḷà ní kí akápò ó lọ́ sọ́ fún Èṣù.
Èṣù ní gbogbo ọ̀ràn tí n dun iwọ́ akápò yí
Kò dun Ifá.
Èṣù ní iwọ́ akápò, 15
Orí rẹ́ ní kí o lọ́ rò fún... (Abímbọ́lá, 2009, 15).

Truthful people on earth are not up to twenty;
The wicked in it are not fewer than one-thousand-two-hundred.
The day of retribution is near,
So the issue hardly bothers one.
Divined for the devotee whose needs were enormous and pressing 5
Whereas, they neither pressed nor interested Ifá.
The devotee was in need of money;
The devotee was in need of wife;
The devotee was in need of children.
He therefore went and explained to Ọ̀rúnmilà 10
Saying he was in dire need of all good fortunes.
Ọ̀rúnmilà told the devotee to explain the issue to Èṣù.
Èṣù said to the devotee “all your dire needs
Are of no interest to Ifá.”
Èṣù therefore said to the devotee 15
“Tender the matter before your Orí.”

The above verse shows that Ọ̀rúnmilà may not be interested in one's problem. So, Orí is believed to be the ultimate measure to which one can fall back when confronted with existential problems. There is another dilemma in this explanation – the Witches have the power to change the status of Orí, which is the carrier of one's destiny or render it impotent completely (Oshitelu, 2010, 222). That is why Ọ̀mótádé Adégbindin explains that “the Ajogun (comprising of the Witches and other evildoers) ... can alter human destiny.” (Adégbindin, 2014, 109). For him, “this realization has always informed why a Yorùbá man consults Ifá (every now and then) in order to know the steps to take in fortifying himself against such evil powers.” (Adégbindin, 2014, 107). The forgoing challenges which the existence of the Witches pose to human effort to make meaning out of existence are what Joseph Balogun overlooks when he contends that “being born into a poor family, which is an evil of a sort, may not be a reason for dying poor: the choice either to remain poor or to break the cycle of poverty within the family lies squarely on the shoulders of the individual in such a situation” (Balogun, 2014, 71).

With the expression above, Balogun apparently, can be said to uphold the stance that human beings are ultimately free and responsible for whatever they become in existence. However, this position portends some difficulties when reconsidered in light of the belief of the Yoruba in the existence of external forces that have the power to alter destinies and nullify conscious efforts. The external evil forces can frustrate the efforts of an individual to be rich. In fact, they can turn someone who is already rich to a poor and wretched person. So, the argument from choice, freedom and responsibility becomes watery in the face of the reality of those evil forces.

From the foregoing, we have examined the various measures or ways by which human existential problems, especially the problem of evil can be addressed in Yoruba Philosophy. However, our analysis shows that there are external forces who always have the power to frustrate those measures. The implication of this is that these external forces emerge unconquerable despite all the attempts and provisions outlined for the amelioration of human existential predicaments. As such, they become what Karl Jaspers calls “limit situation” (Friedman, 1999, 100-104). in human existence. This is because they are also believed to have the power to resist the interventions of other deities such as Ori and Orunmila in the resolution of the existential predicaments of human beings.

It is against the above background that Ayo Adeduntan, while drawing an insight from Hubert Ogunde’s theatre, contends that despite the activities of *Ọ̀sẹ̀túrá* who represents the benevolent forces and attempts to destroy the Witches; the Witches eventually turn out to be ineradicable (Adeduntan, 2008, 189). Again, Adeduntan recognizes *Yẹ̀kìni Ajilẹ̀yẹ̀*’s projection of the indestructibility of the Witches when he observes that all the efforts put in place to unveil their secretes proved abortive in *Ajilẹ̀yẹ̀*’s movie. According to him:

Ajilẹ̀yẹ̀, through the Islamic cleric protagonist, argues that the *Àjẹ̀* do not stand in opposition to God (*Olódùmarè*) but are rather part of His (Its) scheme. The protagonist points out that human efforts at smelling them out and destroying them are doomed before they start. This argument is explicated in the manner in which most of the *Àjẹ̀* successfully escape(d) a ritual that was designed to expose them (Adeduntan, 2008, 189).

The power that these external forces wield is believed to have been given to them by *Olódùmarè*: the Witches remain unconquerable because they were empowered by *Olódùmarè*. It is only *Olódùmarè* who knows their secretes. That is why they cannot be subdued (Adégbindin, 2018, 114). Unlike the Judeo-Christian Yahweh, *Olódùmarè* is not presented in Yoruba belief system as an absolutely benevolent, omniscient and omnipotent being. Accordingly, the existence of evil in Yoruba thought does not provoke the argument from contradiction like it does in western thought. That is why Bewaji argues that:

As far as it is rationally possible, it should be stated emphatically that the problem of evil did not, does not, and need not arise within Yoruba traditional religion. In fact, this initial axiomatic assertion needs all the emphasis it can elicit; in spite of all efforts to show the contrary, only this conclusion seems the plausible and defensible one (Bewaji, 1998, 8).

Bewaji is consistent in defending the view that the kind of problem having to do with contradiction of attributes - that is the logical problem of evil - does not arise in Yoruba traditional religion. This is because *Olodumare* can do as He pleases without being questioned by anyone (Bewaji, 1998, 11). That is why Wale Olajide submits that “the notions of meaninglessness and absurdity are reconciled in the acts of the deity

(Olódùmarè) who does as he wills. If life is wretched, he makes it so, if life is good, pleasant and successful, it is equally his handiwork” (Olajide, 2011, 11). However, that does not mean that the Yorubas are oblivious of the existence of evil altogether. “African people”, John Mbiti argues, are “much aware of evil in the world, and in various ways, they endeavour to fight it.” (Mbiti, 1969, 204). The absence of the logical problem of evil in Yoruba thought does not therefore rule out the urgent existentialist concerns that the reality of evil provokes. If the logical problem of evil does not arise in Yoruba thought, existential problem of evil arises. This is because, the Yorubas, like other cultures of the world are well aware of the existence of evil and the need to resist it at all costs. That is why they do everything within their capacity to resist such phenomenon as: sickness, death, loss, misfortunes and so on, which they count as evil, and anything capable of bringing them about.

The fact that the witches, who are the major agents in the perpetration of evil are unconquerable in the final analysis, makes the helplessness of human beings in the face of evil and existential predicaments star at us afresh in the face. It then becomes obvious that the problem of evil is insurmountable in human existence. It is a reality which must be accepted, managed and grappled with.

Nevertheless, the above observation does not dictate a sheer recession into the abyss of pessimism. Rather, it creates the awareness that human beings are ultimately helpless in existence as far as the problem of evil and suffering are concerned. As such, they have to confront and struggle with their existential circumstances like Sisyphus, who was condemned by the gods to roll a boulder relentlessly up the hill! The sacrifices they offer to the divine forces do not necessarily avert evil, suffering and misfortune. In fact, the idea of offering sacrifice to ward off evil is synonymous with Soren Kierkegaard’s “leap of faith” which Albert Camus describes as philosophical suicide (Camus, 1975). Instead of looking up to the intervention of divine forces which amounts to a form of philosophical suicide, Camus recommends that human beings face their real existential problems with the mind-set that they are abandoned without any help (to use Sartre’s language) in existence and that they have the duty to struggle with whatever situation they encounter in existence. Here, Joseph Balogun’s distinction between *ayé gbíggbé* (living in the world) and *ayé síse* (doing the world) becomes instructive (Balogun, 2019). While the former dictates passiveness, aloofness and total surrender to the existential predicaments, the latter encourages activeness, participation and total rebellion to existential predicaments. Accordingly, the very act of confronting one’s existential problems without the intention to seek divine or external assistance (which may not be available anywhere), is the mark of authenticity, which is central themes in existentialism. Authentic existence is the “mode of living that is real and true to life while the inauthentic existence is the one that is false and untrue to life.” (Ugwuanyi, 2011, 67). Human beings therefore, must see the need to participate in

the world and "do it" instead of merely living in the world in order to live a true life which is consistent with the realities of the world.

Evil should, therefore, be understood as a possible feature of existence like good. It is within the context of human existence that the two concepts derive meaning. Outside of human experiences in existence, the concepts of evil and good will be meaningless. This again shows the fundamentality of the existential analysis of the problem of evil and its relevance to human daily life in existence.

It is eventually the attitude which human beings display in the presence of their existential circumstances and the activities of the forces which are beyond their power in existence that rationalizes freedom choice and responsibility, not the strength of sacrifice, good character or an appeal to one's *Orí* as prescribed in the Yorùbá thought system. From all indications, the power of external factors to manipulate and turn those measures down leaves us stranded at the crossroads of stalemate.

Jean-Paul Sartre, in western existentialism, contends that human beings are condemned to freedom. However, this expression, when considered in the light our analysis of evil within the Yorùbá teleological framework which emphasizes the reality of external control over human choice, life, and action and gives credence to the notion of causality, rules out the idea of freedom. However, going by our analysis from the foregoing, Sartre's contention that human beings are abandoned without any help is applicable in Yorùbá existentialism. The Yorùbá existentialist thought also hangs on the idea of purpose. Nonetheless, this thought fails to elucidate in clear terms what the purpose of evil and human suffering in existence are.

The existence of external factors capable of unleashing unpleasant occurrences on human beings in Yoruba existentialism, is a counterclaim to Sartre's assertion that "human beings are condemned to freedom" (Sartre, 2007, 29), by which he means that human beings are the first and ultimate authors of whatever circumstances in which they find themselves. For Sartre, man experiences dread and anguish and fears nothingness and death that face him but he is free and therefore responsible for his life and decisions (Oshitelu, 2010, 146). Against this view, we have been able to explain how external factors can manipulate human destiny. Aside from this, through our examination of the various measures put in place in Yorùbá thought system for the rectification of human existential situations, we have been able to establish that human beings are ultimately helpless in the presence of their existential predicaments because all those measures are ultimately abortive in the amelioration of their existential conditions, especially in suppressing the problem of evil. Accordingly, the prescriptions of the Yorùbá do not justify freedom, choice and responsibility.

The abortiveness of sacrifice, good character and *Ori* in the suppression of evil and the forces capable of bringing it about, confronts us, anew with the helplessness of human beings in their existential tribulation. This does not, however, suggest a total resignation to

the problems of existence. It suggests, instead that human beings find a way to cope with their various existential challenges. As Camus enjoins, the problems of existence should be confronted and faced like the boulder of Sisyphus. The awareness of human's haplessness in the presence of those predicaments and the resolution to confront the problems are the main factors pointing at the authenticity of human beings amidst the predicaments of existence and the eternal forces that are beyond them.

Camus avers that Sisyphus' smiles at his toil makes him prevail against his rock: "A face that toils so close to stones is already stone itself ... he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock" (Camus, 1975, 109). It is therefore not the strength of the measures through which one can make one's existential situations better as indicated in Yoruba existentialism that justifies choice, freedom and responsibility because the inadequacies of those measures have been pointed out. Going by that line of thought, it will be difficult to maintain without contradicting oneself that human beings have choice, freedom and responsibility in the presence of the existential circumstances that surround them and the heavy influence of external forces around them. Rather, what justifies choice, freedom and responsibility is the full realisation of the facticity that human beings have to struggle with in existence and the attitude they display towards their existential circumstances after being fully conscious and aware of their helplessness in existence.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have considered some ways by which evil can be suppressed in Yorùbá existentialism. We have been able to argue that those measures are ineffective in the final analysis in suppressing evil. This is because the Witches have the power to jettison, reject and water down those measure, thereby rendering them ineffective and impotent. Having established this position through our analysis, the helplessness of human beings in the in the face of evil confronted us afresh. Nevertheless, in the presence of the external factors capable of frustrating human existence, we enjoin that human beings be conscious and aware of their abandonment in existence and should determine to face their existential situations like the rock of Sisyphus by understanding that evil is a possibility of existence that cannot be suppressed but grappled with, instead of putting their hopes in external interventions, which amounts to Kierkegaardian leap of faith, which, according to Albert Camus is a philosophical suicide (Sartre, 1975, xv).

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