

**EHI IN EDO ONTOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF FREEWILL AND
DETERMINISM IN WESTERN METAPHYSICS.**

BY

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY, IN PARTIAL
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CERTIFICATION

We the undersign hereby certify that this project was carried out by **IGHODARO OGHOGHO BLESSING** with matriculation number **ART1901724** in the Department of Philosophy, University of Benin, Benin City and that it is sufficient in both scope and content for the award of Bachelor of Art (B.A) Degree in Philosophy.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty for his grace, knowledge, understanding and divine support that made this work possible. It is also dedicated to my dearest mum Mrs. Josephine and my siblings for their prayers, love and moral support in helping me become who I am today.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| TITLE PAGE - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | i |
| CERTIFICATION | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | ii |
| DEDICATION- | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | iv |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | v |
| ABSTRACT - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | viii |
| CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM- | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 6 |
| 1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY- | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 7 |
| 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY- | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 7 |
| 1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY- | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 8 |
| 1.6 METHODOLOGY- | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 8 |
| 1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW- | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 9 |
| 1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS. - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 10 |
| CHAPTER TWO - THE PROBLEM OF FREEWILL AND DETERMINISM IN WESTERN METAPHYSICS. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.1 THE MEANING AND PROBLEM OF FREEWILL AND DETERMINISM. - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 20 |
| 2.2 TYPES OF DETERMINISM. - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 25 |

2.3 ARGUMENTS AND PROPONENTS OF DETERMINISM. - - - - 27

2.4 ARGUMENTS AND EXPONENT OF FREEWILL. - - - - 30

2.5 AN OVERVIEW OF THE EDO WORLD-VIEW. - - - - 40

**CHAPTER THREE - EDO ONTOLOGY, A REFLECTION ON THE PROBLEM OF
FREEWILL AND DETERMINISM.**

3.1 WHAT IS EDO ONTOLOGY? - - - - 49

3.2 THE NOTION OF EHI IN EDO ONTOLOGY. - - - - 69

3.3 EHI AND THE PROBLEM OF FREEWILL AND DETERMINISM - - 73

3.4 EHI AS A RECONCILIATION OF THE DEBATE BETWEEN
FREEWILL AND DETERMINISM. - - - - 79

CHAPTER FOUR- EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION.

4.1 EVALUATION- - - - 84

4.2 CONCLUSIONS. - - - - 89

BIBLIOGRAPHY - - - - 95

Abstract

Whatever befalls a man is believed to be what he/she settled with his *Ehimwin* (guardian angel) and *Osanobua* (The Supreme Being). Hence, the experience of an invincible external pull and irresistible constraints and the feeling of powerlessness and void, are indeed the common fate human all share. In other words, how the principle of destiny balance against individual will and freedom of action calls for great concern among philosophers and theologians alike. However, our consideration here is with particular reference to the edo, as little or no attention have been given to the concept of Ehi (destiny) from the Edo-African perspective. This study therefore gives a deep philosophical reflection on the concept of ‘Ehi’ (destiny), and the role of one’s *ehimwin* (personal god or guardian angel) in Edo ontology. The study further unveils the canons or principles believed to be responsible in the shaping of a person’s life, as well as the understanding of the factors or means of re-negotiating one’s destiny in the Edo religio-philosophical experience. Through the analytical and hermeneutical method, the study argues that destiny is not fixed, static, and absolutely a predetermined reality, but rather as a framework in which the relationship between divine agency and human agency could be understood as compatibilism that admits personal efforts.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In African traditional thought, human destiny is one of the intriguing and difficult areas of discourse in contemporary African philosophy. Any discussion on the subject has to deal either in part or in general with the Supreme Being, ancestors, the nature of our “being” in the primordial existence, our existence on earth, our successes and failures, freewill and determinism and moral responsibility. Destiny or fate (both used interchangeably) is a phenomenon that cut across almost all religious tradition and philosophy. The concept of destiny is commonly used to refer to a fixed order of things established by Divine decree, which no one, however Pius or powerful, could alter¹. Hence, when St Thomas Aquinas disclosed that everything, however insignificant, must have a purpose, an idea derived from Aristotle, he was in effort raising the status of fate to a level of philosophical inquiry. The types of determinism include biological, psychological, religious, climate, cultural, economic, and geographic determinism.

According to Ferraiolo, Determinism often meets the charge that if true, it would render all purposive deliberation and effort futile². If all that occurs is necessitated by laws of nature,

¹ Udoh, E. A discourse on fate in Ibibio cosmology. *Journal of Religious Studies*, University of Port Harcourt. Vol. 1. No. 2, 2000, 100-110.

² Ferraiolo, B. Freewill, Determinism and Stoic counsel, *Ars Disputandi*, Vol.6 No.1, 2006, 204-210

antecedent conditions, the will of God, the gods, fate, or any other mechanism or government, then it seems that the course of one's life, as it is but a tiny stream of events in confluence with all other events in the universe are determined, and one's life is a series of events within the universe then one's life will unfold as necessitated by the irresistible powers that be, and attempts to masters fate are futile or even perverse. While the ancient stories insisted that everything happens by fate. Such as found in the hymn of Clean thus: "Conduct me, Zeus, and thou, O Destiny wherever your decrees have fixed my lot I follow cheerfully, and did I not, wicked and wretched, I must follow still"³. This suggests that whatever happens is a result of fate. However, the epicureans think that necessity of fate is avoided by the swerve of atoms. In other words, the Epicureans hold that the universe is in-deterministic, and nothing could happen by fate. Hence, human beings are not bound by fate because they are composed of atoms. They however, fail to realized that the swerve of the atom is implausible, and thus cannot be explained why it should occur.

In other words, discussion about the concept of destiny in western scholarship is usually subsumed in discussions about predetermination, predestination, determinism, and fatalism, free-will and moral responsibility. Therefore, the concept of *Ehi*(destiny) has not received the degree of attention as has been given to predestination, determinism and free-will in the western world. Hence, the essence of this study, as it explores the concept of destiny from the Bini-African

³ Epictetus, *Discourses and Enchiridion*. Thomas, W. Higginson (Trans). (New York: Walter J. Black,1944)p.123

perspective. The study argued that though human destiny seems to be blind, predetermined and inescapable, one's efforts cannot be completely ruled out of human success or failure, goodluck or misfortune, life or death etc. This therefore, raised the following posers: Is it possible for one to go against the infallible Divine foreknowledge? In what ways can one renegotiate his/her destiny? What is the belief on human destiny in the Bini contemporary society? The debate on whether human actions and events are being determined or out of free-will seems to have pulled scholars in a journey of no returns.

In other words, the philosophical argument on free-will and determinism which dates back to the ancient period still takes the front burner in the contemporary philosophical discourse. Thus, making the doctrines of pre-determinism (or fatalism), determinism (or hard determinism), Indeterminism (or soft determinism), and non-determinism (or free-willism), popular in western intellectual discourse on the human will questions⁴.

Pre-determinism (fatalism) holds, that "human choice and action have no influence on future events, which will be as they will be regardless of whatever we think or do"⁵. In other words, certain events are such that they cannot but occur no matter what happens. Fatalism beliefs that the future is already set fated, and that everything one does will drive one to complete one's fate, even if one knows and attempts to avoid it. By implication, fatalism does not allow

⁴ Shitta-Bey, O.A. The human will debate between western and Yoruba philosophical tradition. *Filosofia Unisinos-Unisinos Journal*, Vol.17, Issue3, 2016, 326- 332.

⁵ Graig, E. Fatalism: A Concise Approach, in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (London Routledge,2006)p.1112

for possible human efforts, self-criticism, and self-involvement, hence the slogan, what will be, will be.

Determinism (Hard Determinism) holds that every event, with respect to the past, presents, and future, has a cause. In other words, determinism is the view that everything that occurs in the universe must be the effect of a cause, produced by, is dependent on, and condition by what brought it into existence⁶. This doctrine denies human of being either in control or capable of exercising their will freely. Reflecting on the implications of determinism for morality, Spinoza characterized the human condition as nothing less than “bondage”.

Indeterminism (soft-determinism) holds that one can be free even if determinism is true. That is to say that some events and human actions though determined are also functions of human free-will. Non-Determinism (free-willism) holds that human beings are endowed with the ability for choice of actions, for decision among alternatives, and specifically, that given an innate moral sense, man can freely discern good and evil⁷. Free-will is therefore the ability to make choices unimpeded by certain factors. Such factors include metaphysical constraints, physical constraints, social constraints, and mental constraints. However, the seeming incompatibility of determinism and free-will brought the God’s foreknowledge and freewill dilemma.

⁶ Balogun, O.A. The concept of ori and Destiny in Traditional Yoruba thought: A Soft Deterministic Interpretation, in *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol.16, Issue1, 2007, 116-130.

⁷ Marcourlessco, I. Freewill and determinism, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 5 ed. Mircea Eliade. (New York: Macmillan publishing company 1987)p.1250

This is an acute problem because the Bini tends to identify fore-knowledge with human destiny. The practical implication of this is that one is not permitted to make a separation between what God knows at a point in time and what He does with or about that knowledge in the future. That is to say that, if what God knows is as good as done, then any notion of free will and human responsibility is negated. Hence, the possibility for man to go against the infallible divine foreknowledge is a question that continuous to beg for answer.

In other words, human destiny is the mysterious power believed to control human events. It is believed that whatever happens or that will happen in the future has been preordained, and happened according to an earlier master plan⁸. That is to say that every person has his/her biography written before coming to the world which consequently implies that anything one does is not something done out of free-will but something done in fulfillment of pre-ordained history.

Among the Bini, such a belief is usually accredited to *Osanobua*(The Supreme Being) who is said to have pre-existentially fixed all the events that, could possibly and would take place in human's earthly existence. However, this fatalistic conclusion seems to raise a lot of problem, which if carried to its logical conclusion will mean that it will be unjustified to hold a person responsible for his actions since the causes of his actions are external to him/her and beyond his/her control. This therefore, calls for a detail explanation of destiny in the Bini experience.

⁸ Balogun, O.A. The concept of ori and Destiny in Traditional Yoruba thought: A Soft Deterministic Interpretation. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 16(1) 2007, 116-130.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In some way, humans are born into this world and they are to face their own existential dilemma, to be or not to be. There appears to be something that is the determinant factor about their being. Something seems to be working as a kind of ‘existential and transcendental Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA)’, underlying their every action. This ‘something’ has been rendered as destiny. But is destiny, for the Bini, a determined set of actions, some kind of set of causative principles for the individual, according to which they must act or something, a principle of being, according to which they may or may not act? Thus, is the concept of destiny to presuppose some kind of determinism or freedom? Is the human person a determined being or a free being? If the human person is determined, does the human person possess a freewill that can guarantee personal responsibility for one’s life? This concern stems from the fact that it would seem to be the case that the determined individual would not be responsible for their actions. So, what is the relationship between destiny as understood from the point of view of determinism and personal responsibility?

It is to attempt answering questions as these that this discourse on the phenomenon of destiny known as *ehi* in Bini traditional thought is intended. Accordingly, this work shall highlight the basic understanding of destiny in Bini thought. This shall be accomplished by

taking a look at the understanding of destiny from the standpoint of freewill and determinism. The fundamental assumption herein is that there is a basic understanding of destiny in Bini traditional thought. Further on, an attempt to show the points of convergence and divergence of destiny as including personal responsibility and destiny as excluding personal responsibility shall also be discussed.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

1. To investigate if the concept of destiny presuppose some kind of determinism or freedom.
2. To examine the perspective of destiny as expressed by the Bini people of Nigeria
3. To investigate the relationship between destiny as understood from the point of view of determinism and personal responsibility.
4. To ascertain if the human person is determined, does the human person possess a freewill that can guarantee personal responsibility for one's life?

1.4 Significance of the Study

1. It will enable us to know the interrelationship between destiny, determinism and freedom.
2. It will expose us to the divergent notions of destiny in African thought system
3. It will also enable us to know the role of personal responsibility for one's life.

4. It will enable us to know how the Binis use the concept of destiny to explicate their beliefs in individuality and the Supreme Being.

1.5 Methodology

The methodology of this research work shall be phenomenological and hermeneutical method. It will be phenomenological in the sense that the Bini view of destiny in comparison with the concept of freewill and determinism will be considered. It will consist rather in seriously asking oneself whether the ideas in question should be accepted, rejected, reformed, modified or conserved, and in applying one's entire intellectual and imaginative intelligence to the search for an answer.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research work examined the aspect of destiny from the standpoint of an African ethnic group, the Bini people of Nigeria precisely. We are not oblivious of the fact that there are hundreds of cultures in Africa, but we shall focus on Bini for the sake of this long essay. The fundamental assumption herein is that there is a basic understanding of destiny that cuts across these diverse African traditions. Further on, an attempt to show the points of

convergence and divergence of destiny as including personal responsibility and destiny as excluding personal responsibility shall also be discussed.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Destiny: The concept of destiny is commonly used to refer to a fixed order of things established by Divine decree, which no one, however Pious or powerful, could alter⁹.

Determinism: Determinism is the view that everything that occurs in the universe must be the effect of a cause, produced by, is dependent on, and condition by what brought it into existence.¹⁰

Free-willism: holds that human beings are endowed with the ability for choice of actions, for decision among alternatives, and specifically, that given an innate moral sense, man can freely

⁹ Udoh, E. A discourse on fate in Ibibio cosmology. *Journal of Religious Studies*, University of Port Harcourt. Vol. 1. No. 2, 2000,100-110.

¹⁰ Oladipo, O. Predestination in Yoruba thought: Philosophers Interpretation. *Orita: Journal of Religion* XXIV (1 & 2),,1992 34-51

discern good and evil¹¹. Free-will is therefore the ability to make choices unimpeded by certain factors.

Pre-determinism: Pre-determinism (fatalism) holds, that “human choice and action have no influence on future events, which will be as they will be regardless of whatever we think or do”¹².

Ehi: Ehi in Edo ontology is often translated as ‘vital force’ of ‘life force’. It is a concept that is used to describe the energy or force that animates all things this included both physical and spiritual beings, as well as all forms of matter.

Ontology: The term ontology refers to the study of being or existence. “Ontology is the branch of metaphysics that explores the nature of beings and the fundamental categories of existence.

Metaphysics: Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of reality, including topics like the nature of existence, space, time, causality, and identity.

1.8 Literature Review

According to Battista Mondin, man is a kind of prodigy that combines within himself apparent antithesis; he is a fallen or unrealizable divinity, an unsuccessful absolute value or empty absolutization, an infinite or unreachable possibility. For this reason, I think that it would

¹¹ Marcourlessco, I. Freewill and determinism, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 5 ed. Mircea Eliade. (New York: Macmillan publishing company 1987)p.1250

¹² Graig, E. Fatalism: A Concise Approach, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (London: Routledge, 2006)p.1125

not be wrong to define man as an impossible possibility¹³. In Bini ontology, he is considered as next to the Supreme Being since he is at the central point of everything in nature. Hence the Bini beliefs that everything in the universe was created for him. For the Bini, man is very complex being and he is as mysterious as the universe in fact, for them, man is a ‘being-with’. However, from where, comes such a wholesome conviction? One may ask. But digesting the Bini accounts on the origin of man, answers to such question will not be farfetched.

Another question is, “who is a human person?” is itself a philosophical problem. There is no simple and straight-forward answer to that question. However, Boethius offers a definition of what is considered a classical definition of what the term, *person* is. For him, a person is an individual substance of a rational nature.¹⁴ Moreover, the human person, rendered as *omwan* in Bini philosophy is equivalent to *mmadu* of Igbo, *eniyan* of Yoruba, *nippa* of Akan, *anthropos* of Greek and *homo* of Latin.

The human person considered as *Omwan* in Bini philosophy, ordinarily possess the five senses of sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing alongside the rationality, which sets the human person from other sentient beings. Thus, the human person is more than just a psychic entity. The human person is also corporeal, as well as, spiritual. Following from this, Bini thought maintains that the human person is a composite of *orion* (soul), *egbe* (body) and *ehi* (spirit)..

¹³ Mondin, B. (1991), *Philosophical Anthropology*. (Bangalore India: Theological Publication, 1991) p.20

¹⁴ Reith, H *The Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1958), p.262

In African metaphysics, destiny is a fact; it is real. Destiny has been understood as the enigmatic force that is in control of the activities of the human person. In Bini thought, the term destiny is rendered as *ehi*. *Ehi* is carried into this world in *Orion*, the soul of a person. The overall understanding of *Ehi* is such that it entails that “human actions in the society are believed to have been preconditioned by nature”. This *ehi*, in a certain sense, vitiates personal freedom and responsibility.

The concept of destiny is a metaphysical phenomenon, believed to pervade human life and activities and life events. Destiny among the Bini indigenous people is known as *ehi*. *Ehi* (destiny) is futuristic in nature and thus, entails one’s calling or what God has for an individual. While *ehi-nema* is referred to as bad fate, they referred to *ehinoma* as good fate. Hence, in the Bini traditional philosophy, there is a very well -marked belief in *ehi* (destiny).

Ehi (destiny) in Bini may be teleological, collective, selective or communitarian in nature. It is teleological if it is designed for a purpose; it is collective if every member of a family or group is attended to by a particular fortune or misfortune; “it is communitarian if it attends a whole community; and termed selective if different people with no ontological community come together without having any foreknowledge of the situation to face their allotted destiny at the appointed time”¹⁵.

¹⁵ Airoboman, F.A. The concept of destiny and its social implications among the Esans. JORIND 10(3) available at <http://www.transcampus.org/journals>, www.ajol.info/journals/jorind. Accessed on 20th February, 2024

The *ehi* is only known to be given by God and no one can change one's destiny except God. Ehi is therefore believed to be an unalterable fixation, a set of life outcomes, sealed-up or preordained in one's life. It is that which determines the uniqueness and individuality of a person and events. God's destiny is therefore, said to be unavoidable. This suggests that some people are destined to be healthy, strong, hardworking, honest, and wealthy; others are destined to be sickly, weak, lazy, poor, and dishonest.

This hard determinism or fatalistic belief indicates that whatever one has chosen in the present of God remains the blue print of an individual's life. That is to say that whatever actions human perform was meant to be that way and nothing otherwise, since they are not in control of what they do, there is nothing like chance.

In addition, it is believed that personal *ehi*(guardian angel) is in possession of one's biography before one is born. This is one of the principles of destiny where it entails that one is believed to be just what some superior force has predestined, planned and programmed.

John Mbiti's work on *African Religions and Philosophy*¹⁶, John Mbiti is a seminal work that explores the religions and beliefs of the people of Africa. Mbiti argues that African traditional religion is not just a collection of superstitions and rituals, but rather a worldview that underlies the whole of African life. He examines a wide range of topics, including the nature of God, creation, ancestral spirits, magic, witchcraft, and more.

¹⁶ Mbiti, J *African Religion and Philosophy*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1969), p. 18

Mbiti's book provides a rich and in-depth look at the spiritual and cultural beliefs of Africans. One of the most interesting parts of Mbiti's book is his discussion of the relationship between religion and morality in African culture. Mbiti argues that morality is deeply embedded in African spirituality, and that the two are inseparable. He explores how African religious beliefs shape the way people view and behave in the world. This includes their view of work, family, community, and more. Mbiti also discusses how these beliefs influence the way Africans view the afterlife and what happens after death. Another aspect of Mbiti's book that's worth exploring is his discussion of the role of proverbs in African spirituality. Mbiti argues that proverbs play a key role in conveying wisdom and values in African culture. He explores the different types of proverbs used in Africa, and the messages they convey about life, family, work, and more. Mbiti also discusses how proverbs are used in the context of storytelling and oral tradition. He argues that the use of proverbs is a powerful tool for preserving and transmitting knowledge and wisdom from one generation to the next.

Kwame Appiah's, work explores the concept of cosmopolitanism and how it can be used to address global issues such as human rights and justice. Appiah argues that cosmopolitanism is not just about appreciating different cultures, but rather about being committed to the well-being of all humans regardless of their cultural or national background. He also discusses the challenges and opportunities of living in a cosmopolitan world, and how cosmopolitanism can be used to promote social justice and equality. Appiah also addresses the criticisms of cosmopolitanism, such as the idea that it is an elitist or Western-centric worldview.

He argues that cosmopolitanism is not about imposing a single set of values on everyone, but rather about recognizing and respecting the diversity of values and beliefs that exist in the world. He also explores the idea of "rooted cosmopolitanism,"¹⁷ which is the idea that we can be cosmopolitan while still maintaining a connection to our own cultures and communities.

One aspect of cosmopolitanism that Appiah explores in depth is the idea of "moral dialogue." He argues that moral dialogue is a key part of cosmopolitanism, and that it involves engaging with and learning from people with different values and beliefs. Appiah discusses the importance of listening to and understanding others, even when we disagree with them. He argues that this type of dialogue is essential for promoting social change and understanding.

Friday Igbafe explores the origins and development of Edo ontology. According to Igbafe, the roots of Edo ontology can be traced back to the ancient Benin Kingdom.¹⁸ In the kingdom, ontological thought was closely intertwined with religion, art, and philosophy. The book goes on to explore how these different areas of life influenced Edo ontology. Igbafe also discusses the central ideas of Edo ontology, such as the concept of dualism and the relationship between the individual and the community.

In addition to discussing the history and central ideas of Edo ontology, the book also explores its influence on other philosophical systems. For example, Igbafe argues that Edo

¹⁷ Appiah, K.A *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), p. 24

¹⁸ Igbafe, F.I *Metaphysics: Its Nature and Development*, (Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Corporation), p. 12

ontology has had a significant influence on both African and Western philosophical systems. He discusses how Edo ontology has been used to critique Western philosophy, as well as how it has been used to develop new philosophical ideas in Africa.

This work gave a lot of detail about the relationship between Edo ontology and Western philosophy. One example is the concept of dualism. Igbafe argues that Edo ontology is rooted in a dualistic worldview, which contrasts with the monistic worldview of Western philosophy. He also discusses how Edo ontology has been used to critique Western dualism, pointing out its limitations and potential flaws. Igbafe also discusses how Edo ontology has been used to develop a more inclusive concept of dualism in Africa.

Omeregbe explores how religion is embedded in Edo society. Omeregbe argues that religion is not just a set of beliefs and practices, but also a way of life. He discusses how religion is woven into every aspect of Edo life, from family life to economic activities to political decisions. The book also explores the relationship between religion and ethics, as well as how religion has been used to resolve social conflicts. Omeregbe also explores the role of religion in the process of modernization in Edo society.

Omeregbe also discusses the evolution of religious practices and beliefs in Edo society. He traces the history of religious belief from traditional Edo religion, through the influence of Christianity, to the development of modern Edo religion.¹⁹ This history highlights the complex

¹⁹ Omeregbe, M.I *Edo Religion and Society*, (Lagos: Malthouse Press, Limited), p. 16

and dynamic relationship between religious beliefs and societal changes. One of the most interesting topics discussed in the book is the concept of community in Edo religion.

Omoregbe argues that in Edo religion, community is not just a physical or geographical location, but a spiritual space. This community is defined by shared values, beliefs, and practices, which bring people together and create a sense of belonging. The concept of community is central to the Edo understanding of religion and the individual's relationship to the spiritual world. In Edo religion, the community is not only a spiritual space, but also a place of protection and safety. This idea is embodied in the concept of "orion," which refers to the protective power of the community. Omoregbe explains that orion is believed to guard against physical and spiritual harm, and that it can be called upon in times of danger. The power of *orion* is also believed to be strengthened through religious rituals and practices.

In *Oral Literature of the Edo Speaking Peoples of Nigeria*²⁰, P. Ekeh, explores the oral literature of the Edo-speaking peoples, who are a group of related ethnic groups in Nigeria. The book is organized into three parts. The first part explores the development and uses of oral literature in Edo culture. The second part explores different types of oral literature, including riddles, proverbs, and folktales. The third part discusses the role of women in Edo oral literature.

Ekeh provides a comprehensive and insightful look at the role of oral literature in Edo culture. In terms of specific highlights from the book, one interesting aspect is the discussion of

²⁰ Ekeh, P. *Oral Literature of the Edo Speaking Peoples of Nigeria*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979), p.22

how oral literature is used to transmit knowledge and values in Edo culture. For example, riddles are used to teach lessons about the world, and proverbs are used to convey complex ideas in a concise way. Ekeh also provides interesting examples of Edo folktales, including stories about the trickster figure, Eribo. One of the most fascinating parts of the book is the discussion of how oral literature has changed over time in Edo culture. Ekeh explains that oral literature has been influenced by colonialism, urbanization, and the spread of Christianity. He argues that despite these changes, oral literature has remained an important part of Edo culture. In fact, it has adapted and evolved to meet the needs of a changing society.

P. V. Inwagen In *An Essay on Freewill*²¹ makes the case for a particular view of free will known as “compatibilism.” This view holds that free will is compatible with the existence of determinism. Van Inwagen argues that free will is not undermined by the fact that events are determined by prior causes. Instead, he argues that free will is about an agent's ability to act on their own reasons. In the book, van Inwagen also responds to common objections to this view, such as the “no-free-will argument.” The no-free-will argument is one of the most common objections to compatibilism.

The argument goes like this: if determinism is true, then every event, including a person's choices and actions, is caused by prior events. Therefore, a person cannot be responsible for their choices and actions, since they are not free to do otherwise. Van Inwagen responds to this argument by making a distinction between two kinds of freedom. One is “freedom of action,”

²¹ Inwagen, P.V, *An Essay on Freewill*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 37

which is the ability to do what one chooses to do. The other is "freedom of will," which is the ability to have acted otherwise than one did. Van Inwagen argues that we can have freedom of action without freedom of will.

In other words, even if our choices are determined by prior causes, we can still act on our own reasons and be responsible for our actions. He gives the example of a person who is deciding what to have for dinner. Even if this person's choice is determined by their past experiences and current desires, they are still able to choose what to have for dinner. And they are responsible for that choice, even if they couldn't have chosen otherwise.

G. Azenabor, in his work, *Modern Theories in African*²² argues that these theories often ignore or misrepresent the unique features of African culture. He points to the example of "modernization theory," which he says ignores the complexity of African societies and the diversity of African experiences. Azenabor also discusses the work of other theorists, such as Frantz Fanon and Cheikh Anta Diop.

One of the main criticisms Azenabor makes of modernization theory is that it tends to portray Africa as a homogenous entity. He argues that this ignores the diversity of African cultures and the fact that Africa is not a single, unified place. Azenabor also criticizes modernization theory for its assumption that all societies will eventually develop in the same

²² Azenabor, G *Modern Theories in Africa*, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 2019), p. 11

way. He argues that this ignores the agency of African people and their ability to shape their own destiny.

Azenabor also looks at the way modernization theory has been used to justify colonialism and neocolonialism in Africa. He argues that this theory has been used to justify the exploitation of African resources and the continuation of inequality between Africa and the West. Azenabor also critiques the way this theory has been used to justify development policies that have not always benefited African people. He argues that these policies have often focused on economic growth rather than improving the lives of ordinary people.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROBLEM OF FREEWILL AND DETERMINISM IN WESTERN METAPHYSICS

2.1 The Meaning and Problem of Freedom and Determinism

“Determinism is a philosophical concept that posits every event, including human actions, is predetermined by prior events or conditions, making the future inevitable. This deterministic view challenges the idea of free will, suggesting that choices are constrained by a chain of causation”.²³ One problem with determinism lies in its clash with the common human experience of making choices. If everything is predetermined, the notion of personal responsibility and

²³ Honderich, T. *Determinism and Freedom*, (United States: Prometheus Books, 2002) p. 19

accountability becomes complex. Critics argue that determinism undermines moral responsibility, as individuals may not be truly free to choose their actions. Quantum mechanics introduces uncertainty at the microscopic level, challenging strict determinism. The indeterminacy principle suggests that certain aspects of a particle's behavior are inherently unpredictable, posing a challenge to the deterministic worldview. Compatibilists attempt to reconcile determinism with free will by proposing that both can coexist. They argue that even if our actions are determined, as long as we act in accordance with our desires and motivations, we can still be considered free.

Determinism raises profound questions about free will, moral responsibility, and the nature of causation. The tension between determinism and free will remains a complex and enduring topic in philosophy and science. Determinism can be categorized into various forms, including theological determinism, which asserts that a divine entity predetermines all events, and causal determinism, based on the idea that natural laws and causation govern every occurrence in the universe.

The Laplacean determinism, named after Pierre-Simon Laplace, suggests that if the position and velocity of every particle in the universe were known at a specific moment, the entire future and past could be precisely calculated. This deterministic perspective, however, faces challenges from chaos theory, which highlights the sensitivity of deterministic systems to initial conditions, making long-term predictions difficult. “Existentialist philosophers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, vehemently oppose determinism, arguing for radical freedom and responsibility.

They contend that humans are condemned to be free, meaning we are responsible for creating our essence through our choices, and determinism denies this essential aspect of human existence”.²⁴

The problem of determinism extends beyond philosophy, reaching into the realms of psychology and neuroscience. Neuroscientific findings on brain activity and decision-making raise questions about whether our choices are predetermined by neural processes, challenging traditional notions of free will. “The discourse on determinism encompasses a wide array of perspectives, ranging from theological considerations to scientific advancements, weaving a complex tapestry of ideas that continues to captivate thinkers across disciplines.”²⁵

Determinism's influence also extends into social and political philosophy, where debates arise concerning the impact of determinism on societal structures and individual liberties. Discussions on justice, punishment, and the role of government are often framed in the context of whether individuals have genuine control over their actions. Behaviorism in psychology, which gained prominence in the early 20th century, embraced a deterministic view by focusing on observable behaviors and environmental stimuli. This perspective downplayed internal mental processes and emphasized external influences, challenging notions of personal agency.

²⁴ Odesanmi A. C., “Jean Paul Sartre and the Concept of Determinism”, *Global Journal of Humanities* Vol 7, No 1 &2, 2008:85-89.

²⁵ Peter Kampits, “The Actuality of Sartre’s Free Will Conception”. *Labyrinth* Vol. 17, No 2, 2015.

In the field of artificial intelligence, determinism is a crucial consideration. Some argue that a deterministic AI system could be predictable and controllable, while others stress the importance of incorporating elements of randomness or uncertainty for more adaptive and creative outcomes.

In literature and the arts, determinism has been explored through dystopian narratives and works that contemplate the implications of a world governed by predestined events. These creative expressions often serve as vehicles for examining the human condition within deterministic frameworks.

Determinism's impact is pervasive, touching on diverse areas of human inquiry, from ethics and metaphysics to science, technology, and the arts. The ongoing dialogue around determinism continues to shape our understanding of the nature of reality and our place within it.

In the realm of philosophy, debates surrounding determinism often delve into the compatibilist versus incompatibilist positions. “Compatibilists argue that determinism and free will are compatible, asserting that even if our actions are determined, we can still be considered free if we act in accordance with our desires. Incompatibilists, on the other hand, maintain that determinism and free will are fundamentally incompatible, challenging the notion that genuine freedom can coexist with a predetermined universe.”²⁶

²⁶ John Martin, Fischer, Robert Kane, Pereboom, Derk & Vargas, Manuel, *Four views on Free Will*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007) p. 125

The idea of soft determinism suggests a middle ground between strict determinism and full free will. Soft determinists acknowledge external influences on human behavior but argue that these influences do not negate personal responsibility. They propose a nuanced understanding of causation and choice.

Determinism also intersects with debates on time. Eternalism, for instance, contends that past, present, and future events all exist simultaneously. This perspective challenges the conventional linear view of time and has implications for how we understand the determinism of events across the temporal spectrum.

In contemporary discussions, advances in neuroscience and brain imaging technologies have sparked inquiries into the neural basis of decision-making. Questions arise about whether brain activity precedes and determines conscious choices, adding a layer of complexity to the traditional debates on determinism and free will.

In the realm of determinism, chaos theory introduces a fascinating dimension. Chaos theory explores systems that are sensitive to initial conditions, making them appear unpredictable over time. This sensitivity to initial conditions challenges the Laplacean determinism, suggesting that even deterministic systems can exhibit complex and unpredictable behavior.

The butterfly effect is a famous concept within chaos theory, illustrating how a small change in one part of a system can lead to significant, unforeseen consequences elsewhere. This idea underscores the intricate interplay of determinism and unpredictability in dynamic systems.

Indeterminism, a contrast to determinism, asserts that certain events are inherently unpredictable or random. Quantum mechanics, at the subatomic level, introduces indeterminacy with principles like Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, suggesting inherent limits to our ability to precisely measure certain pairs of properties, like position and momentum.

The debate between determinism and indeterminism raises profound questions about the nature of reality. While determinism seeks order and predictability, indeterminism introduces an element of chance and randomness, challenging our assumptions about a clockwork universe.

As technology advances, questions of determinism and agency also arise in the development of artificial intelligence and machine learning. Ethical considerations revolve around the implications of creating systems that exhibit apparent decision-making capabilities, prompting reflections on responsibility and control in the face of deterministic algorithms.

Determinism, therefore, continues to be a rich and evolving topic, touching on chaos theory, quantum mechanics, ethical dimensions, and the ever-expanding intersections between philosophy, science, and technology.

2.2 Types of Determinism

Determinism is a philosophical concept that suggests events are predetermined by antecedent events or natural laws. There are various types of determinism, each offering a distinct perspective on causality and predictability.

1. **Causal Determinism:** This posits that every event is determined by prior events in accordance with causal laws. It implies a linear cause-and-effect relationship, suggesting that if one knows the initial conditions and laws governing a system, one can predict its future states. This type assumes a strict cause-and-effect relationship, influenced by classical physics. However, quantum mechanics introduces uncertainty at the microscopic level, challenging the absolute predictability suggested by causal determinism.
2. **Theological Determinism:** Rooted in religious beliefs, this type asserts that a divine force or God predetermines all events. It implies that human actions and the course of the world are part of a grand plan established by a higher power. Rooted in religious doctrines, it raises questions about free will. If events are preordained by a divine power, how does human agency fit into this framework? Theological determinism often sparks debates about fate, morality, and theodicy.
3. **Biological Determinism:** This perspective attributes human behavior and characteristics to genetic factors and biological influences. It contends that an individual's traits and actions are largely shaped by their genetic makeup. While genetics undeniably influence traits, the debate centers on the extent of genetic determinism. Environmental factors and gene-environment interactions play crucial roles, making it challenging to attribute all human characteristics solely to genetics.

4. **Environmental Determinism:** This notion asserts that external factors, such as geography and climate, determine the development and progress of societies. It suggests that environmental conditions shape cultural, social, and economic outcomes. This idea faced criticism for oversimplifying the complexity of human societies. Critics argue that reducing cultures to environmental factors neglects the agency of individuals and societies in shaping their destinies.

5. **Technological Determinism:** Examines the impact of technology on shaping societal structures and behavior. It proposes that technological advancements play a pivotal role in steering the course of human history and culture. Critics of technological determinism question whether technology is the sole driver of societal change. They argue that human choices, politics, and social structures also play pivotal roles in shaping technological development and its impact.

6. **Economic Determinism:** “Rooted in Marxist theory, this perspective contends that economic factors and class structures are the primary determinants of societal development”²⁷. It suggests that the economic base of a society shapes its political and cultural superstructure. Marxist economic determinism emphasizes the role of economic structures in shaping societies. Critics argue that it oversimplifies the complexity of historical development by reducing it to class struggle and economic factors alone.

²⁷ Howard Sherman, “Marx and Determinism” *Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1981, pp. 61-71.

2.3 Arguments and Proponents of Determinism

However, critics argue that determinism challenges notions of free will, as it implies that our choices are predetermined by prior events. This raises ethical and moral concerns, questioning the accountability and responsibility of individuals for their actions. “Philosophers like Thomas Hobbes and Spinoza support determinism, viewing it as compatible with a mechanistic universe”²⁸. They contend that our decisions are shaped by external factors, such as biology and environment, and that free will is an illusion. “On the opposing side, figures like Immanuel Kant and existentialist thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre challenge determinism. They propose that humans possess free will, allowing them to transcend external influences and make choices independent of deterministic forces”.²⁹

In essence, the debate surrounding determinism revolves around the balance between causation and human agency, exploring whether our actions are predetermined or if free will allows us to shape our destinies. The discourse continues to shape diverse fields, from ethics to neuroscience, with no conclusive resolution in sight. Determinism's proponents argue that it offers a coherent worldview where events follow a predetermined course, fostering a sense of order and regularity in the universe. Some scientific determinists believe that with enough knowledge of the initial conditions and laws of nature, one could accurately predict future events,

²⁸ Frank Lucash, What Spinoza’s view of Freedom Should Have Been. *Philosophy Research Archives* 10:491-499.

²⁹ Odesanmi, A. C. “Jean Paul Sartre and The Concept of Determinism”, *Global Journal of Humanities* Vol 7, No 1 &2, 2008:85-89.

providing a deterministic foundation for scientific inquiry. Behavioral determinism suggests that human actions are governed by factors such as genetics, environment, and upbringing. This perspective finds support in the field of psychology, where behaviorists like B.F. Skinner emphasize the impact of external stimuli on shaping behavior, supporting a deterministic outlook.

Environmental determinism, another facet, posits that geographic and climatic factors largely shape human societies. Historically, this idea influenced theories suggesting that certain civilizations thrived or declined based on their environment.

Critics, however, argue that determinism challenges the concept of free will. The absence of true choice in a deterministic framework raises ethical questions, as it implies individuals are not morally responsible for their actions. This tension is particularly evident in discussions on criminal responsibility, accountability, and punishment. Existentialist thinkers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, vehemently oppose determinism. They emphasize human freedom and the ability to make choices independently of external influences. Sartre's concept of "radical freedom" contends that individuals are condemned to be free, suggesting that even in the face of determinism, one can choose how to respond to circumstances.

In contemporary discussions, the integration of determinism and indeterminism is explored in compatibilism, which seeks to reconcile the idea of causation with the existence of free will. This nuanced approach attempts to address the complexities of agency while acknowledging deterministic elements in the universe.

Overall, the determinism debate extends across various disciplines, encompassing physics, philosophy, psychology, and ethics, reflecting the profound implications of this concept on our understanding of the nature of existence and human autonomy. Determinism finds expression in various forms, with philosophical, scientific, and theological dimensions shaping the discourse.

2.4 Arguments and Exponents of Free Will

“Free will is a philosophical concept that explores the extent to which individuals have the ability to make choices independently of external influences. Arguments for free will often center around the notion that humans possess the capacity for self-determination. Proponents argue that our conscious decisions are not predetermined by external forces, emphasizing the importance of personal agency”.³⁰

On the contrary, determinism posits that every event, including human actions, is predetermined and inevitable. Some argue that factors such as genetics, environment, and past experiences shape our choices, challenging the idea of genuine free will. The determinist perspective raises questions about the true autonomy of human decision-making.

³⁰ Nicholas Rescher, *Free Will: A Philosophical Reappraisal*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publisher, 2008) p. 32

Compatibilism seeks to reconcile free will with determinism by suggesting that these concepts can coexist. “Advocates of compatibilism argue that free will is compatible with the idea that events are determined, emphasizing the nuanced nature of choice and asserting that being influenced by factors doesn't negate one's freedom”.³¹ Neuroscience also plays a role in discussions about free will, with some asserting that brain activity and neural processes influence decision-making. This perspective challenges the traditional understanding of free will, suggesting that our choices may be rooted in biological processes beyond our conscious control.

Critics of free will often highlight the impact of societal structures, cultural norms, and external pressures on individual choices. They argue that these external factors limit the scope of true autonomy, raising questions about the practicality of free will in complex social contexts.

Expanding on the arguments surrounding free will, existentialist philosophy emphasizes individual responsibility and the significance of personal choice. Existentialists contend that even in the face of external influences or societal expectations, individuals can assert their freedom through conscious decision-making, contributing to the ongoing discourse on the nature of free will.

Conversely, behavioral psychology delves into the impact of conditioning and reinforcement on behavior, suggesting that external stimuli can shape choices. This

³¹ P. V. Inwagen, *An Essay on Freewill*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 50

perspective challenges the notion of unbounded free will, proposing that our actions are, to some extent, responses to environmental cues and past experiences.

The concept of moral responsibility is closely tied to discussions on free will. Supporters argue that holding individuals accountable for their actions implies a recognition of their capacity for autonomous decision-making. Critics, however, question the fairness of assigning blame or praise when external factors may have influenced choices.

Philosophers like Daniel Dennett propose a "compatibilist" stance by arguing that free will can coexist with a deterministic worldview. Dennett suggests that "even if our choices are influenced by various factors, as long as we are not coerced, we can still consider those choices free"³². This perspective attempts to bridge the gap between determinism and the belief in personal agency. In the realm of quantum mechanics, some theorists introduce indeterminacy at the microscopic level, suggesting that randomness at the quantum level might allow for genuine spontaneity in decision-making. However, the application of quantum principles to human decision-making remains highly speculative and is a subject of ongoing scientific and philosophical inquiry.

The multifaceted nature of the free will debate incorporates insights from various disciplines, encouraging a holistic exploration of human agency, ethics, and the intricate

³² Daniel C. Dennett, *Freedoms Evolves*, (United States: Viking Books, 2003) p. 45

interplay of internal and external factors that shape our choices. While no consensus has been reached, the ongoing dialogue provides a rich tapestry of perspectives that continue to captivate scholars and thinkers across diverse fields.

Examining the theological perspective on free will, discussions often revolve around concepts like divine omniscience and predestination. Theological determinism, present in some religious traditions, contends that an all-knowing and all-powerful deity's foreknowledge of human actions inherently precludes genuine free will. This stance prompts theological debates on the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human autonomy. "In the realm of ethics, the concept of free will is intricately connected to discussions about moral desert and just punishment. Theories of punishment, ranging from retribution to rehabilitation, often hinge on assumptions about the extent of an individual's control over their actions. This ethical dimension adds complexity to the free will discourse, influencing societal norms and legal systems"³³.

Cognitive science explores the neural mechanisms associated with decision-making, introducing the idea that our choices might be influenced by subconscious processes. The examination of brain activity raises questions about the conscious awareness and control individuals have over their decisions, adding a neuroscientific layer to the ongoing debate on free will.

³³ Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). p.105

The concept of agency in the context of free will considers not only the ability to make choices but also the sense of ownership and control over those choices. Psychologists delve into the subjective experience of decision-making, exploring how individuals perceive and attribute their actions, contributing to a nuanced understanding of free will from a psychological standpoint.

In literature and the arts, the exploration of free will often serves as a central theme. Literary works, philosophical novels, and films frequently delve into the complexities of choice, destiny, and the consequences of actions, offering creative insights into the human experience and contributing to the broader cultural conversation about free will.

In the realm of psychology, the study of free will intersects with research on autonomy, self-determination theory, and the psychology of motivation. Scholars like Edward Deci and Richard Ryan propose that individuals have an inherent need for autonomy, suggesting that a sense of self-directedness contributes to well-being. This psychological perspective aligns with aspects of the free will debate, emphasizing the importance of personal agency in fostering positive mental states. From a sociological standpoint, discussions on free will often intertwine with examinations of social structures and cultural influences. Sociologists explore how societal norms, institutions, and power dynamics shape individuals' choices, contributing to a sociocultural

perspective that complements philosophical and psychological dimensions of the free will discourse.

Feminist philosophy engages with questions of agency and autonomy, raising considerations about how gender roles and societal expectations impact women's perceived freedom of choice. Feminist scholars explore how intersections of gender, race, and class influence the scope of free will within different social contexts, enriching the discussion with diverse perspectives.

In the field of artificial intelligence and ethics, questions about machine autonomy and decision-making echo the free will debate. As technology advances, ethical considerations arise regarding the extent to which autonomous systems possess a form of decisional freedom or if their actions are merely predetermined by programming and algorithms. Cross-cultural perspectives on free will reveal variations in how different societies conceptualize and value individual agency. Some cultures may place a higher emphasis on collective decision-making, challenging the universality of Western philosophical notions of free will and prompting a more globally inclusive dialogue. The ongoing exploration of free will extends to interdisciplinary collaboration, fostering conversations that bridge gaps between philosophy, science, humanities, and social sciences. This interdisciplinary approach enhances the depth and breadth of the discourse,

allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of free will's complexities across various domains of human experience.

In the field of law, the concept of free will holds significant implications for legal responsibility and culpability. Legal systems often assume that individuals possess the capacity for rational decision-making, forming the basis for criminal and civil liability. Debates within jurisprudence explore how notions of free will align with legal frameworks, considering factors like mental health, coercion, and the impact of external influences on an individual's ability to make autonomous choices.

Philosophical debates on free will extend to discussions about the nature of time. “Some argue that if the future is fixed or predetermined, genuine free will becomes challenging to reconcile. Temporal theories, including A-theory and B-theory, introduce complex considerations about the nature of time and its implications for the possibility of autonomous decision-making”³⁴.

In the realm of education, discussions about free will influence pedagogical approaches and the cultivation of critical thinking skills. Educators grapple with how to balance guidance and autonomy, fostering an environment that encourages students to

³⁴ Susanne Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) p 115.

make choices while recognizing the influence of external factors on their decision-making processes.

Recent developments in cognitive science and artificial intelligence pose new challenges to the free will discourse. As technologies advance, questions arise about the potential impact of neuroscience and AI on our understanding of human agency. Exploring the ethical implications of enhancing or altering decision-making capacities through technology adds a futuristic dimension to the ongoing debate.

Within the context of mental health, considerations of free will intersect with discussions on personal responsibility for one's well-being. The debate touches on topics such as addiction, where individuals may grapple with the balance between external influences and personal agency, raising questions about the moral dimensions of addiction and recovery.

The exploration of free will extends to popular culture, with themes of choice, fate, and destiny prevalent in literature, movies, and television. Creative works often serve as mirrors to societal reflections on the complexities of decision-making, contributing to a shared narrative that resonates across diverse audiences. “The discourse on free will spans across legal, temporal, educational, technological, mental health, and cultural dimensions, showcasing the interconnectedness of this philosophical inquiry with

various aspects of human life and society”³⁵. The ongoing exploration of free will continues to evolve, enriched by insights from a multitude of disciplines and perspectives. In the field of evolutionary biology and psychology, for example, the question of free will intersects with inquiries into the adaptive nature of decision-making. Evolutionary psychologists explore how cognitive processes related to choice may have conferred survival advantages, examining whether the capacity for free will has evolved as an advantageous trait for navigating complex environments.

Within the context of religious and spiritual beliefs, diverse perspectives on free will emerge. Theological discussions delve into the compatibility of divine omniscience and human agency, while spiritual traditions may emphasize practices aimed at cultivating a sense of inner freedom and self-awareness. Exploring how different belief systems address the concept of free will adds a layer of cultural and spiritual diversity to the ongoing dialogue. In the domain of economics, discussions on free will intertwine with debates about rational choice theory. Economists explore whether individuals make decisions based on rational calculations and preferences, or if external influences, biases, and societal structures significantly shape economic choices. This economic perspective offers insights into the interplay between individual agency and external factors in decision-making processes.

³⁵ Mary T. Clark (ed.), *The Problem of Freedom*, (New York: Appleton Century- Crofts, 1973) p. 30

The discourse on free will also engages with the philosophy of mind, investigating the nature of consciousness and the role it plays in shaping our choices. Philosophers of mind explore questions related to intentionality, self-awareness, and the subjective experience of decision-making, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of how consciousness intertwines with free will. In the realm of political philosophy, the concept of free will informs discussions about personal liberties, rights, and the role of government. Political theorists debate the balance between individual autonomy and social responsibility, exploring how political structures can either facilitate or constrain the exercise of free will within a society. The impact of technology on free will extends beyond artificial intelligence, with considerations about the influence of social media, algorithms, and digital platforms on individual decision-making. Ethical discussions arise regarding the responsibility of technology creators and the potential societal consequences of digital environments that may shape and influence users' choices.

The ongoing exploration of free will reveals its pervasive nature, touching upon diverse fields such as biology, psychology, religion, economics, philosophy of mind, political philosophy, and technology. This multidisciplinary approach highlights the intricate web of factors that contribute to our understanding of human agency and decision-making in the complex tapestry of existence.

In the realm of philosophy, the debate over free will extends to discussions about moral luck. This concept explores how factors beyond an individual's control, such as external circumstances or luck, can influence the moral assessment of their actions. Philosophers like Thomas Nagel delve into the implications of moral luck, challenging traditional notions of moral responsibility and the extent of free will in the face of unforeseeable events.

The relationship between free will and creativity is another intriguing area of exploration. Creativity involves novel and meaningful decision-making, prompting questions about the role of conscious choice in the creative process. Examining how free will contributes to artistic expression and innovative thinking adds a dimension to the debate that expands beyond traditional philosophical considerations.

The intersection of free will and identity is a topic of interest in psychology and philosophy. Questions arise about how personal choices contribute to the construction of one's identity and whether individuals have the freedom to shape their own sense of self. This connection between free will and identity explores the narrative nature of personal agency in shaping life stories.

Environmental determinism introduces a perspective that links geographical and environmental factors to human behavior. This approach challenges the notion of absolute free will by suggesting that aspects of our surroundings, such as climate or

geography, may shape societal structures and influence individual choices. The exploration of environmental determinism adds a socio-environmental layer to the broader discourse on free will.

The role of emotions in decision-making is a significant facet of the free will discussion. Psychologists and neuroscientists investigate how emotions contribute to the choices individuals make, exploring the interplay between affective states, cognitive processes, and the perception of personal agency. This emotional dimension introduces a nuanced understanding of how feelings may influence and, at times, override rational decision-making.

2.5 An Overview of the Edo Worldview

Worldview constitutes the framework through which an individual interprets the world and interacts in it, Philosophers identify assumptions about the make-up of reality or how the world works, conceptual schemes, or patterns of ideas or values and organize them to form a worldview. Worldviews involves how the average person makes sense of life, it is used to interpret and make sense of the world. Perceptions of the world and reality can greatly differ between people or cultures since their assumptions

of what is important and “true” differ. Worldview as used in this context means the cosmology of Bini people of Nigeria, that is, how man looks at the world in relation to himself. In other words, cosmology is not seen as a science and branch of astrology which views the universe as integral whole or part of the universe which is under astronomical observation as part of that whole.

2.5.1 Ethnography of Edo People

Benin City which lies between Latitude 6'12' N and Longitude 5'45' E is about 11.4 km (7.3 No' miles) inland from the mouth of the Benin River which flows into the Gulf of Guinea. It is on a fairly flat terrain with a few hills to the East and to the North-East and is some 78.64 metres above sea level.³⁶ The city lies in the thick equatorial rain forest belt with rich vegetation and forests consisting largely of very tall trees and dense undergrowth. It has a tropical climate characterized by two main seasons - the wet and raining season (May to October) and the dry season (November to April). Average annual rainfall is about 200 cm (80 inches) while the average temperature is about 50°C. It is situated 200 miles by road east of Lagos.³⁷

³⁶ Aimiuwu, L.E.A., *Edonimose: Regenerating a Great Civilization*, Lecture Delivered at the Annual Egharevba Memorial Lecture, Published by Institute of Benin Studies.2005, p.5

³⁷ Akenzua, E. *Some Facts About Great Benin*. (Benin City: Bendel Newspaper Corporation, 1979) p. 10

Benin is the center of Nigeria's rubber industry, but processing palm nuts for oil is still an important traditional industry. The Benin Kingdom (different from the modern-day Republic of Benin, formerly known as Dahomey) is located in the tropical rainforest belt of Southern Nigeria, to the west of the River Niger. The Benin kingdom was founded in the 10th century (1180 AD).³⁸

Today, Benin City is the capital of the present day Edo State of Nigeria. Edo State could be defined as a collection gathering of people of united yet diverse identity, who are mostly located in the mid-western part of Nigeria, West Africa. Edo State was created in 1991 out of the then Bendel State of Nigeria and subsequently divided into Edo and Delta States. “Many communities in Nigeria trace their ancestry to the ancient Benin Kingdom hence there is a lot of linguistic and cultural affinity among the communities which include - Akoko Edo, Afemai, Edo, Esan, Etsako, Ora, Igala, Igbira, Okpameri, Uneme Osoyo, Urhobo, Izon and Yoruba speaking communities”³⁹ present in the State.

According to Metuh, “Cosmological worldview is taken to mean: the complex of people’s belief about the origin, structure and organization of the universe and the laws

³⁸ Aisien, E, *The Benin City Pilgrimage Stations* (Benin City: Aisien Publishers, Benin City, 2001) pp. 145-147.

³⁹ Omoigui, I. “How To Improve Youth Development In Edo State’, a key note presentation on Excellence in Education and Culture for the New Millennium, 14th Annual National Convention of the Edo National Association of USA and Canada, On the first report of the SFHA(San Francisco Housing Association),2005, vol. 13,

governing the interaction of the being in it”⁴⁰. It may be necessary to ask why a study of people’s problem of causality should start with their cosmology? As Uchendu observed, “to know how people view the world around them is to understand how they evaluate life, and peoples evaluation of life, both temporal and non-temporal, provides them with a character of action and a guide of behaviour”⁴¹.

While trying to characterize Benin traditional cosmology, occasional reference will be made to other African traditional cultures. According to Mbiti, “Africans have their own ontology which is both religious and anthropocentric in the sense that everything is seen in terms of relations to man.”⁴² Mbiti went further to divide this ontology into five categories as follows: a) God as the ultimate explanation of the genesis and substance of both man and all things. b) Spirit being made up of super- human beings and the spirit of men who died a long time ago. c) Man, including human beings who are alive and those about to be born. d) Animals and plants or the reminder of biological life. e. Phenomena and objects without biological life.⁴³

The anthropocentric ontology can be conveniently grouped into sensible thing like man, plants, animals as well as phenomenon and objects without biological life; and

⁴⁰ Omijeh, M, “EHI: The concept of guardian Angel in Bini Religion”,in Ade Adebola E.A(Ed), *Traditional religion in West Africa*. Ibadan: Daystar Press,1983) p. 255

⁴¹ Uchendu

⁴² Mbiti, J. *African Religions and Philosophy* (2nd ed.) (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nig. Ltd, 1991) p. 288.

⁴³ *Ibid.*,

supersensible entities such as God and the spirits. The second group is sustained more by belief systems than by empirical proofs.

In Benin worldview, Egharevba identified the existence of two worlds, namely, *Agbon* and *Erimwin*. For him, *Agbon* is the sensible world created and controlled by *Osanobua* (God) through the divinities⁴⁴. All occurrences in *Agbon* are therefore believed to be controlled by *Osanobua* through the divinities as His agents. *Erimwin* is the invisible supersensible world. It is populated by a variety of spirit being such as *Enikaro* (Ancestors) and *Ebo* (Divinities). It is the general belief of the Benin people that divinities who are *Osanobua*'s agents control both *Agbon* and *Erimwin*. Egharevba's two fold classification of Benin cosmology encompasses the five categories of African' ontology as outlined by Mbiti.

Mbiti has this to say, thus, God is involved in the affairs of mankind, and people experience this involvement in terms of his continuing to create, sustain, provide, pastor, nurse, heal and save⁴⁵. Most of these functions on the physical and concrete level of being, and with special reference to the life of man. Mbiti's views appear to be relevant to the Bini cosmology, because the Binis hold that God is good to all men. They however, attribute evils and sorrows of life to Him as well. Calamities and afflictions in

⁴⁴ Egharevba, J.U. *A Short History of Benin* (Ibadan: University Press, 1968) p. 96.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p 56

Human life, which puzzle the Bini society, are explained in terms of a causal agent, and that agent, probably, is *Osanobua*(God).

When endless trouble continues in a given family, the Binis say that they come from, or are approved by God. The Binis believe that God can strike people who commit incest or contravene important rituals. The rampant death of every male child born into a given family, the premature death of every female child born into a given family, the inability of all full-grown daughter or adult males in a given family to have life- partners, the mental disorder and disease found in a given family and so on are interpreted by the Binis to be God's punishment for man's misdoings.

National calamities such as drought, epidemic, flood and death of infants are seen by the Bini people as beyond individual human cause or control. They are generally attributed to God's activity or to a spiritual being. If God is taught to be responsible, it is often taken that he is punishing people for their mischief. It is God's manifestation of a judicial manner. Death appears to be the most mysterious and puzzling of all misfortunes. For the Yoruba, Ibo, Isoko as well as the Benin, God is paradoxically the giver of life as well as the one who takes it away. The Benin people believe that there is a divinity of death (*Ogie-uwu*). Like the Yoruba, Bacongo, Efik, Urhobo, the Benin people hold that God created death for the purpose of recalling the persons whose times on earth is fulfilled.

According to Mbiti , God is not blamed for calamities, misfortunes and sorrows which strike men. He is brought into the picture primarily as an attempt to explain what is otherwise difficult for the human mind; an explanation, which also serves to comfort those struck by the particular event for suffering⁴⁶. It is in the light of Mbiti's remark that the actions of the causal agents are examined. It is meant to explain the purpose for their actions.

Suffice it to say that the presence of God in the Benin cultural heritage helps to sustain moral sanctity, expose human limitations, encourage self-restraints and self-control, and eliminate human malevolence, thereby protecting existing custom, tradition, norms and values inherent in Benin cultural heritage. His presence remains an invisible cord that binds all Benin people together under one untied political structure called the Benin kingdom with the Oba as the political and spiritual head.

2.5.2 Dressing and Hairstyle

Dressing is one of the basic necessities of life either as a protection from the elements or as a means of covering one's nudity upon the consciousness of same. Most cultures and societies have specific standards for dressing male and female; they devise dress codes which are appropriate for the different genders, while at the same time complementing the beauty of humanity. Bini dress forms play an important role as an

⁴⁶ M. I. Omoregbe, *Edo Religion and Society*, (Lagos: Malthhouse Press, Limited), p. 34

expression of identity, the Binis dress for every occasion and every dressing tells a story of who you are, what you are doing and where you are going.

Dress is politically, socially and religiously significant in its role as indicator of group identity and as a medium for developing and strengthening ethnic, religious and political cohesion. In Bini societies, “there are dress codes related to age grade, personal, official, and other stations in life, especially as these enhance or reflect functions on duties, statuses, and performances”⁴⁷.

Apart from the above, dress is supposed to be suitable to occasions, to weather, and to vocation. An awareness of these facts is part of the sensitivity which is demonstrated and presented to members of society such that while making available avenues for the flouting of these codes on special occasions, members of society display carefulness in grace and candor, to ensure that they do not constitute a nuisance to themselves and to others, There is also careful reinforcement mechanisms to ensure that the equilibrium is not displaced, dislocated, and destroyed; and where temporary latitude is provided for breach, means of correction are provided through proper education and preparation of members of society for the appreciation of the special nature of the circumstances of breach.

⁴⁷ Bewaji, J.A.I. *Narratives of Struggles, The Philosophy and Politics of Development*, (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2012) p.244.

For this reason, it is totally baffling what has transpired in contemporary society where one cannot distinguish between male and female, between young and old, and where climate, culture, and ethics do not seem to matter with regard to self-presentation to the public. Traditional Bini has evolved from the use of traditional textile materials to the adoption of Western materials into traditional dress forms and styles. Dress costumes symbolize sex, social status and ethnicity. Bini traditional styles of clothing for men include wrap-around clothes, shirt tops and bogus skirt otherwise known as “*buluku*”, as well as matching beads. For women, clothing includes wrap-around clothes, as well as head gear known as “*okuku*”. This is complimented with a blouse or a beaded cape popularly known as “*Ewu Ivie*” The women also adorn their hair with traditional beads and hair brass pin which leave them totally stunning. Coral beads worn by Edo men and women of Nigeria are symbolic of power, prestige, wealth royalty and beauty. Bini clothing has distinctively coloured fabrics and design patterns that are of cultural significance. Different colours can signify status, fertility, vitality, spirituality or the type of ceremony being performed.

Many modern African hairstyles are influenced by and have historical connections to traditional African cultures. “African inspired hairstyles include Afro or straightened hair, dreadlocks, buns, knots and plaited hair. Natural hair has been worn as statement of African identity and pride; for example, the Afro hairstyles of the 1960s were an

expression of connection, power, revolution and differentiation”⁴⁸. It was a popular hairstyle among artists, political activists, and youths. There are elaborate hairstyles of and specialists in various African communities that cater the ornamental aspects of hair presentations. The elaborate hairstyles are mere body decorations and beautification that tells the story of about the society. Reflect upon morals in society represents choices and testimonials of the clubs and societies of their various wearers, etc. Some others are associated with religious persons who officiate in special capacities and on special occasions.

2.5.3 Greetings in Edo worldview

Greeting is an important aspect of Bini culture. To the Bini people, it is an indicator of a good upbringing. When a child gets up from bed in the morning, the first thing he or she does is to greet the parents, brothers, sisters and other senior members of the family. This greeting does not stop in the house but extends to every adult the child sees on the way. A child cannot count the number of times he or she have greeted an adult in a day and hence not greet him or her again. Greeting in Bini

⁴⁸ Bewaji, J.A.I, *Beauty and Culture: Perspectives in Black Aesthetics, An Introduction to African and African Diaspora Philosophy of Art*, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited,2003)p.132

is not one-sided as adults also greet younger ones when they are returning from a trip, work, school, market, or doing something else.

In Edo land, some of the popular greetings are *koyo*,(hello) *obowie*,(good morning) *obavan* (good afternoon) *Obota*(good evening, *Obokhian* (welcome) *okhionwie* (good night)Greeting is to the Bini a situation in which neither the greeter nor the greeted loses. However, despite the strong emphasis the Bini lay on greetings, respect for elders or obedience to authority, the people both young and old are not subservient to anybody. They live in an egalitarian society in love, brotherhood and tranquility. In like manner, the Edo have associated themselves with the past and it is not uncommon to find that every family is therefore traced to its original forebear, a fact which is borne out by their family morning salutation. In most cases this morning salutations are interlinked with the various chieftaincy titles of the land.

A common saying in Benin are either stranger or else not freeman, but even those who are to belong to this groups(of strangers or not freeman) usually take the morning salutations of their masters as the case maybe. For example, *delaiso* (laiso), *lamogun* is the morning greeting of the royal family. *Latose* is the for the Edohen of Benin family, *lavbieze* is for the Iyase of Benin family, *Lagiesan* is for the Ezomo of Benin family, *Labo* is for the Enogie of Ugo N'Iyekorhionwon family, *Layedede* is for the Iyase of Uselu, *Laloke* for the Oloke family of Benin.etc.

2.5.4 Songs and Dance

Songs are inspirational and elevating. In war and peace, men and women in many Bini societies improvise songs and sing old ones either embellish to reflect contemporary realities or modified to remove redundancies created by historical anachronisms to inspire their men and women to acts of valor. They also sing to remind their women and men of the great deeds of their ancestors and the need to equal or surpass these. In competitions such as wrestling, running, fencing, and in collective works of cooperation or for personal rewards, the songs are tonics to the timid and encouragement to even the lazy.

As part of the cultural repertoire for a well ordered society, songs are means of recreation that helps soothe the emotions. Songs are valued as means of relaxation, and children on moonlit nights are encouraged to rehearse and perform musical and theatrical concerts and they are rewarded with applause, ovations and simple gifts for exceptional performances indicative of excellence⁴⁹.

According to Mbonu, Singing accompanies almost every activity among African people with one's movements simulating the music; it creates an inherent sense of rhythm. Singing during public functions is usually accompanied by the playing of

⁴⁹ Bewaji, J.A.I. *Narratives of Struggles, The Philosophy and Politics of Development*, (Durham: Carolina Academic Press,2012)p.240

musical instruments⁵⁰. African songs follow the same rhythmic pattern as the musical instruments. In Benin, there is a close connection between the song, the musician, and the dancer such that there can hardly be any song to which there is no dance component. Thus, it is usually difficult to separate song from the musician and the dancer; for music making is undertaken to engender motion-dance.

Dancing is, in a sense, a reflexive reaction and the accompaniment of various verbal and nonverbal communication in Bini society, as each step is as meaningful as the message that impels it and which it seeks to communicate. It involves multiple movements and coordination of different parts of the body.

Dance is a communication tool. It is a tool for the eventuating of ideas about reality; especially relating to procreation, fertility, nobility, royalty and celebration of life. This point is highlighted by Green as follows: "African dance, based upon the spoken language, is a source of communication through which it is possible to demonstrate emotion, sentiment, beliefs and other reactions through movements. Therefore, there are many styles of African dancing as there are different ethnic groups and languages"⁵¹.

It is notable that dance is also a mode of expression and helps to fulfill the need to project the self and to reach out to others, canvass recognition, and portray images

⁵⁰ Mbonu, O. *My Africa*, (London: Branford Press, 1989) p.163

⁵¹ Green, E.H.H, *Ideologies of Conservatism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) p.13

of inner visions and intentions. The performance of a particular dance genre is often symptomatic of complex media for reflexive dilation of the self into the cultural milieu in which one is situated and in which one may be situated. Some dance form help to replicate history as perceived and recorded or even eternalized the genesis of people as mythologized. According to Ugolo, “dance function primarily as an entertainment and recreation in many societies and it is a means of ritual and psychotherapy for the psychic release of tension and stress for the purpose of healing”⁵².

Given the above, there is no way one can meaningfully discuss songs and musical instruments without discussing dance. This is because music and singing and other forms of verbal expression often go with gestural and gesticulating motions that help to make the points intended or that help to convey the sense of the agent to the audience. Bewaji noted that the situation with dance is very different from many other artistic expressions in that while in many African societies there are professional drumming, singing, and oratorical families, there are fewer dance families, as most African people learn to listen to various genres of music and learn the appropriate dance steps from the

⁵² Ugolo, C.E “Journey towards a Nigerian National Dance Culture: The Paradox of Many Nations, One Dance Step”, *278th Inaugural Lecture*, (Benin-city: University of Benin,2023)

cradle⁵³. This is because listening to music and understanding the deep meaning is part of the education of the young members of society.

Dance often depends on other artistic forms. The dependence of dance on these other art forms is very significant since when the other artistic forms such as the drums and drumming and the musical instruments the songs and singing and the lyrics and words that are uttered have not been adequately perfected, the next stage cannot be contemplated. Without the perfection of these components, there can be no dancing. While one could engage in the others without dancing, it would be considered an aberration, if not insanity, to dance without any music.

2.5.5 Music and Musical Instruments

African music is alive in the people's soul, their feeling, their thought, their environment, their voice, their tongue, and every part of their body. This treatment of art seems natural, for freedom is the essence of art. Sing when you feel like singing, and dance when the limbs can no longer restrain the emotions. Music is an important medium for conveying African tradition and culture. African music is imbued with meaning as the primary function of music is to communicate and to convey feeling or

⁵³ Bewaji, J.A.I, *Beauty and Culture: Perspectives in Black Aesthetics, An Introduction to African and African Diaspora Philosophy of Art*, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited,2003)p.103

emotions (happiness, sadness, unity, love, praise)⁵⁴. African music combines rhythm, song, dance and spirituality. The role of music in social entertainment is not separated from its spiritual celebration in African contexts; music therefore carries a mixture of the sacred and the secular. Music is the common possession of a body of people who share the same traditions in social terms. Music exists only in term of social interaction and it is learned behaviour...it involves the behaviour of learned individuals and group of individuals⁵⁵.

Musical concept is important because they determine how music is appreciated and evaluated in a particular society. Knowledge of musical concepts, it should be stressed, is not synonymous with verbalisation and actualisation. That the Benin people have not been emphasising “sophisticated” analysis of music (i.e. the musical examination in scale and feet), does not mean that they are ignorant of such concepts as melody, tempo, pitch and rhythm. There are indeed terms in the Bini language which are technical in the sense of being almost exclusively concerned with music and the people. This restrictive or rather non-universal element of music should be put in its proper course of its ability in settling some pronounced misapprehensions⁵⁶. In order to

⁵⁴ Mbonu, O. *My Africa*,(London: Branford Press,1989)p.163

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁶ Ighile, M. ‘A Conceptual Approach to the Study of Song and Music in Benin Society’ in Venets: *The Belogradchik Journal for Local History,Cultural Heritage and Folk Studies*, Volume 3, Number 1, (2012)93-111.

fully acknowledge the Benin popular song, it is necessary to have an idea of how the people embrace or receive this particular genre of their oral literature, what they appreciate as the beauty of song, what constitutes a good musical production, what is expected from a composer and so on. But before addressing Benin musical concepts, it is essential to give attention, by way of distinction, to ‘folk’ and popular song⁵⁷.

2.5.6 Sculptures and Paintings

In her emotional arts of sculpture, the Binis has made a perpetual contribution that has revolutionized art everywhere. And one may generalize that Benin art is, above all, the sculptor’s art. The sculptor’s talent is that of attention to forms in their relation to one another. When one turns to another very popular Benin arena of artistic expression, sculpture, one finds the situation of perspicacity, perceptiveness, richness, and variety replicated.

Thus we can say that sculptures are important in the artistic terrain of Binis. They are often grandiose, noble, intimate, intricate, and even disturbing. They help to record history as they chronicle their times and epochs and they serve as mementos and

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*,

memorials, endearing monuments to and of the time, as well as commemorating for posterity and for self the achievements or the travails of the people as they journey through the ages that is, as they undergo the necessary transition through space and time.

2.5.7 Poetry and Storytelling

Humans have a compulsion to seek explanations to things. These may be events, phenomena, reality, dreams etc. In seeking explanations, the knowledge, beliefs and opinions of the society and the knowledgeable or influential matters very much in helping to develop explanatory models. For this reason, poetry and storytelling are forms of explanation in Bini social milieu. Praise poetry is a common practice among African communities. Praise accompanies community leaders in ceremonial functions describing their prowess. According to Shava, “Praise is also used to thank and to appease other community members .For example, the use of totemic praise is common among the Shona tribe of Zimbabwe and is applied to both men and women as greeting, gesture of respect or means of appreciation.it is applied in diverse contexts from private bedrooms to public occasion”⁵⁸.

⁵⁸ Shava, S.(2015) “The African Aesthetic”, in *The Sage Encyclopedia of African Cultural Heritage in North America*, (Thousand oaks: Sage publications Inc.2015)p.121

In the words of Bewaji, “Poetry is a form of entertainment at ceremonial gatherings, whereby the poet will demonstrate his or her creative oratory prowess in relation to the occasion through poetry interpolated with the appropriate use of proverbs and idioms. Among the West African people, precisely, poetry and proverbs formed the basis for logical argument in personal relations, legal proceedings and political negotiations”⁵⁹. The Binis has few poems that he can recite merely as poems. He loves poetry when it can be dramatized, sang and danced. We have no real poetry besides songs, for a true poet does not compose without the sublime inspiration that comes from musical impulse. Bewaji further buttressed that “The African poet is conscious of the co-operation and simplicity that characterize his society. He sympathizes with his audience and wants them to share with him actively in the poem. That is the cultural reason why the poet always invents an easy chorus for the audience. Often the words or phrases have no literary meaning. All they have is musical charm, a dominant rhythm”⁶⁰.

African tales, fables and myths form a distinctive way of entertaining as well as educating the young about the world, combining both myth and reality and drawing on the wisdom of the elders. Myths are stories seeking to justify events or to explain

⁵⁹ Bewaji, J.A.I, *Beauty and Culture: Perspectives in Black Aesthetics, An Introduction to African and African Diaspora Philosophy of Art*, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited,2003)p.132

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*,

usually featuring gods, heroes, or beings. In many instances, myths have veiled meaning, because they originate out of unclear presuppositions regarding the things they explain about which there is detailed knowledge. As an oral society, the art of storytelling remains a distinctive aspect among African people. In telling stories the audience is intimately involved.

Story-telling among the African people is defined by its role and performative representation among the people. For example, the Binis as a people can all be considered as story tellers and as the audience at the same time. This is because all stories originated from their collective cultural milieu and experience. As such, no story is considered the product of a particular story teller and, since all members of the community know these stories, they can in turn tell or perform them on various occasions to different audiences⁶¹. Tales about commoners and villagers, as marvelous and extraordinary as they may be, still maintain the aura of historical authenticity in the eyes of the Binis. At the same time the actual telling of the stories is art. The narratives are not merely a chronological listing of events but they do have literary and rhetorical artistic qualities. The art of telling Benin history involves both singing and speech. The songs are interspersed between the narrative episodes and often are an integral part of the plot. For example, in the story of Ozolua and Izevbokun the song

⁶¹ Ben-Amos, D. Story Telling in Benin. African Arts, Vol.1 No.1, 1967 54-59. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3334367> on 24/03/2023.

serves a reflective function, enabling one of the main heroes to meditate upon the course of events.⁶²

Similarly, in the tale of Igiromi one song is actually a commentary by a secondary character upon the nature of the hero. These songs provide a respite in the flow of actions. The second song in this tale, however, is an essential narrative dialogue put into rhythmical language and music. The audience takes part in the chorus and in this way participates in the story telling itself. The narrator does not resort to any dramatic impersonation of the characters or to any external effects, such as gestures, in order to impress the listeners. He relies mainly upon the actual wording of the story and the sheer effect of the unfolding of the events. In that sense, Benin story telling is more a verbal than a dramatic art.

Benin narratives do not have any required opening and closing formulae. The story teller may start with the Phrase *ox'okpa ke do re*, (a story is coming), or *ox'okpa siensfensien*, (this is a nice story). Then he introduces the main characters in the tale. In other cases he may begin with the main song and thus prepare his audience in a more active manner for what follows. For the conclusion the teller simply signifies *evba ni oxa nan ya de wu*, (here the story dies).

⁶² *Ibid.*,

In contrast to the rigid formality of modern theatre, storytelling sessions in Benin society are characterized by the semi informal nature of their performance. This is aptly demonstrated in the fluid performer audience relationship and interaction. The audience is usually free to intrude into the narrative, to question the tale, sing songs, cheer or boo at the various characters of the story and provide complementary or complimentary and choral action to the narrative. This quality is essential to the harmonious communal relationship that is usually reflected in the stories themselves and their social functions.

Bini stories, like most traditional art-forms express the socio cultural, economic and political needs of the people that produce them. Stories in Bini society are thus told to suit the need of each audience, situation, the occasion and the specific socialization function. For this reason, stories for non-specific occasions are usually told at night to satisfy the convenience of both the story teller and his audience who are usually free at this time to relax and enjoy the stories, usually after a hard day's job.

Most of these stories teach moral lessons and this didactic quality of the tales makes them serve as means of improving the morals of the people .They also carry out psychological functions. People with mental, emotional and psychological problems have their tension released and their spirit lifted up, the moment they listen to these tales. Quite appreciable stories have songs in them, and during the course of narrating these tales, the performer or narrator or storyteller, sing a song whie the audience joins by

repeating the choruses. It is not unusual for both the performer and the audience to clap their hands and dance as they sing. This dramatic action sharply illuminates the function of these tales as means of entertainment. In order to sustain the interest of the audience and make this tale credible, the story teller use histrionics and other forms of dramatization.

CHAPTER THREE

EDO ONTOLOGY, A REFLECTION ON THE PROBLEM OF FREEWILL AND DETERMINISM

3.1 What Is Edo Ontology?

It is often said that ontology as the study of being is metaphysics and that metaphysics is ontology. It is important to state for the avoidance of ambiguity that the term ontology is used to denote the genuine sense of metaphysics. Unah clarifies this perceived ambiguity in his work *On Being*, when he stated in the introductory part that “it is in the domain of metaphysics that we speak of the concept of being. Thus, ontology is in the realm of metaphysics, that is, in the purest sense of metaphysics”⁶³

⁶³ Unah, J. *On Being: Discourse on the Ontology of Man*, (Lagos: Fadec Publishers,2002) p.x

Ontology is the philosophical understanding of the nature of beings, existence or reality as well as the basic classifications of beings and their interaction. Ontology as a branch of metaphysics could be conceived as the science of what is, of the kinds and structures of the objects, properties and relations in every area of reality. Ontology in this sense is often used in such a way as to be synonymous with metaphysics⁶⁴. Ontology often deals with questions about the existence of entities or beings and their categorization and relationship within a hierarchy including their sub-divisions depicting their similarities or otherwise.

Ontology thus, concerns itself with fundamental questions about existence of things and their categories, the meaning of being and their various modes as well as their interactive relations and reactions attendant thereto. Ontology deals with things in general, it abstracts from everything particular, it embraces all pure concepts of the understanding and all principles of the understanding or of reason with reflect to beings. “Ontology is a pure doctrine of elements of all our *a priori* cognitions, or: it contains the summation of all our pure concepts that we can have as *a priori* of things⁶⁵”.

The word ‘ontology’ refer to philosophical investigation of existence or being. Such investigation may be directed towards the concept of being, asking what being

⁶⁴ Floridi, L. (ed.) *Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Computing and Information*, Oxford: Blackwell.2003) p.155.

⁶⁵ Ameriks, K and S.Naragon, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1997)p.307

means or what it is for something to exist; it may also be concerned with the question of what exists?⁶⁶ The need for elucidating the nature of ontology is to provide the basis for a thorough understanding of the term. This is necessary because the traditional understanding treatment of ontology has made it a little bit difficult in comprehending the true nature of being (reality).

Alluding to the rendition of Unah, Ontology is simply the study of being.⁶⁷ By this we mean, ontology is the study of pure being (Ibid.) or the study of being precisely as being⁶⁸. Ontology is also defined as the study of what it means to be or the study of what it means to be at all⁶⁹. To say that ontology is the study of being or what it means to be is not to imply that it is the study of particular beings or entities. Neither does it mean the study of what it means to be this nor that, what it means to be that, but fundamentally, ontology means the study of being precisely as being or what it means to be at all. For simplicity, Ontology as the study of being is not

⁶⁶ Craig, E (ed.) *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005) p.756.

⁶⁷ Unah, J. *On Being: Discourse on the Ontology of Man*, (Lagos: Fadec Publishers 2002) p.x

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.1

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2

essentially the study of being or man or any particular entity but the study of being precisely as being ; pure being⁷⁰.

Benin is situated on a slightly elevated piece of flat about eight meters above sea level. Benin was the capital of a large kingdom from early part of the fourteenth century and remains even the biggest town and cultural centre of the Edo speaking people of mid-western Nigeria⁷¹. The present day Benin City has an estimated population of 1,147,188 according to the national population census of 2006; the city is the capital of Edo State, Southern Nigeria and is a port on the Benin River. The area inhabited by the Benin speaking people is bordered by the Esan territory in the North, the Ijaw and Itsekiri in the South, the Yoruba in the West and the Western Igbo and the River Niger to the East.

The area corresponds with what was left of the empire since the European conquest of the kingdom in 1897 and the restoration of the monarchy in 1914.⁷² It is therefore distinct from Benin Empire which was a much larger entity encompassing different peoples and ethnic groups which were brought together by various means including wars to acknowledge the authority of the Oba. Benin as a nomenclature is

⁷⁰ Unah,J. *African Philosophy: Trends and Projections in Six Essays*, (Lagos: Concept Publication Limited,2002b). p.16

⁷¹ Osadolor, O .B, *Cradle of Ideas, A Compendium of Speeches and Writings of Omo N'Oba Erediauwa of Great Benin*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 2013) p.34

⁷² Ogbonmwan, F.N, *Early Catholic Missionary Activities in Benin-City*, Port-Harcourt: Josemaria Trust Nigeria Limited, 2005)p.25.

used to describe the people as well as the entity which they occupy till date. According to Benin mythology, Edo is the cradle of the world “*edo ore isi agbon*”.⁷³

Benin City which lies between Latitude 6'12' N and Longitude 5'45' E is about 11.4 km (7.3 No' miles) inland from the mouth of the Benin River which flows into the Gulf of Guinea. It is on a fairly flat terrain with a few hills to the East and to the North-East and is some 78.64 meters above sea level.⁷⁴ Benin city is also called ‘Edo’ by its inhabitants and individuals who are from Benin-city refer to themselves as ‘*oviedo*’, children of Bini, or ‘*Ovioba*’, subjects of the monarch, or Oba.⁷⁵ Hence, both Bini and Edo serve as ethnic and linguistic labels for the indigenous inhabitants of the Benin territory. The city lies in the thick equatorial rain forest belt with rich vegetation and forests consisting largely of very tall trees and dense undergrowth.⁷⁶ It has a tropical climate characterized by two main seasons - the wet and raining season (May to October) and the dry season (November to April). Average annual rainfall is about

⁷³ Aisien, E, *The Benin City Pilgrimage Stations*, (Benin City: Aisien Publishers, Benin City, 2001)p.34

⁷⁴ Akenzua, E, *Some Facts About Great Benin*. (Benin City: Bendel Newspaper Corporation, 1979)p.34

⁷⁵ Ogbonmwan, F.N, *Early Catholic Missionary Activities in Benin-City*, Port-Harcourt: Josemaria Trust Nigeria Limited, 2005) p.23

⁷⁶ Osadolor, O .B, *Cradle of Ideas, A Compendium of Speeches and Writings of Omo N’Oba Erediauwa of Great Benin*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 2013)p.232

200 cm (80 inches) while the average temperature is about 50°C. It is situated 200 miles by road east of Lagos.⁷⁷

Today, Benin City is the capital of the present day Edo State of Nigeria. Edo State could be defined as a collection gathering of people of united yet diverse identity, who are mostly located in the mid-western part of Nigeria, West Africa. Edo State was created in 1991 out of the then Bendel State of Nigeria and subsequently divided into Edo and Delta States. According to Omoigui, many communities in Nigeria trace their ancestry to the ancient Benin Kingdom hence there is a lot of linguistic and cultural affinity among the communities which include - Akoko Edo, Afemai, Edo, Esan, Etsako, Ora, Igala, Igbira, Okpameri, Uneme Ososo, Urhobo, Izon and Yoruba speaking communities present in the State.⁷⁸

Ontology is the philosophical understanding of the nature of beings, existence or reality as well as the basic classifications of beings and their interaction. Ontology often deals with questions about the existence of entities or beings and their categorization and relationship within a hierarchy including their sub-divisions depicting their similarities or otherwise. Ontology thus, concerns itself with fundamental questions about

⁷⁷ Osezua, C.O, “The Ethnography of Sex Trade among Bini Women in Southern Nigeria in Adeniran, A.I & Ikuteyijo, L.O (eds.) *African Now! Emerging Issues and Alternative perspectives*, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) p.320

⁷⁸ Anyanwu, K.C. “African Worldview and Theory of Knowledge” (eds.) Anyanwu K.C, *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa*, (Rome: Catholic Book Agency. 1984) pp. 77-99

existence of things and their categories, the meaning of being and their various modes as well as their interactive relations and reactions attendant thereto. Ontology deals with things in general, it abstracts from everything particular, it embraces all pure concepts of the understanding and all principles of the understanding or of reason.

Benin concept of person is essentially and necessarily rooted in Benin ontology. The Bini view of person is in consonant with her metaphysics. This is the context of Placide Tempels idea that true wisdom which is knowledge, is to be found in ontological knowledge. Ontological knowledge is the intelligence of forces in their hierarchy, their cohesion and interaction.

The Benin (traditional) ontology for instance, is a probe into things as they are in nature. The universe, according to Anyanwu is conceived as a cyclical order or ordered sequence, which symbolizes harmony.⁷⁹ This means to do wrong individually for example is to be individually in disharmony and involves in causing disorganization of order itself. Agreeing with this, Ogbomwan avers that the Benin's believe in this perception since they do not make rigid or, superior-inferior demarcation between the phenomenal and the noumena and between the cause and effect.⁸⁰ This implies that everything is related to everything else according the nature of the relatum and reality

⁷⁹ Ogbomwan, F.N, *Early Catholic Missionary Activities in Benin-City*, (Port-Harcourt: Josemaria Trust Nigeria Limited, 2005)p.15

⁸⁰ Anyanwu, K.C. "African Worldview and Theory of Knowledge" (eds.) Anyanwu K.C, *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa*, (Rome: Catholic Book Agency , 1984) Pp.77-99

dovetails into each other. This belief have initially prompted Anyanwu to opine that the metaphysical, physical and moral goodness interpenetrate each other in mythical consciousness.⁸¹

The Benin people like every other people in Africa strongly believe and acknowledge a Supreme Being. An Edo mythology holds that the universe is divided into two parts: The *Agbon* which is the actual and visible world, the physical world of material things, and *Erinmwin* the invisible abode of numerous deities, spirits and supernatural powers.⁸² Although the people believe strongly in a super-mundane being, yet they acknowledge other divinities, who they believe, are closer to them than the Supreme Being.

The idea of being in Benin worldview is closely related to the concept of ontology in African metaphysics. This is so because; being is a generic term which represents all existing things. The Africans and indeed the Benin's conceive everything as being. There is nothing which exists that is taken lightly. The belief is that, there is a reason for whatever is. Though man may not immediately know why a thing is

⁸¹ Ebohon, O, *Olokun Worship in Benin Kingdom*, Benin-City: Ebohon Centre Publications, 2010)p.25

⁸² Ozumba, G.O.“Outlines of African aesthetics” in *Sophia: An African Journal of Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol.9 No.2 2007.

created, but it serves a purpose, “Being is therefore conceived as the whole range of existent things”⁸³

3.1.1 The Hierarchy of Being in Benin Ontology

3.1.1.1. Supreme Being (Osanobua)

According to Ebohon, The Benin people like other rational peoples of the world, responded to the unresolved mysteries, uncertainties and the intricate problems of life by having an understanding which believes that God created the universe. They called the creator *Osanobua* which mean "the source of all beings who carries and sustains the world or universe". He cares for the universe, maintains and prevents it from disintegrating .⁸⁴

Also, Ogbonmwan corroborated by stating that the Benin’s believe strongly in the existence of God called *Osanobua*. *Osa* is the shortened form. The word *Osanobua* means “one who holds or sustains the universe”. This *Osa* is known by many active attributes. Among them are:

- (i) *Akpama* the Creator of all living things.
- (ii) *Udazi* the giver of all life and all power to whom everything is subjected.
- (iii) *Oghodua* the almighty, omnipresent and omniscient.

⁸³ Ebohon, O, *Op Cit.*, p.24

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*,

(iv) *Ogovba* the merciful, loving and kind.⁸⁵

In Benin mythology “*Osanobua*” is pictured as a king living in splendour with many wives and children” This representation of *Osanobua* reflects the Benin hierarchical and sociological set-up in which the Oba as the political and spiritual leader of the people, sits enthroned and supported by his guards.⁸⁶

One informative and striking aspect of the Benin beliefs is their direct worship of *Osanobua*. The worship which is simple include “the offerings of pigeons, white cocks, white cloth, scarlet, chalk and a peeled stick or wand called *Uwenrhiontan* and a kind of pumpkin called *Umwenkhen*”⁸⁷. In this worship, human sacrifice was never involved although, it was however rampant in other forms of worship. The ritual connected with the invocation of help from *Osanobua* is very unique, because the “one who wants to contact *Osanobua* takes a good bath after a brief period of mental preparation in retreat and dresses in white”⁸⁸. The white dress and chalk marked the process of spiritual purgation needed for divine communion. In their supplication to God, they pray for

⁸⁵ Ogbonmwan, F.N, *Early Catholic Missionary Activities in Benin-City*, (Port-Harcourt: Josemaria Trust Nigeria Limited, 2005) p.10

⁸⁶ Bradbury, R.E. *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria*, London: International African Institute,1957) p.58

⁸⁷ Egharevba, J.U. *A Short History of Benin*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1968)p.34

⁸⁸ Ogbonmwan, F.N, *Op. Cit.*, p.12

good health, for themselves and members of their families and for increase in their harvest and progress in their various undertakings.

3.2.1.2 Divinities (Ebo)

Although the Benin's hold *Osanobua* sacrosanct, they also believe in the existence of other object of worship and deified personages or sub-god/goddesses which they worship and expect to act as intermediaries between them and *God/Osanobua*, the Supreme Spirit. Invariably, the Binis don't subscribe to polytheism - the existence of several Gods, since they only refer to the Supreme God with a capital "G" and the divinities with a small "g". God is widely acknowledged as the one Supreme Being and is held in high esteem with profound reverence, According to Ogbomwan, God (*Osanobua*) is approached through these divinities (*Ebo*).

It must be understood that *Osa* is not ranked with divinities. They also hold that the divinities are not as powerful as *Osa* because they operate on lower astral planes than that of *Osa*.⁸⁹ These divinities are said to have either been created by God or using anthropomorphic language, are sons and daughters of God. In the words of Ogbomwan, a Benin oral tradition relates that *Osanobua* had a wife called *Anume* who gave birth to three children. In order of seniority they are *Olokun*, *Ogiuwu* and *Obieven* who was a female. It seems clear that by assigning human qualifications to these

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.16-17

divinities,⁹⁰ the Benin people were trying to concretize the metaphysical for their own understanding and comprehension. Ogbomwan further described the Benin beliefs in gods in the following ways:

- (i) **Olokun:** *Olokun* is said to be the first son of *Osanobua* and is identified with the sea. The central *Olokun* shrine is located at Urhonigbe (about 100 km from Benin City). At the shrine, *Olokun* is represented by a temple in which are housed life-size clay figures represented as an Oba with his retinue and wives. *Olokun*, which is both an object of communal and private worship, is uniquely the god of inspiration and idealism and works upon the hidden spirit of man. *Olokun* is associated with human fertility and is considered the 'bringer of children' and the 'god of wealth'. In Benin religious practice, *Olokun* worship by far surpasses that of *Osanobua* his father. This is so because *Olokun* can be directly approached with much ease than *Osanobua*.
- (ii) **Ogiuwu:** *Ogiuwu* is the second male child of *Osanobua* and regarded as one of the great messengers of his father. He is the author of death because it eats human flesh and drinks human blood. Its worship went into oblivion with the coming of the European administration.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*,

- (iii) **Obiemwen:** The only daughter of *Osanobua* is considered the wife of the earth. *Obiemwen* is believed to be the mother of all human beings and is the source and goddess of blessings.
- (iv) **Esu:** *Esu* is regarded as the director and master of knowledge, cunning and power. The worship had been in existence since time immemorial.
- (v) **Ogun:** The 'god of iron' and is mostly worshipped by brass smiths, warriors and hunters. Aware of the violent and destructive power of *Ogun* over the material world, the Benin worship it so that it does not harm them in their usage of metallic objects.
- (vi) **Osun:** The "god of medicine" and is worshipped by the professional medicine men and herbalists. Annual festivals for the strengthening of the medicines are held. Most household heads have their *Osun* shrines in special rooms where their medicines are kept.
- (vii) **Ovia:** *Ovia* is the "god of land fertility" and is mostly worshipped by farmers.

From the above exposition of the divinities in Benin cosmology, we can affirm that the divinities are not ends in themselves but instruments and channels of communicating with the divine. Moreover, they assist *Osanobua* in the theocratic government of the universe.⁹¹

3.2 The Notion of Ehi In Edo Ontology

⁹¹ Ebohon,O, *Op. Cit.*,

Every individual is thought of as consisting of two parts, the living “person” in this world (*Agbon*) and the spiritual counterpart “*Ehi*” which is in *Erimwin* (spirit world). According to the common belief as shown by Bradbury, when a person is going to be born in *Agbon*, he goes to *Osanobua*, the creator and tells what he plans to do with his life on earth and requests the material and spiritual faculties for accomplishing this; thus, this act is expressed in the infinitive “*hi*” (to predestine oneself)⁹². He opined: thus; if a man is unsuccessful in the world, he is said to have done this badly or to be fighting against the fate, which he has determined for himself and when such people are being buried, the mourners call after them to “*hi*”⁹³.

Also, Omijeh explained that *Ehi* in one sense is a person and in another, a counterpart and guide in the spirit world. After the individual “*Omwan*” (the living person) is born, *Ehi* remains in the spirit world to act as a guide and intermediary with *Osanobua*.⁹⁴ Omijeh’s comment seems to imply that *Ehi*’s task is to stand behind his counterpart when the latter is making his request to the creator and to ensure that his counterpart does not forget anything. Unsuccessful individuals sometimes make offerings to their *Ehi* to secure its intercession with the creator.

⁹² Bradbury, R.E. *Benin studies*, (London: Oxford University Press,1973) p. 288

⁹³ *Ibid.*,

⁹⁴ Omijeh, M, “EHI: The concept of guardian Angel in Bini Religion”, in Ade Adebola E.A(ed.) *Traditional Religion in West Africa*. (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1983) p.255.

Misfortune can, therefore be explained in terms of failure of “Ehi’ to keep to the chosen life programme. The sufferer is said to have a bad ‘Ehi’ and prayers and offerings must be addressed to the ‘Ehi’ asking it to intervene. Omijeh, explained that at one level, the *Ehi* represents the innate potentials for social achievement with which each individual is believed to be endowed⁹⁵. Predestination is seen as a limiting factor on the individual capacity to achieve success through his own actions. He also observed that “though one who has a stroke of good luck should, and often does thank his *Ehi*, it is more often involved in context of failure and misfortune⁹⁶. In operation, *Ehi* seems to have ability to beget, or bear and keep healthy children.

Destiny known as *ehi* is the Bini belief in personal ehi (guardian angel/personal god or destiny-spirit) which is believed to be an emanation of Osanobua (The Supreme Being). It is a sort of spirit double, guardian genius; personal providence, or a divine agent assigned to a person from the moment of conception, and remains with the person for the rest of his/her life on earth.⁹⁷ When a person dies, his/her personal destiny goes back to Osanobua to give account of one’s work on earth. The Binis therefore believed that it is one’s personal *ehi* that determines One’s success, abilities, misfortunes and failures in life. Consequently, human continue to strive not just to bridge the visible with the invisible world, but to establish a special relationship between oneself and

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*,

one's godly guardian. This places the human person at the forefront of interlinked activities that involve other cosmic forces.

Eghosa Osaghae discusses the role of *ehi* in the worldview of the Edo people. *Ehi* is often translated as “power” or “vital force,” He stated that it is a broader concept that encompasses all the forces that govern the world.⁹⁸ *Ehi* is seen as the source of all knowledge, and it is believed to be present in all things. *Ehi* as a concept is significant in areas such as religion, art, and morality, and it examines how it relates to other concepts in Edo ontology.

Osaghae presents a detailed analysis of the different aspects of *Ehi*. He discusses the concept of *Ehi* as it relates to nature, health, and morality, and he examines the role of *Ehi* in the process of individuation and self-realization⁹⁹ According to Osaghae, *Ehi* is the force that determines the shape and structure of things, he argues that an individual's *Ehi* is not static, and it can be affected by their actions and experiences. He highlighted how the concept of *Ehi* relates to the notions of balance and harmony, and how it influences the way an individual interacts with the world around them. For

⁹⁸ Osaghae, E. *The Concept of Ehi in Edo Ontology*, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1983), p. 6

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*,

Osaghae, *Ehi* is a dynamic force that can be influenced and developed by an individual through their actions and choices¹⁰⁰.

J. U. Egharevba argues that the concept of *Ehi* emerged over time as a result of a variety of factors, including the influence of Yoruba culture, the impact of Portuguese colonization, and the rise of the Benin monarchy. He argues that *Ehi* is not a static concept, and that it has evolved over time.¹⁰¹ He traces the development of *Ehi* from its origins in animistic beliefs, through the introduction of Christianity, to the present day. He explained the role of *ehi* in the Benin monarchy, and how it has been used to legitimize the power of the Oba, or king. He also explores the role of *ehi* in healing and divination practices, and the ways in which it has been integrated into everyday life.

One of the interesting arguments that Egharevba makes is that *ehi* is not just a concept, but also a force that is deeply rooted in the Benin worldview. He argues that it is a dynamic concept that is constantly evolving and changing. He also discusses the ways in which it has been adapted to new technologies and changes in society¹⁰². He uses the example of how *ehi* has been integrated into modern medicine and science, and argues that it has the potential to be a unifying force in a rapidly changing world.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹⁰¹ Egharevba, J.U *The Emergence of Ehi in Benin Culture and Civilization*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 33

¹⁰² *Ibi.*,

3.3 *Ehi* as the Problem of Freewill and Determinism

The debate on whether human actions and events are being determined or out of free-will seems to have pulled scholars in a journey of no returns. In other words, the philosophical argument on free-will and determinism which dates back to the ancient period still takes the front burner in the contemporary philosophical discourse. Thus, making the doctrines of pre-determinism (or fatalism), determinism (or hard determinism), Indeterminism (or soft determinism), and non-determinism (or free-willism)¹⁰³, popular in western intellectual discourse on the human will questions.

Pre-determinism (fatalism) holds, that “human choice and action have no influence on future events, which will be as they will be regardless of whatever we think or do”¹⁰⁴. In other words, certain events are such that they cannot but occur no matter what happens. Fatalism beliefs that the future is already set fated, and that everything one does will drive one to complete one’s fate, even if one knows and attempts to avoid it. By implication, fatalism does not allow for possible human efforts, self-criticism, and self-involvement, hence the saying: what will be, will be. Determinism (Hard Determinism) holds that every events, with respect to the paste, presents, and

¹⁰³ Graig, E. Fatalism: A Concise Approach, in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (London Routledge,2006)p.1112

¹⁰⁴ Balogun, O.A. The concept of ori and Destiny in Traditional Yoruba thought: A Soft Deterministic Interpretation, in *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol.16, Issue1, 2007, 116-130.

future, has a cause. In other words, determinism is the view that everything that occurs in the universe must be the effect of a cause, produced by, is dependent on, and condition by what brought it into existence¹⁰⁵. This doctrine denies human of being either in control or capable of exercising their will freely.

Indeterminism (soft-determinism) holds that one can be free even if determinism is true. That is to say that some events and human actions though determined are also functions of human free-will. Non-Determinism (free-willism) holds that human beings are endowed with the ability for choice of actions, for decision among alternatives, and specifically, that given an innate moral sense, man can freely discern good and evil¹⁰⁶.

Free-will is therefore the ability to make choices unimpeded by certain factors. Such factors include metaphysical constraints, physical constraints, social constraints, and mental constraints. However, the seeming incompatibility of determinism and free-will brought the God's foreknowledge and freewill dilemma. This is an acute problem because the Binis tends to identify fore-knowledge with human destiny. The practical implication of this is that one is not permitted to make a separation between what God knows at a point in time and what he/she does with or about that knowledge in the future. That is to say that, if what God knows is as good as done, then any notion of

¹⁰⁵ Marcourlessco, I. Freewill and determinism, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 5 ed. Mircea Eliade. (New York: Macmillan publishing company1987)p.1250

¹⁰⁶ Balogun, O.A. The concept of ori and Destiny in Traditional Yoruba thought: A Soft Deterministic Interpretation. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 16(1) 2007, 116-130.

free will and human responsibility is negated. Therefore, the possibility for man to go against the infallible divine foreknowledge is a question that continuous to beg for answer.

According to Egharevba, *Osanobua* has created all *Ehi* and has given them a number of functions, An *Ehi* acts as informant to *Osanobua*. The Edo say: *Aghoghonorsoe omwan vbaserimwin*, 'When we shall get to *erimwin*, (spiritual world) *ehi* (Destiny) will be my witness,¹⁰⁷ The word used here for *Ehi* is *aghoghon* which means shadow. An *Ehi* is like a shadow, constantly observing its *agbon* counterpart. An individual's *Ehi* witnesses all actions and when an Edo eventually goes before *Osanobua* for judgment it is impossible to cover up, for his *Ehi* will bear witness.

The destiny of an Edo is set before he comes into the world.¹⁰⁸ The element of fate is operative here for it is commonly believed that one cannot rise higher than one's *Ehi*. If an Edo has a 'poor' *Ehi*, then he is destined to be 'poor.' Upon observing an individual's unfortunate behaviour, an Edo might remark: *Ehi ere ima*. (that person's *Ehi* is not good). The name *Ehimwenma* (My *Ehi* is good) reflects this attitude as well. This particular name no doubt reflects an attitude of thankfulness before one's *Ehi*:

¹⁰⁷ Egharevba, J.U *The Emergence of Ehi in Benin Culture and Civilization*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 33

¹⁰⁸ Omijeh, M, "EHI: The concept of guardian Angel in Bini Religion", in Ade Adebola E.A(ed.) *Traditional Religion in West Africa*. (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1983) p.257.

possibly the birth of a child is attributed to *Ehi's* intercessional activity.¹⁰⁹ A number of other names reveal a similar attitude to *Ehi*. The name *Ehiorobo* (*Ehi* is a good doctor) is a praise name indicative of a belief that *Ehi* is capable of interceding on one's behalf. This consciousness that good destiny is attributable to *Eni* is further seen in the name *Ehizogie* (*Ehi* has created me to be like a king). The happiness over good fortune is expressed in the name given to the newly born child.

It is obvious, then, that apart from the shadowing function, another of an *Ehi's* functions or spheres of influence is that of giving assistance to his human counterpart. This takes the form of intercession before *Osanobua*. It may be that if an *Ehi* is successful *Osanobua* will send the other divinities on a mission on the supplicant's behalf. One informant told me that an *Ehi* is the 'last of all the divinities'¹¹⁰ because his sphere of influence is limited solely to the personal level.

The protecting function of an *Ehi* is also revealed in the *Ehi* names. The name *Igbinehi* (I take shelter under *Ehi*) asserts the Edo belief that an *Ehi* can give protection in dangerous situations. *Ehisumwen* (My *Ehi* guards me) indicates that *Ehi* is being praised for protection throughout trials imposed by enemies. *Ehi* has stood by and enabled the individual to remain free from 'bad intentions.' At death the individual's *Ehi*

¹⁰⁹ Osemwegie, W.T & Asia, E, "The Bini Concept of a Person: A Hermeneutical Approach" in *Contemporary Humanities*, Vol. 9, 2016, 185-195.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*,

ceases to exist. As we have seen when an Edo child is born it is given an *Eni* by *Osanobua*; when dead the *Ehi* ceases to function. An *Ehi*, however, will incarnate at the first opportunity. The Edo believe that death releases the *orion* into *erimwin* where it takes its place assuming the new function of lineage guardian. The exception to this are the *ighele-erimwin* who are wanderers (ghosts), since they have not had a proper burial. The *orion* does not incarnate, only the *Ehi*.

The Edo believe that an *Ehi* goes through fourteen cycles before its final judgment before *Osanobua*. In a number of interviews with my informants, I discovered that the Edo believe that it is possible to identify the incarnated *Ehi*. There are essentially four means of identification, First, it is necessary for the woman to conceive contiguously with the death of some member of the extended family. Secondly, markings on the child's body will be identical to the dead person's. Thirdly, the child's behaviour through the years will be similar to the deceased's; Fourthly, the diviner will identify the child's *Ehi*.

According to Osemwengie and Asia, the Bini person's freedom is limited within the confines of his creator and his *ehi* (destiny). This is seen in the statement *ara ria gbon, da dae ehi aze* (which literally means, when we came to this world, we all chose a different destiny)¹¹¹. Now our actions must be tailored towards achieving this goal.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*,

However, in times of uncertainty, the gods are consulted sometimes through cast lot otherwise known as *iha* and the *ehi* of the person is seen and revealed in the process. The individual is brought up, from the beginning, with a sense of belonging and solidarity with an extensive circle of kinship¹¹².

The basis of this solidarity is a system of reciprocity in which each individual has obligations to a large set of other individuals. These are matched by rights owed him or her by the same number of individuals. Living amidst the reality of this reciprocity, one soon begins to see oneself as presupposing the group. This is the crux of the Bini conception of destiny. Among the Bini-speaking people of Nigeria, there is high value of human life. Whatever is done is for the maintenance of life. No one has power over life or death. Intentional killing (murder) is therefore considered a grave wrong; and whoever kills is equated to an animal (non-person). Such acts that dehumanise others depersonalise the individuals doing so.

Humans come into the world having no choice of parents, the place where to be born, and the time to be born, may grow in a physical (biological) manner, reproduce or not, and as a must, have to die. At death, life is not terminated but transformed since the spirit does not die. *Erimwin*, the underworld is the destiny of the person, which is a kind of migration or movement from one world to another.

¹¹² *Ibid.*,

However, once gone, the person does not return in a physical form save through dreams and visions. It is also believed that someone in the spirit-world has more influence on the affairs of the living. If the dead person was good, his/her name is perpetuated through rituals like naming and sacrifices for continued good relationships. However, if someone was bad, his/her influence will likewise be bad; a serious inconvenience to the living. Such would demand appeasement. Alternatively at burial, elaborate rituals are undertaken to ‘terminate’ the influence of such a person on the living. There may never be someone in the family named after or in the memory of such a one. He/she ceases from the memory of the community; a kind of ‘second death’ in the modern language.

Therefore, one is enjoined to live at peace with others. The community through the family becomes the ‘theatre’ where the ‘drama’ of life is lived and experienced. There are sanctions to live by, defined in terms of norms and values. It is the value that one places on these that determines success and failure in life and the desire of everyone is to live life to the fullness. In this Bini community, ‘*omwa na gbon*’ is what summarizes being. One beyond existing is identified as having ‘*omwa na gbon*’ if he/she manifests positive attributes; attributes that are life affirming like humanness and generosity.

3.4 Ehi as a Reconciliation of The Debate Between Freewill and Determinism

The Binis believed that *Ehi* (destiny) is concerned with the general quality and the ultimate end and also believe that issue of man's final destiny naturally involves the question of death and life after expiration. It also deals with the idea of judgment, the cult of ancestors and reincarnation, hence, they strongly belief in death and after-life. The Binis believed any ancestor who considers his work on this earth unfinished before he died may decide to come back to this earth again. This clearly shows that death is not an annihilation of life but rather an inevitable sojourn considered to be transitory.

Reincarnation therefore becomes one of the hallmarks of the cannon of destiny in Bini religious philosophy. The Bini believed that *ehi* (destiny) that befalls humans that brings suffering – deformities, bareness, blindness, importance and other permanent disabilities – are as a result of the sin committed, customs violated as well as the negligence of the victim in his other world before reincarnating. Thus, the saying; *enwin naru wan agbon oghian ta ermwin na rie* (your suffering today is based on what you did in the later world). That is to say that the success or misfortune experienced today have their roots in the past already lived life without knowledge of the victim¹¹³. This therefore suggests that human responsibility cannot be ruled out while considering one's destiny. It is important to note that *ehi* centers on wealth, riches, success, poverty, misfortune and failure (material success), with little or no

¹¹³ *Ibid.*,

consideration to moral character, and as such it does not affect all of human actions, inactions, and events.

The Binis therefore believed that it is one's personal *ehi* that determines One's success, abilities, misfortunes and failures in life. Hence, human continue to strive not just to bridge the visible with the invisible world, but to establish a special relationship between oneself and one's godly guardian. This places the human person at the forefront of interlinked activities that involve other cosmic forces. The idea of *ehi* (Destiny) and moral responsibility enjoins good behavior and the need to struggle to achieve one's destiny. Hence, amidst the fatalistic and hard-deterministic cannons of destiny, the bini believed that there are actions which human chooses to perform and which he could also choose not to perform. Free-will is therefore not an illusion as some scholars perceived; as the Bini instinctively holds that they have freewill given their common choices and self-decision concerning those choices.

Relating the above to human *ehi*, there is the common saying in bini: *Emvin ne omwan si kevbe no ru egbe e* (what a person has caused or done for oneself). This expression appears to have some kind of karmic implications in the direction of one having to suffer for what one has done. Thus, the expression; *ghe emwin nu si ghie egbe vhe'* meaning what one has caused for himself, let him/her bear the responsibility or the consequences. In other words, what is implied in the statement is the notion of

individual responsibility for action. This suggests that the human person has the personal freedom arising from a free exercise of the person's will to do or to refrain from carrying out certain actions. This principle of responsibility for one's actions is so strong in Bini worldview that they are quick to affirm: *emwin no omwan whe si ghian sie Iwu wen*(let what another person has done lead not to my death). In the same vein, the Bini also have a proverb: *ghie ighogho le le omwan no mu eren* (let the smoke follow him who is carrying the fire).

Juxtaposing the hard deterministic interpretation of the canons of *ehi* (human destiny) with that of the compatibilist interpretation, one will easily notice a problem with hard deterministic school which tends to have pressed too far and exaggerated the role played by personal *ehi* (guardian angel), and in the Bini view of destiny. This exaggeration is in conflict with the concept of hard work, personal morality and good behaviour as upheld by the Bini.

In other words, if all human actions and events are predetermined exclusively, then could there be room for morality, sin and punishment and good behaviour and reward? This posits a great Philo-ethical problem. Thus, Gyekye observes; ...This may be the sense of destiny that is operative in the thinking of those Africans who insist that personal effort of the right kind is necessary for the realization of a good destiny, notwithstanding postulating the cosmological (an unalterable) predestining of everything

¹¹⁴. A soft deterministic or compatibility conception of *ehi* in Bini philosophical thought is truly reflective of and coherent with the belief of the people on moral responsibility and freedom. It is because of the freedom, morality and responsibility which accommodated by this conception of *ehi* that mark the renegotiation (alterability) of one's destiny meaningful and consistent. Therefore, situating *ehi* (human destiny) within framework of compatibilism can help in taking care of the inconsistencies and problems associated with the fatalistic interpretations of *ehi* in Bini religious philosophy.

The Bini indigenous people have no particular divinity in charge or known to be the custodian of people's destiny. However, the Bini people believed that an individual's destiny could be renegotiated for good or for bad. They believed one's *ehinoma* (good destiny) could be maintained and achieved; and one's *ehinema* (bad fate) could both be renegotiated for through good the aid of diviners who are believed to be fully knowledgeable in the affairs of human destiny. This is done through the use of particular mediums, the reading of one's *atata obo* (inscriptions on one's palms), and Omens, as well as the movements of sacred animals or objectives etc.

The Binis quest to know what the future holds for them is further shown in their daily activities, as the Bini consults deities before marriage, at their birth of a child, before the appointment of a king, and to ascertain the causes of one's illness and

¹¹⁴ Gyekye, K. *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, Revised edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1987)p.121

eventual death etc. This implies that one can consult a divinity to renegotiate one's unfavorable destiny. The possibility of archiving this depends on how one is able to marshals the favourable forces through rituals, sacrifices, prayers, offerings, vows, making good medicines, charms etc., to neutralize the machination of the evil forces.

The Binis also believe that sadistic foes, in the form of *azen*(witches and wizards), secrete cults and anybody with evil intention can through spiritual means renegotiate one's destiny and frustrate an otherwise a prosperous fate, thus, spoiling every opportunity of people's success. It is also believed that an individual's character can negatively affect one's fate. In other words, a person's own rashness or impulsive behavior can affect his destiny for the worse, and bad character is recognized as being accountable for such a fate. Hence, the believe that *ehinoma*(good destiny) without *uyinmwun* (character) is worthless. This suggest that a man's failure or success all though his life may be his own responsibility. As a result, what must be, may not be in such situation, as one will need to work to bring the contents of his/her destiny to fruition.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

4.1. Evaluation

From Ancient, through medieval to modern and contemporary philosophy, the concept of destiny have been deeply rooted on metaphysics and religion reserved with the ability of ensuring a valid foundation for the absolute value of the person. Ancient philosophical thought of Akinaton, Himotep, Amenotep etc., provided the foundation for Socrates, Plato and Aristotle as well medieval analysis of person on an ontological perspective with generic (substance) and specific element (rationality), a person; individual, unique, unrepeatabe and unchangeable reality¹¹⁵. This ontological definition of destiny was a classic -conquest subscribed to by all philosophers with a belief in the

¹¹⁵ Iroegbu P., *'Kpim' of Personality Treatise on the Human Person, Respect, Solidarity, (Liberty. Germany: HGBs Druck GmbH, 2000) p. 107.*

possibility of investigating the component of destiny. Such investigations was prominent in the works of philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, St Anselm and Guardini etc.

With the postulations of Descartes, the study of the human person shifted from a metaphysical to the psychological plane. Given that the problems of metaphysics cannot be attacked unless one radically makes certain the value of our knowledge, Descartes employed doubt, both methodic and skeptical in the study of man and logically concluding that the problems of human person can be seen in this prescriptive, he no longer defines the person in relation to the autonomy of being (individuality, rationality and subsistent) but in relation to self-consciousness. Man therefore is a being in himself, an effective existent and not a pure dream but an authentic being because he thinks himself; '*Cogito ego sum*, '.

By this psychological analogy of being, Descartes transformed the person from an ontological to psychological fact, thus opening the door to a series of either grave reduction of the concept of the human person as seen not only in the works of Hume, Freud and Watson, but nauseatingly in Fichte, Hegel -and Nietzsche. Although modern philosophy set the plane for Jasper and Sartrean analysis of the person, which influenced and attracted frightening consequences of dehumanization especially in the social and political planes as recorded in the history of mankind; from human extermination to

racial discrimination, and from scientific and technological manipulations through barbaric and iniquitous laws, many latter contemporary philosophers have engaged in a project of reflection to establish a new the concept of the person in his intrinsic value and dignity, hence they defined the person in a dialogical perspective of inter-subjectivity, vocation, action and communication as shown in the works of Ricocur, Gasset, Wojtyla and Mounier and Bubber.

For the Africans ,the concept of person is determined by the community holding the most profound bound of incarnate existents, living in common; a community of the 'I' and of others.¹¹⁶ These epochal definitions of person as substance, self-conscious and communicable being, are indications of semantic diffusion. Therefore for an wholesome definition of person, the ontological, psychological and dialogical qualities must not be considered complete without the quality of self-transcendence as it express the sense and value of the human person.¹¹⁷

As noted before, the person is not only an existent (Heidegger), a co-existent (Bubber) nor a subsistent (Boethius), but a transcendent; a project towards the infinite, penetrating the realms of the absolute and the eternal. Hence a global definition of person whether black, white, Christian, Buddhist or Islam, must include all four

¹¹⁶ Kwame, Gyekye, *An Essay On African Philosophical Thought*, (Cambridge: C.U.P.,1987) p. 173

¹¹⁷ Maritain, J., *Introductory to Philosophy*, (New York: Sheed and Ward,1947)p.23

transcendental qualities or elements: autonomy, self-consciousness, communication, and self-transcendence¹¹⁸ as in the African scientific paradigm of 'being-with' shown in Wiredu, Gyekye, Mbiti, Tempels, Pantaleon and in Bini ontology as '*Omwana agbon*'-a being in the community with-others.

From our analysis so far, we can deduce that the concept of destiny as a 'being-with' has been essentially and seemingly the thrust of the preceding analysis of person by African philosophers. It is with all precision that we affirm that this conceptual analysis of destiny as a 'being-with' wells from the fact that African cosmology/ontology is purely anthropocentric and this forms their world-view.¹¹⁹ And as a complex of their belief not attitude concerning the origin, nature, structure of the universe and the interaction of beings with particular reference to person, simply put a 'person-universe' relation, the concept 'being-with' is easily stanchied to African nature traced to ancient past.

Hence as long as the Blackman is among his own people, he will have no need to put his own being to the test for someone else's benefit. This account for what gave rise to the search for African personality; as a 'being-in-the-whole' world he is a 'being-uncomfortable-inthe-white-attitude', and being conscious of he/her uniqueness in the

¹¹⁸ Metuh, E. I., *African Religion in Western Conceptual Scheme the problem of Interpretation*, (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 1985) p. 96

¹¹⁹ Mondin, B., *Philosophical Anthropology*. (Bangalore India: Theological Publication, 1985) p. 253.

world, he was psychologically conditioned with the need to search for himself, to define himself, to seek an understanding of himself in relation to himself or his community, but more problematically, in confrontation with the 'white world'. The self-consciousness and self-discovery of the African personality therefore, arose in the circumstances of slavery, colonialism and other forms of dehumanizing racial oppressions whose predominant effects characterized the post-colonial African.¹²⁰

This search substantiated the definition of person as a 'beingwith' planted in the philosophy of Okolo, Jacquet, Senghor, Nyerere, Mboya, Nyasani, Shutte, Tutu, Pantaleon, Odimegwu, Gyekye, Nkemkia, Mbiti, Tempels and in Ruch and Ayanwu, Menkiti, Steven Shalita, Kihumbu Thairu, Thaddeus Mbi, Oguejiofor, Ukhun e.t.c. although in semantic diffusion, each identifying 'being-with' and its uniqueness as distinct from the Western that is; tracing it to his origin, showing its concrete dimensions in the micro and macro interrelation of beings, visible and invisible, its characteristics in family hood, names, cultural rite, religion etc. and advocating it as a way forward for Africa and the rest of the world, but only if they can look at man through this African scientific paradigm of 'being-with'.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Nkafu, N., *African Vitology: A Step Forward in African Thought*.(Enugu: Pauline Publishers 1995), p. 102.

¹²¹ Oguejiofor, O.J, "Negritude as Hermeneutics: A Reinterpretation of Leopold Sedar Senghor's", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 83. 1, 2009. pp. 79-94

No doubt the analysis in this study clearly examines the imports of the definition of person as a 'being-with'. But there lies a lacuna which this Bini ontological analysis essentially fills, it is in fact a reconciling integrationist philosophy. Although, the person as a 'being-with' in Bini ontology speaks family hood like other African ontologies but in this dimension, it speaks a contract of solidarity between all people, if we are to realize a rational relationship not only between individuals, but also between groups and peoples. Family hood in this Bini ontology is that of the universal in which everyman is deeply related in a form of universal brotherhood. This Bini ontology of being also portrays the essential characteristics of communalistic life, but this community structure 'be-ing' goes beyond the level of emphasizing a dignified and distinctive personal identity in theoretical terms to laying concrete in existential terms what it is to be so defined in living experience.

A person as a 'being-with' in Bini ontology is humanism which bears a meaning in terms of economical, political, social and religious policies as it seeks to reconstruct the structure of geocentricism, exploitation, inequality and disharmony to harmony (of being in a mystical network of interrelatedness, material and physical), so to ensure a universal equilibrium.

From the above, it is important to acknowledge our differences in the way we look at Being instead of trying to condemn one attitude or the other. Suffice to this, let

us indicate that taking a critical and hermeneutical look at the concept as a person In Thomas Aquinas and Edmund Mounier, Chukwudumbi Okolo and Nkafu Nkemkia side by side with the reality of our very existence as well as its imports in our daily actions, a brighter understanding will be reached as this will enable a digestion of the arguments or controversy and a reconciliation disconnects in the concept of person in Western and African philosophy.

4.2. CONCLUSION

The discussion on the concept of destiny in Edo ontology so far can be summarized thus: the human person, which is a tripartite composite of body, soul and spirit, is believed to have been caused and determined in African thought. This fact of being caused and determined is the core of the concept of destiny in African philosophy and religion. Destiny, in Edo thoughts, involves the absolute imprint of the divine plan on the life of the human person. This, as has been elucidated above, has implications for human freedom and moral responsibility. Consequently, the present work has navigated through Edo worldview as a representative tradition system in African thought in order to find answers to the fundamental questions that have given bearing to the discussion so far like, what is the human person?, (*omwan*)? and what is destiny?(*Ehi*)? Is destiny alterable? If yes how?

More so, the discourse has also shown that if destiny is understood as absolute determinism, there would be no need for any personal effort to be good and human beings would be no more than robots, programmed to merely fulfill the viewing pleasure of some superior force that determined them as such. But this is not the case as we have shown that destiny, understood as soft determinism, admits of personal effort, hence the Edo concepts of , *ese* and *uyinmwēn* and the reality of human freedom and responsibility and the possibility of some diabolic forces to impinge on the destiny of the human person. Another intervention in this discussion has been centered on the imperative of divination, which involves attempting to know one's destiny through the help of a deity, *Orunmila* of Yoruba thought, for instance. Finally, the African thoughts on destiny that we have seen leave us with the obvious choice of making a rational and realistic move toward the soft deterministic understanding of destiny. It appears to be more tenable and speaks to our common and daily experience of life.

From all we have examined in this study, it is apparent that the Bini conception of person and respect for human life is a product their metaphysical world view. In this long essay we have delineated the various ways in which the *Binis* express their belief in the worth or value of Person's beingness. Although the core of this philosophy

tends towards humanism, it is obvious that this humanistic tendency is quite different from secular humanism which excludes all religious and metaphysical theses about his origin and welfare. It is quite germane to point out here that African ontology is basically pluralistic in nature¹²².

In the hierarchy of beings, man is believed to be next to the spirits and ancestors before God. He is both spirit and matter, possessing body and soul, both corporeal and incorporeal, thus, deserves to enjoy a life that is sacrosanct. The Bini, nay, African ontological view of the human person (generically represented as man), is thus, closely associated with their metaphysical idea of immortality of the soul and destiny⁹. In this regard, an assault on human life is believed to be capable of vitiating and upsetting the transcendent ontological order that binds all existent things. As the study has shown there is a sense in which it could be argued that, in traditional *Bini* thought, a person is most appropriately conceived as a moral person whose life and existence is substantially dependent on others and that the question about the ontological nature of person is a perennial one, and a person, being a complex psycho-physical phenomenon will continue to be source of metaphysical and normative speculations.

It is evident from this discussion that in the African context, a human being derives his/her identity from the relevant culture in which he/she is born and bred. This

¹²² Gyekye, K., *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995)p.68

makes Personhood a kind of historical and cultural artefact. This is the summative conclusion that can be made when reference is made to the various disciplines like Philosophy, Cultural Anthropology, Anthropology, Theology, and others that would consider the significance of the different perspectives one would encounter in the discussion of the position of humanity in the wider socio-cultural context. The African context has undergone many and diverse cultural changes from the time of its contact especially with the colonial legacy that still lives on through both governance and educational and religious sectors¹²³.

The rates of industrialization, together with the resultant urbanization challenge the traditional cultural set-up and worldview. This calls for revision of the once cherished value systems as relationships are re-negotiated in terms of the new realities. For example, the discussion of destiny in most African communities today will be overshadowed by European and Christian worldviews. This is occasioned by the education system that Africa has inherited from especially the West. All that is indigenous and informal in nature is not considered as trustworthy and foundational in giving focus and direction to the continent.

However, it is evident that quite often, and especially after the failure of the ‘borrowed’ and adopted methodologies, there is a ‘return’ to the search for the enduring

¹²³ Asouzu, I. I. (2004). *The Method and Practice of Complementary Reflection in and Beyond African Philosophy*. (Calabar: University of Calabar Press,2004)p.56

and traditional knowledge systems that are human-sustaining. How much longer this will be and is still a contentious matter.

As seen before, the communal emphasis in matters of life and being in the African setting finds itself set against the modern trends and knowledge systems. Individualism threatens our very existence as interdependence characteristically marks our essential nature as social beings. It is the individualistic tendencies, rooted in the imported worldviews that account for the gross lack of respect for life in Africa today in all aspects and at all levels.

It is the de-construction of all cultural attributes and values that creates humans devoid of humanness, respect, love, integrity, honour; all life-affirming and sustaining values. This is not the essential African mind that values Personhood as experienced in the community. It, indeed, is time to get back to the basics of life, life lived and experienced in the community; the kind of life that recognizes existence beyond the self and individual, affirming the view that our individual identities are a construct of the community, and our being depends on how we relate with the immediate milieu.¹²⁴

Much as it (Personhood) is the need for Africa, this is the need for humanity on the globe. More than ever before, humanity is living on the edge. World over, fear

¹²⁴ Ezedike, E. U.,. Respect for human life in Igbo morality and the notion of justice. In Asiegbu, M. F. & Chukwuokolo, J. C. (Eds). *Truth, Knowledge and Society.*(Abakiliki: Pacts GM Press, 2012) p.43

among people is not without but within. Reduced and re-defined in material and physical terms, life is reduced to mere existence devoid of meaning and significance. The 'person' in this regard has value in terms of what he/she can do, which calls for 'performance' and 'duty' for 'self-actualization' rather than community wellbeing. The breakdown of the social institutions and organizations that would enhance human life and value threaten the very existence of individuals and community. In everything, the concept of Personhood which plays out well in the different cultures and communities of Africa needs further study as a possible panacea for a world devoid of human value and respect for life in a holistic manner.

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