

**CAN MAN ACT FREELY IN THE WORLD OF MYSTIC BEINGS?  
PUZZLE IN AFRICAN METAPHYSICS**

**BY**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this research was carried out by **IZEVBIZUA VICTORY** with the matriculation number **ART2101107**, and it's meet the requirements for an award of Bachelor of Art in philosophy.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to God Almighty for this infinite love He shows to me throughout my stay in institution. And also, to my parents, Mrs Rose and Mr Elvis Izevbizua.

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## ABSTRACT

*This research explores the intricate relationship between human freedom and spiritual determinism within the framework of African metaphysics. It examines whether human beings can act freely in a universe governed by mystical beings such as ancestors, deities, and spirits, who are believed to influence destiny and moral conduct. The study departs from Western dualisms that separate freedom and determinism, proposing instead a relational understanding grounded in African ontology.*

*African metaphysical thought views existence as holistic and interconnected, where the physical and spiritual realms coexist in continuous interaction. Within this worldview, mystical beings are not tyrannical forces dictating fate but moral agents who guide human behavior, ensure justice, and maintain cosmic harmony. Human destiny (chi, akala, ori) is understood not as an unchangeable script but as a divine framework within which individuals exercise will, responsibility, and moral choice.*

*Through philosophical analysis and interpretation of African cosmology, this research reveals that freedom in African thought is not the absence of constraint but the responsible participation in the moral and spiritual order of existence. True freedom is realized when individuals act ethically, align with communal values, and harmonize their personal will with the divine purpose.*

*The study concludes that man can indeed act freely in the world of mystic beings, but such freedom is relational, moral, and deeply contextual. It affirms a vision of human existence where agency is exercised within divine order, and where freedom finds its fullest expression through cooperation with the unseen forces that shape reality.*

**PHILOSOPHY OF OTHER DIMENSIONS**

**CAN MAN ACT FREELY IN THE WORLD OF MYSTIC BEINGS?  
PUZZLE IN AFRICAN METAPHYSICS**

**GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

## 1.1 Background to the Study

The metaphysical debate surrounding freedom and determinism has been a central theme in philosophy from antiquity to contemporary times. Within the African philosophical context, this debate takes on unique dimensions due to the centrality of mystical beings in shaping existential realities. African metaphysics is rooted in the belief that human life is interconnected with spiritual forces, ancestors, deities, and unseen beings who exert influence over the material world.<sup>1</sup> This worldview challenges Western dichotomies that separate the spiritual from the rational and places emphasis on the relational structure of existence. In many African societies, the belief in predestination or determinism is grounded not in abstract logic but in the lived experience of ancestral presence and divine influence. Individuals are believed to be born into a cosmic order governed by forces beyond their comprehension, which shapes their path, choices, and consequences. Thus, freedom in this sense is not absolute, but relational and negotiated within the spiritual and communal frameworks of African life.<sup>2</sup>

The presence of mystical beings such as gods, spirits, and ancestors suggests that human actions are sometimes predetermined or at least heavily influenced by spiritual causality. This introduces a serious philosophical tension: if our actions are

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<sup>1</sup>Mbiti, John S. *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann, 1969

<sup>2</sup>Tempels, Placide. *Bantu Philosophy*. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959

guided or controlled by spiritual forces, can humans still be said to possess free will? This is one of the core concerns of contemporary African philosophers who are re-examining traditional metaphysical views through critical and modern lenses.<sup>3</sup>

Contemporary African philosophy seeks to reconcile these metaphysical complexities by interrogating the nature of agency within African cosmology. Philosophers like Kwasi Wiredu and Ifeanyi Menkiti emphasize that African metaphysics sees personhood not merely as an innate quality, but as something achieved through community participation and moral action.<sup>4</sup> In this communal context, freedom is not the absence of constraint but the fulfillment of obligations in alignment with cosmic and spiritual harmony.

The concept of determinism in African metaphysics is deeply intertwined with cultural notions of destiny, often referred to as *akala* among the Igbo or *chi* in other communities. In Igbo language and metaphysics, *Chi* is a profoundly significant concept that refers to a person's personal spiritual guardian or divine spark bestowed by Chukwu, the Supreme Being. It is often described as the "personal god" or "inner spirit" that guides an individual's destiny and life journey. Among the Igbo, *Chi* is believed to embody both fate and agency, for while it represents a

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<sup>3</sup>Edeh, Emmanuel M. P. *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1983.

<sup>4</sup>Menkiti, Ifeanyi. "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought." In *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, edited by Richard A. Wright, 171–181. Lanham: University Press of America, 1984.

divine allotment that determines one's potential, it also works in harmony with human effort and moral choices. Proverbs such as *onye kwe, Chi ya ekwe* ("if one agrees, his Chi agrees") illustrate this balance, showing that while destiny is influenced by one's *Chi*, the individual must still act responsibly to bring it into fulfillment. Thus, *Chi* functions as both a spiritual companion and a metaphysical principle, shaping character, fortune, and identity. It is through one's *Chi* that divine will becomes personalized, making every human life unique while still connected to the greater order established by Chukwu. However, this deterministic perspective does not completely negate human agency, as many African cultures emphasize the role of personal effort, moral responsibility, and communal influence in shaping one's life path. Rather, it suggests a dynamic tension between divine predetermination and human effort. Thus, individuals are expected to strive toward fulfilling their destiny while remaining morally accountable for their choices.<sup>5</sup> The role of mystical beings in shaping human fate presents a unique metaphysical model, one that challenges Western notions of causality. In the African worldview, these beings are not merely supernatural entities but are integrally linked to the moral and existential development of individuals and communities. The spiritual

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<sup>5</sup>Gyekye, Kwame. *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*. Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996.

world is not seen as distant or abstract, but as active in guiding and sometimes correcting human behavior.<sup>6</sup>

African metaphysics does not regard freedom and determinism as mutually exclusive. Instead, it views them as interdependent aspects of a larger ontological framework. This has led to a rethinking of concepts such as justice, punishment, guilt, and virtue in African societies. A person who violates communal or spiritual norms may not only be judged by human laws but may suffer consequences believed to be orchestrated by mystical forces.<sup>7</sup> The African philosophical landscape affirms the ethical dimension of metaphysical beliefs. The assumption that mystical beings influence destiny carries with it the moral responsibility of aligning one's life with cosmic principles. Ethics, in this context, becomes not merely a rational exercise but a spiritual obligation. This situates moral philosophy within a metaphysical framework that includes invisible beings as moral agents or enforcers.

This background demonstrates that the metaphysical conversation in African philosophy is deeply tied to lived experiences, oral traditions, religious practices, and communal values. The complexity of freedom and determinism in African thought cannot be fully grasped without acknowledging the roles that these mystic

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<sup>6</sup>Ramose, Mogobe B. *African Philosophy Through Ubuntu*. Harare: Mond Books, 1999.

<sup>7</sup>Idowu, E. Bolaji. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. London: Longmans, 1962

beings play. Contemporary scholars are therefore revisiting these themes to articulate a uniquely African perspective on existential autonomy. This research is important because it contributes to the growing literature on African metaphysics and offers a platform to explore how indigenous African thought systems provide alternatives to dominant Western models of metaphysical inquiry. In doing so, it highlights the richness and depth of African philosophical traditions in addressing fundamental human concerns about choice, destiny, and existence.<sup>8</sup>

The metaphysical dialogue between freedom and determinism, as seen through the lens of mystic beings, also has implications for African identity and development. In a world that increasingly emphasizes individualism and secularism, understanding the traditional African metaphysical framework offers insight into how many communities still conceptualize responsibility, misfortune, and success in collective and spiritual terms. This study seeks to explore whether true moral autonomy is possible within a spiritual universe governed by mystic forces. It also examines how contemporary African philosophers are negotiating these tensions in ways that maintain the integrity of traditional beliefs while engaging with modern philosophical standards. This metaphysical inquiry not only enriches the academic

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<sup>8</sup>Wiredu, Kwasi. *Philosophy and an African Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

discipline of philosophy but also deepens our understanding of African worldview and the role of unseen realities in shaping human freedom.<sup>9</sup>

The methods adopted in this work are conceptual and critical analysis of research methodology. This research aims at a critical metaphysical examination of the relationship between human freedom and mystical determinism within the framework of African philosophy. The analytical framework adopted here is philosophical in nature, focusing on ontological, ethical, and spiritual themes inherent in African thought. This theoretical discourse is directed at interrogating the influence of mystical beings—such as ancestors, spirits, and divinities—on human destiny, moral agency, and existential choices. Human existence in African metaphysics is intricately connected with the unseen spiritual realm, which makes such an analytical approach imperative. This research also adopts the hermeneutical methodology in the sense that it seeks to interpret and analyze the meanings and implications of African metaphysical beliefs regarding freedom, determinism, and mystical causality. It explores the interpretations of key African philosophical concepts such as destiny (chi, akala, or ori), communal personhood, and spiritual causality in relation to moral responsibility. This theoretical discourse is crucial in

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<sup>9</sup>Masolo, D. A. *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

evaluating how African metaphysical systems contribute to contemporary philosophical discourse and human self-understanding within African contexts.

This research is divided into four chapters. Chapter One is the introduction. Chapter Two focuses on the nature of African metaphysics and the conceptual foundations of freedom and determinism. Chapter Three discusses mystical beings in African cosmology and their implications on human moral autonomy and existential agency. Chapter Four is the evaluative appraisal, concluding considerations, and recommendations for further philosophical engagement.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

## **1.1 THE ONTOLOGY OF HUMAN FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM IN AFRICAN METAPHYSICS**

The ideological tension between the notions of human freedom and metaphysical determinism has been widely discussed across various philosophical traditions. In contemporary African philosophy, this debate acquires a distinct character due to the central role mystical beings play in determining the fate and actions of individuals. African metaphysics does not isolate human existence from spiritual realities; instead, it views human life as deeply embedded in a cosmological network of spiritual forces such as ancestors, divinities, and spirits. These beings are believed to influence, guide, or sometimes determine human choices and destinies. Hence, the relationship between freedom and determinism is not merely an abstract concern, but one that directly involves the unseen dimensions of reality.

This research is saddled with the following fundamental questions such as:

1. What is the ontological status of freedom and determinism in African metaphysical understanding?
2. Who are mystical beings in African cosmology, and what ontological roles do they play in determining human destiny?
3. Can the human person be said to possess true moral autonomy in the face of spiritual determinism?
4. What is the relationship between mystical determinism and the traditional African notion of destiny (ehi, chi, akala, or ori)?

5. Are freedom and determinism mutually exclusive in African thought, or are they harmonized within a spiritual framework?
6. What are the existential, moral, and spiritual implications of believing that human actions are influenced or predetermined by mystical forces?
7. How does the communal conception of personhood in African philosophy affect the interpretation of human freedom and moral responsibility?
8. Does the belief in mystical beings promote fatalism or encourage ethical conduct and social harmony in African societies?
9. What is the relevance of this metaphysical framework in contemporary African philosophical discourse and its implications for modern African identity?

The purpose of this study is to explore and provide a comprehensive ontological analysis of the concepts of freedom and determinism in relation to mystical beings within the context of contemporary African philosophy. This research seeks to examine the underlying ontological, spiritual, and cultural assumptions that shape African perspectives on human agency, moral responsibility, and the influence of metaphysical forces. It aims to establish a theoretical framework that illuminates the ways in which mystical beings—such as ancestors, divinities, and spirits are believed to participate in or influence human destiny, decisions, and actions.

Through critical analysis, the study intends to articulate how African metaphysics interprets the tension between self-determination and divine or mystical orchestration of life events. It also aims to determine whether freedom and determinism are mutually exclusive or harmonized within African cosmological systems. By investigating the implications of these metaphysical beliefs, the research aspires to assess the moral, existential, and communal dimensions of freedom as understood in African thought. The study endeavors to contribute meaningfully to the discourse in African philosophy by offering an informed perspective on how metaphysical realities shape African conceptions of personhood, moral agency, and social harmony.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to deepen philosophical understanding of how African metaphysical systems conceptualize human freedom and determinism. By situating these concepts within the framework of mystical beings, the research offers a culturally grounded exploration of human agency that challenges the dominant Western dichotomies. It provides a unique lens through which to interpret human existence as influenced by both spiritual and material dimensions, reflecting the holistic worldview that characterizes African thought.

This study is also significant for its contribution to contemporary debates in moral and existential philosophy, particularly as it relates to the African context. By examining whether human beings can be morally responsible for actions that are

believed to be influenced or predetermined by mystical forces, the research opens up important discussions on accountability, ethics, and the limits of human control. It will help clarify how traditional African beliefs reconcile spiritual causality with moral judgment, and what this means for understanding justice and responsibility in African societies. The study enriches the broader field of African philosophy by re-centering indigenous metaphysical categories and restoring their intellectual legitimacy. In doing so, it provides a platform for reclaiming African modes of thought from colonial distortions that have often dismissed or misunderstood mystical and spiritual dimensions of reality. By engaging critically with these themes, the research not only preserves cultural heritage but also revitalizes it within academic and philosophical discourse.

In practical terms, this study holds significance for social and cultural development, especially in communities where traditional beliefs in mystical beings continue to shape worldviews and behaviors. By offering an in-depth philosophical framework for understanding such beliefs, the study can inform educational, religious, and ethical discussions that seek to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. It promotes dialogue on how indigenous knowledge systems can be integrated meaningfully into contemporary African life without being reduced to superstition or folklore.

The study is significant for its interdisciplinary implications, especially in areas such as theology, cultural studies, anthropology, and ethics. By revealing the metaphysical dimensions of freedom and determinism through the lens of African cosmology, the research invites cross-disciplinary collaboration and offers a model for how traditional belief systems can inform global philosophical conversations. It encourages scholars to take seriously the intellectual richness of African metaphysics and to explore its relevance to universal human concerns.

## **1.2 African Philosophical Scoping**

This study is focused on exploring the metaphysical and philosophical dimensions of freedom and determinism in relation to mystical beings within the context of contemporary African philosophy. It limits its scope to African metaphysical systems, particularly how spiritual entities such as ancestors, spirits, and divinities are believed to influence human destiny and moral choices. The work does not engage with Western philosophical models but centers exclusively on African thought, aiming to understand how traditional beliefs shape views on agency, responsibility, and communal life.

The essay critically examines the ontological and spiritual foundations of African cosmology and their implications for moral philosophy. It reflects on how mystical determinism interacts with the idea of human freedom and assesses the influence of these beliefs on ethical conduct and social structures in African societies. The

study's primary interest is to deepen philosophical discourse by engaging with the indigenous African understanding of mystical causality and its relevance in contemporary African identity and thought.

## **1.2 Conceptual Clarification**

**1.6.1 Freedom:** In the context of contemporary African philosophy, freedom refers to the capacity of individuals to make choices, act according to their will, and exercise moral responsibility within the framework of their social, cultural, and spiritual environment. Unlike the Western individualistic notion of freedom, African thought often situates freedom within communal and spiritual relationships, emphasizing that true freedom aligns with both personal desires and collective well-being.

**1.6.2 Determinism:** Determinism in African metaphysics denotes the belief that certain aspects of life are preordained or influenced by spiritual, ancestral, or cosmic forces. This concept is closely linked to ideas of destiny (*akala*, *chi*, or *orisa*), suggesting that while humans may exercise choice, their life paths are in some ways guided or constrained by higher mystical powers or pre-existing cosmic orders.

**1.6.3 Mystic Beings:** Mystic beings in contemporary African philosophy are entities that exist beyond the material world but actively influence human life and society. These include ancestral spirits, deities, or other supernatural forces believed

to govern fate, moral order, and the flow of events. Their presence underscores the interconnectedness of the spiritual and physical realms, highlighting that human freedom is exercised not in isolation but within a cosmos guided by these beings.

**1.6.4 Contemporary African Philosophy:** This refers to modern interpretations and expansions of traditional African thought, blending indigenous metaphysical beliefs with critical reflection, ethics, and sometimes dialogue with Western philosophical ideas. It often examines how spiritual, cultural, and mystical elements interact with modern social realities, including concepts of freedom and determinism.

#### **1.4 Literature Review**

According to Mbiti, John S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, Heinemann, 1969, African philosophy is deeply embedded in the religious and spiritual worldview where mystical beings such as ancestors and spirits are central. Mbiti explains that these beings actively participate in the affairs of the living, influencing destinies and moral choices. This metaphysical outlook challenges Western secular notions of freedom by emphasizing a relational understanding of human agency, rooted in cosmic and communal interconnectedness.<sup>10</sup>

According to Wiredu, Kwasi, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*, Indiana University Press, 1996, African metaphysics does not isolate

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<sup>10</sup>J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (Heinemann, 1969).

human beings as autonomous agents but views them as part of a larger cosmic order where mystical forces exert real influence. Wiredu suggests that freedom in African thought is often harmonized with determinism through the acceptance of spiritual guidance and communal values, which shape moral responsibility within the framework of destiny and fate.<sup>11</sup>

According to Appiah, Kwame Anthony, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, Oxford University Press, 1992, African conceptions of personhood involve complex relationships between the physical and spiritual worlds. Appiah highlights the role of mystical beings in shaping human existence and argues that these metaphysical beliefs provide a foundation for understanding freedom not as absolute independence but as freedom within a spiritually ordered cosmos.<sup>12</sup>

According to Odera Oruka, *Philosophy, Humanity and Ecology: African Perspectives*, Volume 2, Acton Publishers, 1997, the metaphysical traditions of African philosophy assert that human freedom is intricately connected to the will and influence of mystical beings. Oruka critically examines how this determinism

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<sup>11</sup>Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*, (Indiana University Press, 1996).

<sup>12</sup>Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, (Oxford University Press, 1992).

is not fatalistic but allows for a form of ethical agency that is both communal and transcendent, balancing spiritual influence and moral accountability.<sup>13</sup>

According to Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi, *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, Blackwell Publishing, 1998, the discourse on freedom and determinism in African philosophy is enriched by the recognition of spiritual causality. Eze stresses that mystical beings are essential mediators of destiny and ethical conduct, thus reframing the Western dualism of free will and determinism into a more fluid, relational metaphysical context.<sup>14</sup>

According to Hountondji, Paulin J., *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, Indiana University Press, 1996, African metaphysical systems regard mystical beings as integral to the understanding of human destiny. Hountondji argues that these spiritual forces shape the limits and possibilities of freedom, emphasizing that African philosophy offers a distinct conception of agency that incorporates communal values and spiritual realities.<sup>15</sup>

According to Gyekye, Kwame, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, Temple University Press, 1995, the Akan metaphysical

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<sup>13</sup>Odera Oruka, *Philosophy, Humanity and Ecology: African Perspectives*, Vol. 2, (Acton Publishers, 1997).

<sup>14</sup>Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, (Blackwell Publishing, 1998).

<sup>15</sup>Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, (Indiana University Press, 1996).

framework includes the concept of destiny (sunsum) and the influence of ancestral spirits, which guide individual freedom within a predetermined spiritual order. Gyekye illustrates how this framework fosters a balance between determinism and ethical self-determination in African thought.<sup>16</sup>

According to Masolo, D.A., *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, Indiana University Press, 1994, African metaphysics insists on the inseparability of the physical and spiritual realms in understanding freedom and determinism. Masolo argues that mystical beings not only influence human actions but also symbolize deeper ontological truths about interdependence and moral responsibility in African societies.<sup>17</sup>

According to Helleiner, Jane, *African Cosmology of the Bantu-Kongo: Tying the Spiritual Knot*, Africa World Press, 1993, the Kongo cosmology presents mystical beings as active agents in shaping human fate, where freedom is exercised within the constraints of spiritual causality. Helleiner's work emphasizes the ethical and social dimensions of this metaphysical relationship, highlighting communal harmony as the goal of human action.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, (Temple University Press, 1995).

<sup>17</sup>D. A. Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, (Indiana University Press, 1994).

<sup>18</sup>Jane Helleiner, *African Cosmology of the Bantu-Kongo: Tying the Spiritual Knot*, (Africa World Press, 1993).

According to Ramose, Mogobe B., *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, Mond Books, 1999, the Ubuntu philosophy integrates freedom and determinism by positing that individual existence and agency are realized through communal relationships and spiritual interconnectedness. Ramose discusses how mystical beings play a crucial role in guiding moral decisions and social conduct, illustrating the unique African synthesis of metaphysical determinism and moral freedom.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Mogobe B. Ramose, *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, (Mond Books, 1999).

## CHAPTER TWO

### MAN, FREEDOM AND MYSTICAL BEINGS IN AFRICAN METAPHYSICS

#### 2.1 Meaning and Scope of African Metaphysics

African metaphysics occupies a central place in the study of African philosophy, as it deals with the fundamental nature of reality, existence, and the interconnectedness of beings within the African worldview. Unlike Western metaphysical traditions that often emphasize abstract reasoning, African metaphysics is grounded in lived experiences, communal relationships, and a holistic understanding of the universe. It seeks to explain the nature of reality through the interaction of the spiritual, physical, and moral dimensions of life, placing the human person at the center of this web of existence.

Within this framework, questions of freedom and determinism emerge as essential philosophical concerns. Freedom, in African thought, is not merely individual autonomy but is deeply tied to communal responsibilities, moral obligations, and spiritual order. Determinism, on the other hand, is often expressed through the belief in destiny, divine will, and ancestral influence, which shape human actions and outcomes. The tension between these two concepts—whether human beings are truly free agents or subject to predetermined forces, has long been a point of reflection in African metaphysics.

This discourse provides a conceptual foundation for understanding how Africans perceive human existence, choice, and responsibility within a cosmos that is at once dynamic and ordered. By exploring the nature of African metaphysics and the philosophical debates surrounding freedom and determinism, one can appreciate not only the depth of African philosophical traditions but also their relevance to universal human questions about autonomy, morality, and destiny.

African metaphysics refers to the branch of African philosophy concerned with the fundamental nature of reality, existence, and being. It explores how Africans understand the universe, the relationships between visible and invisible realities, and the principles that govern human life. Unlike the Western tradition, which often treats metaphysics as an abstract, speculative discipline, African metaphysics is deeply practical and embedded in the day-to-day lives, rituals, and cultural practices of the people. It connects the physical world with the spiritual, presenting reality as a holistic system where every part has meaning and relevance.<sup>20</sup>

The meaning of African metaphysics can be best understood through its holistic outlook. In African thought, reality is not compartmentalized into separate categories of material and immaterial but is viewed as a continuum in which human beings, nature, ancestors, spirits, and God coexist in mutual dependence. This interrelatedness gives African metaphysics a distinctive feature, where the physical

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<sup>20</sup>Gyekye, Kwame. *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.

and spiritual realms are interwoven, and human beings must live in harmony with both for balance and order in life.<sup>21</sup> One essential component of African metaphysics is the concept of vital force, which refers to the life energy that flows through all beings and things. This idea suggests that everything in existence, whether animate or inanimate, possesses a force that influences and is influenced by others.

Vital force not only defines the essence of being but also explains causality, morality, and destiny in African philosophical traditions. Through this, metaphysics provides the foundation for explaining why events happen and how human beings should respond to them.<sup>22</sup> The scope of African metaphysics extends to cosmology, ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Cosmology seeks to explain the origin, structure, and purpose of the universe, often through myths and oral traditions that communicate deep philosophical insights. Ontology deals with the question of being, exploring the relationship between God, ancestors, spirits, humans, and the natural environment. Epistemology addresses the ways of knowing, emphasizing intuition, experience, and revelation, while axiology underscores values such as

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<sup>21</sup>Mbiti, John S. *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann, 1969

<sup>22</sup>Tempels, Placide. *Bantu Philosophy*. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959.

morality, justice, and communal harmony. This broad scope demonstrates the richness and depth of African metaphysical thought.<sup>23</sup>

African metaphysics also emphasizes the communal nature of existence. The African worldview rejects radical individualism and instead promotes the idea that to be is to belong. A person's existence acquires meaning only in relation to family, community, ancestors, and the larger cosmic order. Freedom, responsibility, and identity are not viewed in isolation but within this broader relational context. Hence, metaphysics shapes not only abstract philosophical discussions but also ethical systems, governance, and patterns of social organization.<sup>24</sup>

Another important dimension of African metaphysics is its dynamic conception of reality. In African thought, reality is not static but constantly evolving, shaped by both natural forces and spiritual influences. This view contrasts with certain Western metaphysical systems that emphasize fixed categories and immutable laws. For Africans, being is active and relational, and the universe is an interconnected field of forces where change is expected and accepted as part of life. This dynamic

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<sup>23</sup>Wiredu, Kwasi. *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

<sup>24</sup>Menkiti, Ifeanyi. "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought." In *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, edited by Richard A. Wright, 171–181. Lanham: University Press of America, 1984.

perspective allows African metaphysics to remain flexible and relevant to different historical and cultural contexts.<sup>25</sup>

The scope of African metaphysics also includes the interpretation of destiny and providence. Many African traditions hold that human life is shaped by divine will or destiny, often assigned before birth. However, this belief in determinism does not negate human freedom entirely. Instead, African metaphysics presents a balance where destiny provides a framework for existence, while human choices and actions determine how one fulfills or frustrates that destiny. Thus, metaphysics provides a foundation for engaging with questions of freedom, moral responsibility, and determinism.<sup>26</sup>

Spirituality is another domain that demonstrates the scope of African metaphysics. The African worldview acknowledges multiple layers of spiritual beings, including deities, ancestors, and spirits, all of whom influence human affairs. These entities are not distant abstractions but active participants in the lives of individuals and communities. Rituals, sacrifices, and prayers are thus not mere cultural practices

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<sup>25</sup>Hountondji, Paulin J. *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.

<sup>26</sup>Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

but metaphysical engagements aimed at maintaining harmony between the seen and unseen worlds.<sup>27</sup>

African metaphysics also serves as a basis for explaining morality. Since reality is interconnected, moral actions are believed to affect not only the individual but also the community and the cosmic order. Wrong-doing can disrupt harmony, inviting misfortune, while virtuous living strengthens vital force and sustains communal well-being. This moral dimension highlights how metaphysical beliefs translate directly into ethical practices and social norms within African societies.<sup>28</sup> The epistemological scope of African metaphysics is equally significant.

Knowledge in African thought is not restricted to empirical observation or logical deduction but includes intuition, revelation, and wisdom handed down through generations. Elders, diviners, and spiritual leaders are seen as custodians of metaphysical knowledge, drawing insights from both natural and supernatural sources. This broader conception of knowledge challenges narrow scientific or rationalist definitions and affirms the richness of indigenous epistemologies.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Idowu, E. Bolaji. *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. London: SCM Press, 1973.

<sup>28</sup>Gyekye, Kwame. *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

<sup>29</sup>Oruka, Henry Odera. *Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990.

Furthermore, African metaphysics has a socio-political dimension. Ideas about power, leadership, justice, and social order are often grounded in metaphysical beliefs about the nature of authority and the relationship between leaders, the community, and the divine. Traditional rulers, for example, are not merely political heads but metaphysical representatives of divine order and ancestral authority. This demonstrates how metaphysics permeates not only individual lives but also the broader structures of governance and cultural identity.<sup>30</sup>

The scope of African metaphysics extends into contemporary philosophical debates. Scholars continue to draw on African metaphysical insights to engage with global questions about freedom, determinism, human dignity, environmental ethics, and intercultural dialogue. By affirming the interconnectedness of all reality, African metaphysics provides a framework for addressing modern challenges such as ecological crisis, social injustice, and the search for meaning in an increasingly fragmented world. Its meaning and scope, therefore, go beyond traditional systems and remain relevant for understanding both African and universal human experiences.<sup>31</sup>

## **2.2 Ontological Foundations of African Thought**

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<sup>30</sup>Mamdani, Mahmood. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

<sup>31</sup>Mudimbe, V.Y. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Ontology, in philosophy, is the study of being and existence. In African philosophy, ontology forms the backbone of metaphysical inquiry because it explains what it means to exist and how various levels of reality interact. African ontology does not restrict being to material existence alone but sees it as a complex system where the spiritual, moral, and physical dimensions are inseparably linked. It emphasizes that reality is not fragmented but integrated, and human life must be understood within this unified framework.<sup>32</sup> At the center of African ontology is the belief in a Supreme Being who is the source of all existence. God, often described in indigenous names across different African cultures, is regarded as the ultimate ground of being and the sustainer of life. From this Supreme Being flows all other forms of existence—deities, ancestors, spirits, humans, animals, plants, and inanimate objects. This hierarchical order of being illustrates the graded structure of reality, where everything is connected through participation in divine life.<sup>33</sup>

Human beings occupy a unique place within this ontological structure. Unlike animals and plants, humans are seen as possessing not only physical bodies but also spiritual essence, moral will, and a destiny tied to the divine. The African concept of personhood is, therefore, not limited to biological life but includes communal identity, ancestral connections, and spiritual vitality. To exist as a human being is to

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<sup>32</sup>Okolo, Chukwudum B. *African Philosophy: A Historical Overview*. Lagos: Precision Publishers, 1994.

<sup>33</sup>Mbiti, John S. *Concepts of God in Africa*. London: SPCK, 1970.

exist in relation to others—family, community, ancestors, and the divine.<sup>34</sup> Another significant aspect of African ontology is the role of ancestors. Ancestors are not regarded as dead and absent but as living members of the community who continue to influence and guide the living. They serve as mediators between humans and the divine, ensuring the continuity of life and order within society. In this sense, being in African thought is not extinguished by death but transformed into another mode of existence, thereby affirming the continuity of life beyond the physical.<sup>35</sup> African ontology also incorporates the existence of spiritual forces that shape human affairs. Spirits may be benevolent, malevolent, or neutral, but they form an essential part of the universe and must be acknowledged in daily life. Divination, sacrifices, and rituals are metaphysical practices aimed at maintaining harmony with these spiritual realities.

This ontological outlook stresses that existence is not self-sufficient but is constantly influenced by forces beyond human perception.<sup>36</sup> The concept of vital force, often regarded as a cornerstone of African ontology, underlines that all beings possess life energy that determines their existence and interactions. Human beings, for instance, may increase or diminish their vital force through moral

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<sup>34</sup>Menkiti, Ifeanyi. “On the Normative Conception of a Person.” In *A Companion to African Philosophy*, edited by Kwasi Wiredu, 324–331. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

<sup>35</sup>Opoku, Kofi Asare. *West African Traditional Religion*. Accra: FEP International, 1978.

<sup>36</sup>Ellis, Stephen, and Gerrie ter Haar. *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa*. London: Hurst & Company, 2004.

conduct, rituals, and relationships. Harmony in society and nature is sustained when vital forces are balanced, while disharmony results in sickness, misfortune, or conflict. This dynamic understanding of being portrays ontology as both practical and ethical.<sup>37</sup>

Ontology in African thought is also deeply relational. To exist is not merely to “be” but to “be-with.” This means that individuality is inseparable from community, and being is realized through participation in the lives of others. The saying, “I am because we are,” reflects this ontological orientation. Personal identity is constructed not in isolation but within a web of relationships, reinforcing the communal nature of African thought.<sup>38</sup> African ontology further emphasizes the inseparability of being and morality. To live well is not only a social requirement but also an ontological one, since immoral behavior is believed to weaken one’s vital force and disrupt harmony in the community. Thus, ontology does not only define what it means to exist but also prescribes how existence ought to be lived. Being and goodness are, therefore, closely intertwined in African thought.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Kagame, Alexis. *La Philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise de l’Être*. Brussels: Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales, 1956.

<sup>38</sup>Nkrumah, Kwame. *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization*. London: Heinemann, 1964.

<sup>39</sup>Gyekye, Kwame. “African Ethics.” In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Stanford: Stanford University, 2011.

In addition, the African understanding of time is embedded in ontology. Time is not conceived as an abstract, linear progression but as a cyclical and experiential reality tied to events and relationships. The past, present, and future are interconnected through ancestral memory, current actions, and the destiny that awaits each person. This temporal dimension reinforces the interconnectedness of being, showing that existence unfolds within a continuum rather than a strict linear order.<sup>40</sup>

African ontology also influences how knowledge is understood and transmitted. Since reality is relational and spiritual, knowledge is not confined to empirical observation but is derived from lived experience, community traditions, and spiritual insight. Elders, sages, and diviners are seen as ontological mediators who interpret reality for the benefit of the community. Knowledge, therefore, is not merely abstract but existential, oriented toward sustaining life and harmony.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, African ontology serves as the foundation for African ethics, politics, and religion. Concepts of leadership, justice, and communal responsibility are all derived from the understanding of being as interconnected and hierarchical. Leaders are expected to embody metaphysical authority, reflecting both divine

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<sup>40</sup>Mbiti, John S. *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann, 1969.

<sup>41</sup>Hountondji, Paulin J. "The Master's Voice: Remarks on the Problem of Humanism in Africa Today." In *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*, edited by Lee M. Brown, 9–20. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

order and ancestral guidance. Injustice or abuse of power is seen not only as a political failure but as a disruption of the ontological balance of the community.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Wiredu, Kwasi. *Philosophy and an African Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

### 2.3 Concept of Man

The concept of man has been a central theme of philosophy, theology, and social science for centuries, touching on questions of existence, purpose, nature, and destiny. Philosophers and scholars have sought to understand what it means to be human, what constitutes the essence of man, and how man relates to the universe, society, and the divine. In many traditions, the term “man” is used to denote humanity as a whole, encompassing both the physical and spiritual dimensions of human existence, and reflecting a complexity that transcends mere biological explanations of human life. This concept is not static but has evolved across different cultures, times, and intellectual frameworks, each contributing unique perspectives to the discourse on what it means to be human.<sup>43</sup>

In classical philosophy, the concept of man was tied closely to rationality. Ancient Greek thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle regarded man as a rational animal, emphasizing the unique capacity for reason that distinguishes humans from other creatures. For Plato, the human soul was immortal and composed of reason, spirit, and appetite, with reason serving as the highest faculty that should govern human life. Aristotle, in turn, defined man as a “political animal,” highlighting the natural inclination of humans to live in organized societies governed by laws and moral

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<sup>43</sup>Menkiti, Ifeanyi. “Person and Community in African Traditional Thought.” In *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, edited by Richard A. Wright, 171–181. Lanham: University Press of America, 1984.

values. These foundational ideas have shaped Western conceptions of humanity for centuries, emphasizing rationality, morality, and sociality as key aspects of man.<sup>44</sup>

Religious perspectives have also been instrumental in shaping the concept of man. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, man is viewed as a creature made in the image and likeness of God, endowed with dignity, freedom, and responsibility. This view not only grounds human worth in divine creation but also ties humanity's purpose to fulfilling divine will. Similarly, in Islam, man is regarded as God's vicegerent on earth, entrusted with the duty of stewardship over creation. These religious interpretations emphasize that man's identity is not merely material but spiritual, linking human existence to transcendence and moral accountability.<sup>45</sup>

In African traditional thought, the concept of man is deeply communal and relational. The individual is understood not in isolation but within the context of family, community, and ancestral ties. The popular expression "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" reflects this orientation, showing that personhood is realized through relationships and shared values. Man is thus conceived as both a spiritual and social being, with his existence tied to the wellbeing of the community

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<sup>44</sup>Gyekye, Kwame. *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.

<sup>45</sup>Mbiti, John S. *Op.Cit.*, p.40.

and harmony with the universe. This view contrasts with Western individualism by emphasizing interdependence and collective identity.<sup>46</sup>

The Enlightenment brought a shift in the understanding of man, focusing more on autonomy, reason, and the capacity for progress. Thinkers like Immanuel Kant described man as a rational and moral agent capable of self-determination. This period elevated human reason as the source of knowledge and freedom, promoting ideals of liberty, equality, and human rights. The Enlightenment concept of man laid the groundwork for modern democratic societies, scientific advancement, and the recognition of human dignity as a universal value.<sup>47</sup>

In modern philosophy, existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger offered new perspectives on man by emphasizing freedom, choice, and the search for meaning. Sartre argued that “existence precedes essence,” meaning that man has no predetermined nature but must create his own identity through choices and actions. Heidegger, on the other hand, focused on man’s being-in-the-world, analyzing how human existence is defined by temporality, finitude, and the confrontation with death. These existentialist views shifted the focus from fixed definitions of man to the lived experience of existence.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Wiredu, Kwasi. *Op. Cit.*, p.56

<sup>47</sup>Appiah, Kwame Anthony, *Op. Cit.* p.21

<sup>48</sup>Nussbaum, Barbara. “African Culture and Ubuntu: Reflections of a South African in America.” *World Business Academy Perspectives* 17, no. 1 (2003): 1–12

Psychology has also contributed to the understanding of man, particularly through the works of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Abraham Maslow. Freud saw man as a being driven by unconscious desires and instincts, struggling between the demands of the id, ego, and superego. Jung emphasized the collective unconscious and archetypes, viewing man as connected to deeper symbolic and cultural patterns. Maslow, from a humanistic perspective, described man as motivated by a hierarchy of needs, culminating in self-actualization, where one realizes full human potential. These psychological interpretations highlight the inner complexity of man and the quest for personal fulfillment.<sup>49</sup>

Sociology adds yet another dimension by focusing on man as a social being shaped by structures, institutions, and cultural norms. Émile Durkheim emphasized the role of collective consciousness and social facts in defining human behavior, while Karl Marx viewed man primarily through the lens of labor and economic relations, arguing that human essence is realized in productive activity and social relations. Sociology thus underscores that the concept of man cannot be separated from the social environments that influence identity, behavior, and development.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Van der Merwe, W.L., and P.H. Coetzee. "African Philosophy and the Context of Modernity." In *The African Philosophy Reader*, edited by P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux, 95–114. London: Routledge, 1998.

<sup>50</sup> Shutte, Augustine. *Philosophy for Africa*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1993.

Anthropology broadens this discussion by examining man across cultures and historical epochs. From this perspective, man is not only a biological being but also a cultural and symbolic creature who creates meaning through language, rituals, and traditions. The anthropological approach reveals the diversity of human existence, showing that while all humans share common biological traits, cultural expressions of humanity vary widely, reflecting different worldviews, practices, and social systems.<sup>51</sup>

The concept of man is also central to ethics and morality. Ethical theories often hinge on assumptions about human nature. For instance, Thomas Hobbes viewed man as naturally selfish and prone to conflict, necessitating strong authority to maintain order, while Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that man is naturally good but corrupted by society. Contemporary moral philosophy continues to debate whether man is fundamentally altruistic or self-interested, and how moral responsibility arises from human nature.<sup>52</sup>

In political philosophy, the concept of man determines theories of governance and justice. Liberalism, for instance, is rooted in the belief that man is a rational individual entitled to freedom and rights, while communitarian perspectives stress that man's identity is inseparable from community and shared values. Marxist

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<sup>51</sup>Behrens, Kevin. "Exploring African Holism with Respect to the Environment." *Environmental Values* 19, no. 4 (2010): 465–484.

<sup>52</sup>Idowu, E. Bolaji. *Op.Cit.*, p.45

theory, by contrast, views man as a product of material conditions and economic structures, arguing for a society where human potential can be fully realized through equality. These differing conceptions shape debates on justice, freedom, and the role of the state.<sup>53</sup>

Scientific developments have also influenced conceptions of man. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution challenged religious and philosophical views by situating man within the continuum of natural selection and biological adaptation. This evolutionary perspective portrays man as part of the animal kingdom, yet unique in intellectual, cultural, and technological capacities. Advances in neuroscience and genetics continue to raise questions about the extent to which human behavior and identity are determined by biology versus environment.<sup>54</sup>

The technological age further complicates the concept of man. With artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and trans-humanism, humanity now grapples with questions about what distinguishes man from machines and whether human essence may be altered or transcended by technology. Philosophers and ethicists debate

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<sup>53</sup>Magesa, Laurenti. *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997.

<sup>54</sup>Gyekye, Kwame. *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

whether technological enhancement threatens or fulfills human nature, raising profound questions about identity, freedom, and the boundaries of humanity.<sup>55</sup>

From an existential-religious standpoint, man is often described as a pilgrim in search of meaning, caught between finitude and transcendence. Thinkers like Søren Kierkegaard emphasized the anxiety and despair inherent in human existence, but also the possibility of faith as a way of transcending despair. This view underscores the paradox of man as both limited and open to the infinite, seeking fulfillment beyond material existence.<sup>56</sup>

In contemporary discussions, the concept of man increasingly incorporates global and ecological perspectives. Man is no longer seen solely in relation to himself or society but also in relation to the environment and the planet. The ecological crisis has highlighted humanity's responsibility toward nature, leading to the view of man as a steward of the earth, whose survival is tied to sustainability and harmony with the natural world.<sup>57</sup>

## **2.4 Concepts of Freedom in African Philosophical Traditions**

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<sup>55</sup>Ogot, Bethwell A. *African Historiography: From Colonial Historiography to UNESCO's General History of Africa*. Nairobi: Academy Science Publishers, 2001.

<sup>56</sup>Nketia, J.H. Kwabena. *The Music of Africa*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1974.

<sup>57</sup>Wiredu, Kwasi. "The Moral Foundations of an African Culture." In *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies, I*, edited by Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, 193–206. Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992.

Freedom is one of the most profound concepts in African philosophical traditions, yet it is often understood differently from the Western liberal notion of absolute individual autonomy. In the African worldview, freedom is not the ability to act without restraint, but the ability to live in harmony with community, nature, and the spiritual order. It emphasizes balance between personal choice and collective responsibility.

The African understanding of freedom is tied to the notion of communal existence. A person's actions are never seen as affecting only themselves but are considered to have consequences for family, society, and even the spiritual world. Therefore, freedom is exercised responsibly within the framework of communal norms and moral expectations. This interdependence ensures that freedom strengthens, rather than undermines, social harmony.<sup>38</sup> African philosophical traditions also link freedom to moral responsibility. A free person is not one who ignores moral codes but one who deliberately chooses to live in accordance with truth, justice, and respect for others. In this sense, freedom and morality are inseparable: the exercise of freedom must enhance life, sustain vital force, and protect communal well-being. The concept of destiny adds another dimension to African reflections on freedom. Many African societies believe that every individual has a destiny ordained by God or the spiritual order. Yet destiny does not eliminate freedom; rather, it provides the

framework within which choices are made. Freedom, therefore, lies in how one responds to destiny, either fulfilling or frustrating the divine plan.<sup>58</sup>

Freedom is also understood in spiritual terms. Since reality is both physical and metaphysical, freedom involves maintaining right relationships with the spiritual world. A person who neglects their obligations to ancestors, deities, or the Supreme Being is not considered free but vulnerable to misfortune. Spiritual freedom is achieved through rituals, prayers, and sacrifices that align human life with transcendent realities. The African idea of freedom further emphasizes relational identity. The saying “I am because we are” implies that freedom cannot be separated from belonging. An individual may have the capacity to choose, but true freedom is realized only when those choices affirm communal ties. Freedom without responsibility, in this context, is seen as destructive rather than liberating.

Another significant dimension of freedom in African thought is its connection to justice. Freedom is not only about personal independence but also about living in a society where fairness, equality, and respect are upheld. When injustice prevails, both individuals and communities are deprived of true freedom. Thus, justice becomes the social condition that makes freedom possible. Freedom is also tied to autonomy of thought. African traditions value wisdom and encourage individuals to seek knowledge and understanding. However, this autonomy is never disconnected

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<sup>58</sup>Abimbola, Wande. *Ifa: An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1976.

from communal values. An individual is free to question, reflect, and innovate, but such intellectual freedom is always oriented toward the good of the community rather than self-centered pursuits.<sup>59</sup>African rituals and initiation ceremonies reflect this philosophical orientation toward freedom. Through rites of passage, individuals learn the responsibilities of adulthood, the expectations of the community, and the values of moral living. By undergoing these processes, they gain freedom not as license but as empowerment to live meaningfully and responsibly. In African traditions, freedom is also economic in nature. A person who is enslaved by poverty or denied access to land, resources, or communal support is not fully free. Economic well-being is therefore tied to freedom, since material deprivation undermines one's ability to participate fully in the community and live a dignified life.

The political dimension of freedom is equally important. Traditional African societies often viewed leadership as a sacred trust aimed at ensuring justice, peace, and prosperity for all. Freedom, in this sense, depended on leaders who ruled in accordance with moral and spiritual principles. Oppressive or unjust leadership was seen as a violation of freedom, not only for individuals but for the entire community. African conceptions of freedom also include liberation from fear and

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<sup>59</sup>Hountondji, Paulin J. *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.

spiritual bondage. Witchcraft, curses, and malevolent spirits are considered obstacles to human flourishing. Rituals of cleansing, exorcism, and protection are thus means of restoring freedom by releasing individuals from spiritual oppression. True freedom, therefore, includes security in both the visible and invisible realms.<sup>60</sup>

In African thought, freedom cannot be separated from the concept of vital force. To be free is to have one's vital energy strengthened and unimpeded by external or internal obstacles. Illness, immorality, or broken relationships weaken vital force, thereby reducing freedom. Conversely, healthy living, communal harmony, and moral uprightness increase a person's capacity to act freely and meaningfully. Freedom in African philosophy is not an abstract idea but a lived experience expressed in daily practices. Farming, trading, storytelling, and festivals all embody the exercise of freedom within the cultural and spiritual life of the people. These practices reinforce the idea that freedom is holistic, encompassing social, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

The African diaspora experience has also highlighted the struggle for freedom in political and existential terms. Enslavement and colonialism represented profound violations of African conceptions of freedom, stripping individuals of communal identity and spiritual harmony. The resistance to these systems of domination drew

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<sup>60</sup>Ellis, Stephen, and Gerrie ter Haar. *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa*. London: Hurst & Company, 2004.

upon African metaphysical principles that affirmed the dignity and resilience of the human person.<sup>61</sup>

Freedom in African philosophy is, therefore, not merely negative freedom—the absence of constraints—but positive freedom—the capacity to fulfill one’s role in community and destiny. It affirms both individuality and relationality, both choice and responsibility. By holding these elements together, African traditions present a balanced and holistic vision of what it means to be truly free. Education plays a role in cultivating this freedom. The transmission of values, wisdom, and skills through elders and teachers equips individuals with the capacity to act responsibly within society. Without education, a person remains immature and unprepared, and thus cannot fully exercise freedom. Education is, therefore, a liberating process that integrates personal growth with communal expectations. The ecological dimension of freedom is also evident in African traditions. Since humans are part of a larger cosmic family, freedom cannot be achieved by exploiting or destroying nature. A society that damages its environment undermines its own freedom, as ecological disharmony brings suffering and limits human flourishing. Respect for nature, therefore, is a necessary condition for genuine freedom.

## **2.5 What are Mystics Beings?**

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<sup>61</sup>Asante, Molefi Kete. *The Afrocentric Idea*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987.

Mystic beings are often described as entities or figures that transcend the ordinary boundaries of human perception and understanding, existing within a realm that is spiritual, supernatural, or metaphysical. They are associated with experiences that go beyond rational explanation and are often encountered in religious, spiritual, and esoteric traditions. These beings are said to embody higher wisdom, hidden knowledge, or divine presence, making them central to mystical experiences in which individuals claim to encounter realities beyond the material world.<sup>62</sup>

In many religious traditions, mystic beings are understood as intermediaries between the human and the divine. For example, in Christianity, saints and angels are often considered mystic beings because they are believed to exist in spiritual dimensions and can intercede or communicate with humans. Similarly, in Islam, figures like the *awliya* (friends of God) are revered for their mystical connection to the divine. These beings are not only objects of reverence but also serve as models of spiritual perfection, embodying qualities such as purity, enlightenment, and closeness to God.<sup>63</sup> Beyond organized religion, mystic beings are also prevalent in indigenous and cultural belief systems. Many African traditions, for example, speak of spirits, ancestors, and deities that guide, protect, or discipline individuals and communities. In these contexts, mystic beings are inseparable from everyday life,

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<sup>62</sup>Mbiti, John S. *Op.Cit.*, p.69

<sup>63</sup>Abimbola, Wande. *Ifa: An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1976.

often consulted for healing, guidance, or protection. Their presence highlights the deep connection between the spiritual and material worlds, showing that mysticism is not a detached phenomenon but one that shapes cultural identity and social practice.<sup>64</sup>

Philosophically, mystic beings represent the embodiment of truths that surpass logical reasoning. Mysticism itself is defined as the pursuit of direct communion with ultimate reality, and beings encountered in such states are perceived as manifestations of that reality. Whether understood as archetypes of the unconscious mind, symbolic representations of divine principles, or actual metaphysical entities, mystic beings challenge human understanding of existence. They serve as reminders of the limits of human cognition and the possibility of realities that lie beyond the senses.<sup>65</sup>

In literature and mythology, mystic beings often take symbolic forms—such as angels, spirits, or cosmic figures—that reflect humanity’s longing for transcendence. They appear in myths, legends, and sacred texts to deliver messages, test human character, or reveal hidden truths. Their narratives not only enrich cultural imagination but also provide frameworks for grappling with questions of purpose,

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<sup>64</sup>Gyekye, Kwame. *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.

<sup>65</sup>Cabral, Amilcar. *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973.

destiny, and morality. Through stories of mystic beings, communities transmit values, preserve traditions, and inspire individuals to seek higher states of awareness.<sup>66</sup>

In contemporary spirituality, mystic beings continue to play a role, especially within movements that blend ancient wisdom with modern practices. People often report encounters with beings of light, ascended masters, or spiritual guides during meditation, prayer, or altered states of consciousness. These experiences are interpreted as evidence of a deeper spiritual reality, reinforcing the idea that mystic beings are not bound to a single tradition but are universal archetypes of the human search for connection with the transcendent. Their enduring presence across history, cultures, and belief systems underscores their significance in humanity's ongoing exploration of the mystical.<sup>67</sup>

## **2.6 Interplay between Individual Freedom and Communal Responsibility**

The African worldview places great emphasis on the balance between individual freedom and communal responsibility. Unlike Western traditions that often privilege the autonomy of the individual, African thought underscores the

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<sup>66</sup>Ayittey, George B.N. *Indigenous African Institutions*. Ardsley-on-Hudson: Transnational Publishers, 1991.

<sup>67</sup>Wiredu, Kwasi. *Op. Cit.*, p.79

interdependence of human existence. The individual is seen as a being-in-community, whose freedom cannot be detached from the welfare of the larger group. In many African societies, the saying “*I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am*” captures the essence of this relationship. Individual freedom finds meaning only in relation to the community. A person’s choices and actions are expected to align with communal values, ensuring harmony rather than conflict.<sup>68</sup>

This does not mean that individuality is suppressed. African philosophy acknowledges the uniqueness of each person, affirming that every individual has a destiny, talents, and potential. However, freedom is exercised responsibly when those gifts are directed toward the flourishing of both the individual and the community. The community, in turn, nurtures the individual, providing the moral and social framework that allows freedom to thrive.

The tension between freedom and responsibility arises when individual desires conflict with communal norms. In such cases, African thought emphasizes dialogue, reconciliation, and restorative justice rather than punitive exclusion. The aim is not to annihilate personal freedom but to reintegrate it into the communal fabric.

Communal responsibility also functions as a safeguard against the misuse of freedom. When a person acts in ways that endanger social harmony—through greed, violence, or dishonesty—the community intervenes to restore balance. This

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<sup>68</sup>Mbiti, John S. *Op. Cit.*, p. 80

intervention reflects the belief that unchecked freedom can be destructive, and that responsibility must guide the exercise of personal choice.<sup>69</sup>

Rites of passage illustrate the balance between freedom and responsibility. In initiation ceremonies, individuals are not only welcomed into adulthood but also instructed in the duties they owe to family, clan, and society. Their new freedom as adults comes with responsibilities to respect elders, protect the vulnerable, and contribute productively to the community.

African cosmology reinforces this relationship. Freedom is not only a social reality but also a spiritual one. To be free is to live in right relationship with ancestors, deities, and the Supreme Being. Communal responsibility ensures that individuals do not disrupt spiritual harmony by pursuing selfish or immoral goals. The economic dimension of this interplay is also evident. Land, for example, is often held communally rather than individually. A person may exercise the freedom to cultivate it, but cannot exploit it selfishly without regard for others. This demonstrates how African systems sought to balance personal benefit with communal welfare.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Gyekye, Kwame, *Op.Cit.*, p.204

<sup>70</sup>Mamdani, Mahmood. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

African proverbs further articulate this philosophy. Sayings such as “*One finger cannot lift a load*” or “*When one tree falls, the whole forest feels it*” highlight the necessity of cooperation and mutual accountability. Individual freedom must therefore be exercised in recognition of interdependence, not in denial of it. Political life in African traditions reflects the same principle. Leaders are expected to embody both freedom and responsibility. While they may exercise authority, that authority is limited by their accountability to the people. A chief or king who rules selfishly is considered to have violated the communal trust and may be deposed or ritually sanctioned. At the family level, parental authority guides the freedom of children, but always with the understanding that children will one day assume responsibility themselves. Freedom is gradually expanded as responsibility grows, creating a dynamic process that mirrors the maturation of both the individual and the community.

In African ethical thought, freedom is meaningless without responsibility. A person who insists on freedom without regard for consequences is considered immature or morally deficient. Conversely, a person who fulfills communal obligations is respected as genuinely free, because they harmonize personal choice with the needs of others.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Menkiti, Ifeanyi. “Person and Community in African Traditional Thought.” In *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, edited by Richard A. Wright, 171–181. Lanham: University Press of America, 1984.

The interplay of freedom and responsibility is also expressed through conflict resolution. When disputes arise, elders often remind disputants of their obligations to one another as kin, neighbors, or members of the same community. By invoking shared responsibility, they reframe freedom not as a license to dominate but as an opportunity to restore unity.

African spirituality also situates this interplay within the concept of destiny. Each person's destiny is personal, yet it cannot be fulfilled in isolation. One's success often depends on contributions to the well-being of others. Thus, communal responsibility becomes a pathway to the actualization of individual freedom. This framework also informs African conceptions of justice. True freedom is realized only when everyone's dignity is respected. A society where one person's freedom undermines another's is considered unjust. Justice, therefore, is the communal condition that ensures freedom is equitably distributed and responsibly exercised.<sup>72</sup>

Freedom and responsibility also extend into ecological relationships. Since the community includes not only humans but also the land, animals, and spirits, individual actions toward the environment are judged by their impact on communal well-being. Thus, ecological stewardship is both a freedom and a responsibility.

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<sup>72</sup>Wiredu, Kwasi. "The Moral Foundations of an African Culture." In *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies, I*, edited by Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, 193–206. Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992.

The communal dimension of freedom is not static but evolves with history. In the African struggle against colonialism, individual leaders often rose to prominence, but their freedom to act was legitimized by their responsibility to the collective liberation of their people. This highlights the dynamic way African thought integrates personal initiative with communal goals.

In modern African societies, the challenge is how to sustain this balance in contexts shaped by globalization and liberal individualism. While modernity emphasizes personal rights, African traditions insist that rights must coexist with duties. Freedom without responsibility leads to alienation, while responsibility without freedom leads to oppression.<sup>73</sup>

African metaphysics presents a holistic worldview where reality is understood as both physical and spiritual, with all beings interconnected in a dynamic order. Its ontological foundations emphasize that existence is relational, and the African conception of personhood highlights that the individual is defined not in isolation but within community, ancestry, and spiritual ties.

Freedom in African philosophy is not seen as absolute independence but as responsible choice exercised within moral and communal contexts. Determinism, expressed through destiny and divine will, does not negate human agency but

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<sup>73</sup>Hountondji, Paulin J. *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.

guides it, leaving room for accountability and moral responsibility. This balance shows that freedom and determinism are not opposing forces but complementary realities. The African framework also stresses the interplay between individual freedom and communal responsibility, ensuring that personal choices contribute to harmony rather than chaos. Even in dealing with the problem of evil, African thought maintains that humans remain responsible for restoring balance despite cosmic influences.

Compared with Western traditions that often polarize freedom and determinism, African metaphysics provides a compatibilist model that integrates both, showing their coexistence. Its contemporary relevance is clear in law, governance, education, psychology, and environmental ethics, where its emphasis on harmony, responsibility, and interconnectedness offers practical solutions to modern challenges.

In essence, African metaphysics demonstrates that true freedom is not the absence of limits but the responsible exercise of choice within the framework of destiny, community, and moral order, making it a philosophy of balance with enduring significance.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MYSTIC BEINGS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON HUMAN ACTIONS IN AFRICAN METAPHYSICS

#### 3.1 The Role of Ancestral Spirits in Guiding Human Conduct

The role of ancestral spirits in guiding human conduct is central to African metaphysics, as ancestors are regarded not merely as departed family members but as active participants in the lives of the living. They are believed to dwell in the spiritual realm yet maintain close ties with their descendants, watching over them, influencing their decisions, and ensuring the continuity of moral and social order. In many African traditions, the ancestors are honored through rituals, sacrifices, and prayers, which acknowledge their ongoing presence and authority. Their role extends beyond remembrance to active engagement in the moral life of the community.<sup>1</sup>

Ancestral spirits are often viewed as custodians of tradition and morality, ensuring that members of the community uphold cultural values. When individuals deviate from accepted norms, it is believed that the ancestors can express displeasure through misfortunes, illness, or social disharmony. Conversely, those who respect communal ethics and honor the ancestors are thought to enjoy blessings such as fertility, prosperity, and protection. This understanding makes the ancestors a moral

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<sup>1</sup>Wiredu, Kwasi. "The Moral Foundations of an African Culture." In *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies, I*, edited by Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, 193–206. Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992.

compass, guiding conduct not through abstract laws but through lived relational accountability.<sup>2</sup>

In African metaphysics, the authority of ancestral spirits derives from their lived experience and their status as mediators between the living and the divine. Because they once lived as human beings, ancestors are believed to understand the challenges of earthly existence. Their guidance is thus practical and empathetic, rooted in cultural wisdom and communal expectations. As intermediaries, they bridge the gap between human beings and higher spiritual forces, ensuring that human actions align with cosmic and divine order.<sup>3</sup>

The influence of ancestral spirits is also visible in rites of passage, such as initiation, marriage, and burial ceremonies. During these events, ancestors are invoked to bless the participants and sanction their entry into new stages of life. For example, in initiation rites, elders often act as representatives of the ancestors, transmitting values and expectations to the younger generation. This process reinforces the idea that human conduct is not individualistic but deeply tied to ancestral approval and guidance, thereby embedding morality into the very fabric of communal identity.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Gyekye, Kwame. *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

<sup>3</sup>Mbiti, John S. *African Religions and Philosophy*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1969.

<sup>4</sup>Idowu, E. Bolaji. *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. London: SCM Press, 1973.

Dreams and visions are frequently described as channels through which ancestors communicate their will to the living. A person may dream of an ancestor who warns against certain actions, encourages moral living, or prescribes remedies for illness or misfortune. These spiritual encounters are interpreted as direct interventions from the ancestors, showing their active concern for the wellbeing of their descendants. Such experiences reinforce the belief that human conduct is continuously observed and shaped by the unseen world of spirits.<sup>5</sup>

Ancestral spirits are also associated with justice and accountability in African metaphysics. When disputes arise in a community, especially those that threaten unity, elders may invoke the ancestors in rituals to reveal truth or restore peace. The fear of ancestral judgment often compels individuals to act honestly and to resolve conflicts amicably. In this way, the ancestors function as enforcers of justice, ensuring that human behavior aligns with fairness and respect for communal harmony.<sup>6</sup>

In agricultural societies, ancestral spirits are often believed to influence the success of farming and the fertility of the land. Communities make offerings to ancestors before planting and harvesting to seek their blessings. It is thought that neglecting such rituals may lead to poor yields or natural disasters. Here, the ancestors' role in

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<sup>5</sup>Tempels, Placide. *Bantu Philosophy*. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959.

<sup>6</sup>Busia, K. A. *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti*. London: Oxford University Press, 1951.

guiding conduct extends to ecological and economic responsibilities, reminding humans of their duty to live in harmony with nature and to respect traditions that sustain the community.<sup>7</sup>

The moral authority of ancestral spirits also serves to preserve collective memory and identity. By maintaining a connection with the past, the ancestors ensure that cultural values are not forgotten in the face of modernization or external influences. Their presence reinforces continuity, guiding individuals to act in ways that honor the sacrifices and achievements of those who came before them. This guidance fosters a sense of responsibility toward the community and toward future generations, as present conduct is believed to affect not only current relationships but also the legacy one leaves behind.<sup>8</sup>

The fear and reverence associated with ancestral spirits function as powerful motivators of ethical behavior. People avoid actions such as theft, adultery, or betrayal not only because of social sanctions but also because of the belief that ancestors will punish them. This spiritual accountability transcends human observation, instilling morality in even private actions where societal authority

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<sup>7</sup>Nyerere, Julius. *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*. Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968.

<sup>8</sup>Kagame, Alexis. *La Philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise de l'Être*. Brussels: Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales, 1956.

might be absent. Thus, the ancestors' influence extends to both the public and private dimensions of human conduct.<sup>9</sup>

Ultimately, the role of ancestral spirits in guiding human conduct in African metaphysics underscores the interconnectedness of the spiritual and physical realms. Human beings are not seen as isolated individuals but as members of a continuum that includes the living, the dead, and the yet unborn. The ancestors embody this connection, ensuring that human actions remain aligned with cosmic order, divine will, and communal wellbeing. Their influence provides moral stability, cultural continuity, and spiritual assurance, making them indispensable guides in the shaping of human conduct within African thought.<sup>10</sup>

### **3.1.1 Deities and the Regulation of Moral and Communal Life**

In African metaphysics, deities are revered as powerful spiritual beings who regulate moral and communal life by acting as custodians of order, justice, and harmony. Unlike the ancestors, who are primarily connected to family and lineage, deities are often associated with broader natural forces such as rivers, mountains, fertility, and the sky. They are regarded as intermediaries between the Supreme Being and humanity, carrying divine authority to enforce moral standards and guide

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<sup>9</sup>Oruka, H. Odera. *Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy*. Nairobi: ACTS Press, 1990.

<sup>10</sup>Gyekye, Kwame, and Kwasi Wiredu, eds. *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies, I*. Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992.

human relationships within the community. Through rituals, sacrifices, and prayers, people seek the favor of these deities to ensure balance in both personal and communal affairs.<sup>11</sup>

The regulatory function of deities extends to the enforcement of morality. Many African societies believe that the deities observe human actions and intervene when individuals transgress moral norms. Wrongdoing such as theft, dishonesty, adultery, or neglect of communal duties is thought to provoke the displeasure of the deities, resulting in misfortune, illness, or communal unrest. This belief acts as a deterrent against immoral behavior, reinforcing the idea that morality is not only a social construct but also a divine obligation that ensures harmony between humans, the spiritual world, and nature.<sup>12</sup>

Deities also play a significant role in the resolution of conflicts and the restoration of justice within communities. In cases where truth is obscured, rituals invoking the deities may be performed to reveal hidden realities and determine guilt or innocence. The fear of divine retribution often compels individuals to speak truthfully and act fairly, thereby strengthening communal trust and cohesion. By serving as guarantors of justice, the deities embody the moral foundation upon

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<sup>11</sup>Oluwole, Sophie B. *Socrates and Orunmila: Two Patron Saints of Classical Philosophy*. Ibadan: Ark Publishers, 2014.

<sup>12</sup>Horton, Robin. "African Traditional Thought and Western Science." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 37, no. 1 (1967): 50–71.

which social relationships are built, ensuring that peace and order prevail in the community.<sup>13</sup>

The influence of deities on communal life is equally evident in festivals, ceremonies, and communal rituals that reaffirm collective identity and shared values. These occasions are not only acts of worship but also moments of moral renewal, where communities reflect on their responsibilities to one another and to the divine order. The presence of the deities in such events symbolizes unity, reminding individuals that their personal conduct has direct implications for the wellbeing of the entire community. Thus, the worship of deities strengthens social bonds while reinforcing moral discipline.<sup>14</sup>

Ultimately, deities in African metaphysics embody the interconnectedness of morality, spirituality, and communal existence. They regulate human actions by rewarding virtue and punishing vice, ensuring that ethical standards are upheld not only by human authority but also by divine power. Their role affirms that human conduct is inseparable from spiritual accountability, and that the wellbeing of the community depends on maintaining harmony with the divine order. In this way,

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<sup>13</sup>Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

<sup>14</sup>Fayemi, Ademola Kazeem. "The Challenges of Relativism and the Quest for African Philosophy." *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya* 1, no. 2 (2009): 41–59.

deities serve as guardians of both moral integrity and communal stability, shaping the ethical fabric of African societies across generations.<sup>15</sup>

### **3.1.2 Spirit Forces, Rituals, and the Shaping of Human Destiny**

Spirit forces in African metaphysics are believed to permeate the universe, shaping human destiny in ways that transcend ordinary human control. These forces, often invisible but deeply felt, are thought to operate in both benevolent and malevolent forms, influencing health, prosperity, fertility, and even social harmony. Unlike ancestors or deities, spirit forces are sometimes impersonal powers, yet they interact with human life in profound ways. Communities recognize that to live well and fulfill one's destiny, it is necessary to acknowledge, respect, and sometimes appease these forces through rituals and symbolic acts.<sup>16</sup>

Rituals play a vital role in mediating between humans and spirit forces, ensuring that their influence is aligned with communal wellbeing. Offerings, sacrifices, libations, and prayers are performed to either attract blessings or ward off misfortune. These rituals are not empty traditions but are understood as channels through which human beings establish communication with the unseen powers that

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<sup>15</sup>Azenabor, Godwin S. *Understanding the Problems in African Philosophy*. Lagos: First Academic Publishers, 2002.

<sup>16</sup>Kaphagawani, Didier N. "African Conceptions of a Person: A Critical Survey." In *A Companion to African Philosophy*, edited by Kwasi Wiredu, 332–342. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

shape their lives. By engaging with spirit forces ritually, individuals and communities seek to harmonize their destinies with the broader cosmic order.<sup>17</sup>

In many African traditions, spirit forces are associated with natural phenomena such as rivers, forests, or mountains, which are treated as sacred sites. Rituals conducted in these spaces acknowledge the sacredness of nature and the spiritual forces that dwell within it. For instance, before farming seasons, offerings may be made to spirit forces to ensure fertility of the soil and abundant harvests. Such practices highlight the belief that human destiny is inseparable from the spiritual energy of the natural world, reinforcing ecological respect and communal responsibility.<sup>18</sup>

Spirit forces also play a role in personal destiny, often linked to concepts such as one's spiritual "chi" in Igbo thought or "ori" in Yoruba philosophy. These ideas suggest that each individual is born with a guiding spirit or force that shapes their purpose and life path. Rituals of divination are performed to uncover the will of this spirit, providing insight into personal destiny and how best to fulfill it. In this way,

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<sup>17</sup>Menkiti, Ifeanyi A. "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought." In *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, edited by Richard A. Wright, 171–181. Lanham: University Press of America, 1984.

<sup>18</sup>Gyekye, Kwame. *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

spirit forces are not only collective but also deeply personal, guiding individual choices and actions in alignment with cosmic order.<sup>19</sup>

The role of spirit forces in shaping destiny becomes especially evident in times of crisis, such as illness, infertility, or misfortune. When such challenges arise, they are often interpreted as signs of imbalance between humans and spirit forces. Ritual specialists, such as diviners or healers, are consulted to identify the offended forces and prescribe rituals of reconciliation. These interventions demonstrate that human destiny is not fixed but can be reshaped through right relationships with the spiritual realm, reaffirming the dynamic interplay between freedom and divine influence.<sup>20</sup>

Ultimately, spirit forces and rituals underscore the African metaphysical conviction that human life is part of a larger spiritual continuum. Human destiny is not determined solely by personal effort but by the interaction of visible and invisible realities. Through rituals, communities actively engage these forces, seeking to align human conduct and aspirations with cosmic harmony. In doing so, they affirm

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<sup>19</sup>Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi. *On Reason: Rationality in a World of Cultural Conflict and Racism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

<sup>20</sup>Okolo, Chukwudum B. *What Is to Be African?*. Enugu: Cecta Nigeria Limited, 1993.

that destiny is both a gift and a responsibility, requiring cooperation with spiritual powers to realize its fullest expression.<sup>21</sup>

### **3.2 Mystic Beings as Instruments of Reward and Punishment**

Mystic beings in African metaphysics are often regarded as agents of both reward and punishment, serving as enforcers of the moral and spiritual order that governs human life. They are seen as extensions of divine justice, ensuring that individuals and communities live in harmony with cultural norms, ethical principles, and cosmic balance. Through their invisible yet powerful influence, mystic beings remind humans that their actions carry consequences beyond the immediate and the physical, shaping destinies according to the principles of justice and accountability.<sup>22</sup>

One of the ways mystic beings reward human conduct is through the granting of prosperity, fertility, protection, and general wellbeing. When individuals honor ancestral spirits, deities, or other spiritual forces through rituals, sacrifices, and moral living, it is believed that they receive blessings in return. Such rewards are not viewed as arbitrary but as affirmations of righteous living and respect for the metaphysical order. In this sense, mystic beings function as guarantors of

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<sup>21</sup>Sodipo, J. O. "Notes on the Concept of Cause and Chance in Yoruba Traditional Thought." In *Second Order: An African Journal of Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (1972): 31–37.

<sup>22</sup>Hallen, Barry, and J. Olubi Sodipo. *Knowledge, Belief, and Witchcraft: Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997.

reciprocity, ensuring that good deeds and moral discipline translate into tangible benefits.<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, mystic beings are equally associated with punishment for moral failings, negligence, or disobedience to spiritual obligations. Illness, barrenness, poverty, or social misfortune may be interpreted as signs of ancestral displeasure, divine anger, or the retaliation of neglected spirits. Such punishments are not seen as mere retribution but as corrective measures intended to bring individuals back into alignment with moral and communal responsibilities. By imposing consequences, mystic beings reinforce the seriousness of spiritual accountability in human affairs.<sup>24</sup>

Ritual practices often reflect this dual function of reward and punishment. Communities perform rituals not only to seek blessings but also to avert or appease the wrath of offended mystic beings. For example, cleansing ceremonies, sacrifices, and libations may be prescribed by diviners to restore balance after a moral transgression. These acts of reconciliation underscore the belief that punishment is

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<sup>23</sup>Bewaji, John A. I. *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge: A Pluricultural Approach*. Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2007.

<sup>24</sup>Metz, Thaddeus. "Toward an African Moral Theory." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15, no. 3 (2007): 321–341.

not final but a call to repentance, while reward is the fruit of continued faithfulness to spiritual obligations.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Iroegbu, Pantaleon. *Metaphysics: The Kpim of Philosophy*. Owerri: International Universities Press, 1995.

### **3.3 Interconnectedness of the Spiritual and Human Realms in African Thought**

In African metaphysics, the spiritual and human realms are not seen as separate or distant spheres but as deeply interconnected dimensions of existence. The visible and invisible worlds flow into each other, shaping human destiny, social order, and cosmic balance. This interconnectedness is rooted in the belief that life is a continuum, where the living, the ancestors, the unborn, and spiritual forces all participate in a shared reality. Human actions therefore carry implications beyond the material, influencing relationships with spirits, deities, and the Supreme Being.<sup>26</sup>

This worldview emphasizes that every human activity, whether ordinary or extraordinary, is spiritually significant. Farming, marriage, childbirth, and healing are all performed with recognition of their spiritual dimensions. Rituals and prayers are interwoven into daily life as reminders of the unseen forces that accompany human existence. In this sense, African thought resists any dichotomy between sacred and secular, showing instead that human life is always lived within a spiritual framework that shapes both personal conduct and communal wellbeing.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Towa, Marcien. *Essai sur la problématique philosophique dans l'Afrique actuelle*. Yaoundé: CLE, 1971.

<sup>27</sup>Hountondji, Paulin J. *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.

The interconnectedness of the realms is perhaps most visible in the role of ancestors, who act as mediators between the living and the divine. Ancestors, though physically dead, are believed to remain present and active in guiding, blessing, and disciplining their descendants. This continuity affirms that death is not an end but a transition into another stage of existence where one's influence persists. Such a perspective deepens the sense of moral accountability, as individuals recognize that their conduct affects not only the living community but also the spiritual order.<sup>28</sup>

Deities further reinforce this interconnection by linking natural phenomena to spiritual power. Rivers, forests, mountains, and skies are not viewed as inert objects but as abodes of divine forces that influence human life. Through rituals and sacrifices performed in these sacred spaces, communities acknowledge that their survival and prosperity depend on maintaining harmony with the spiritual world. In this way, the natural environment becomes a meeting point of human and divine realities, embodying the seamless unity of the two realms.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Wiredu, Kwasi. *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

<sup>29</sup>Masolo, D. A. *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Divination practices also highlight the close relationship between the spiritual and human worlds. When individuals or communities face crises, diviners are consulted to reveal hidden truths or prescribe rituals for resolution. The diviner is seen as someone who interprets the messages of spirits and deities, offering insight into the unseen causes of human challenges. Such practices reflect the conviction that human knowledge alone is insufficient; true understanding requires engagement with spiritual wisdom. This demonstrates the practical consequences of the spiritual-human interconnection in decision-making and destiny.<sup>30</sup>

Rituals of healing provide further evidence of the overlap between the two realms. Illness is often interpreted as a disruption in the relationship between humans and spiritual forces. Healers therefore approach sickness not merely as a biological phenomenon but as a spiritual imbalance requiring reconciliation. The process of healing involves both medicinal remedies and ritual acts such as sacrifices or incantations, restoring harmony between the physical body and the spiritual world. This illustrates the holistic nature of African metaphysics, where health is defined by harmony across realms.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Ani, Ifeanyi. "The Rationality of African Belief in Witchcraft." *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1–22.

<sup>31</sup>Idemudia, Solomon O. "The Influence of African Metaphysics on Contemporary Ethics." *Journal of African Studies and Development* 5, no. 7 (2013): 152–160.

### **3.3.1 Mystic beings in Christianity**

Mystic beings in Christianity occupy a vital role as mediators between humanity and God, reminding believers that life is part of a greater spiritual reality beyond the material world.<sup>32</sup> Angels are the most prominent mystic beings, serving as God's messengers and protectors. They guide, defend, and communicate divine will, showing God's active involvement in human affairs. Saints, especially in Catholic and Orthodox traditions, are honored as holy figures who intercede for the faithful. Their mystical presence assures believers that spiritual bonds continue beyond death. The Holy Spirit, as experienced in prophecy, healing, and visions, also embodies mystic presence in Christianity. Through such encounters, Christians affirm God's direct and transformative communication with humanity.<sup>33</sup>

### **3.3.2 Mystic beings in Ifa**

In the Ifa tradition of the Yoruba people, mystic beings occupy a central role as intermediaries between Olodumare, the Supreme Being, and humanity. These mystic beings are primarily expressed through the Orisa, divine entities that embody aspects of nature, morality, and cosmic order. They are not distant gods but spiritual presences actively engaged in human affairs, guiding individuals in their daily lives and shaping destiny through wisdom, protection, and discipline. The

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<sup>32</sup>Uzodinma, Nwala T. *Critical Review of the Great Debate on African Philosophy*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1992.

<sup>33</sup>Oluwole, Sophie B. *Philosophy and Oral Tradition*. Lagos: ARK Publishers, 1999.

Orisa are revered through rituals, sacrifices, and chants, which maintain the sacred bond between humans and the spiritual world.<sup>34</sup>

Another vital category of mystic beings in Ifa is the ancestors (Egungun), who are seen as guardians of tradition and moral order. They continue to participate in the life of the community after death, offering blessings, protection, and correction when necessary. Ancestors are honored in ceremonies that invoke their presence, reinforcing the idea that the living are never separated from the spiritual world. Their guidance ensures that communal ethics, respect for elders, and cultural values remain firmly embedded in human conduct.<sup>35</sup>

Ifa also emphasizes the role of the divinatory system, through which Orunmila, the Orisa of wisdom, communicates spiritual truths. Through divination, the will of mystic beings is revealed, offering insight into hidden causes of misfortune and instructions for achieving balance. This process underscores the interconnectedness of human destiny and the spiritual realm, showing that mystic beings are not passive but active shapers of life's outcomes. In Ifa thought, mystic beings therefore serve as moral guides, protectors, and interpreters of divine will, ensuring harmony between humans, nature, and the cosmos.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Abanuka, Bartholomew. *A New Essay on African Philosophy*. Enugu: SNAAP Press, 1994.

<sup>35</sup>Edeh, Emmanuel. *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985.

<sup>36</sup>Ozumba, Godfrey O. *A Concise Introduction to Epistemology in African Philosophy*. Calabar: Jochrisam Publishers, 2004.

### 3.3.3 Mystic beings in Islam

In Islam, mystic beings are understood primarily through the Qur'an and Hadith, where they are recognized as part of the unseen world (*al-ghayb*) that influences human life. Among the most significant of these are the angels (*mala'ika*), who are created from light and serve as messengers and servants of Allah. Angels such as Jibril (Gabriel) are believed to deliver divine revelation, including the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad. They also record human deeds, provide protection, and execute Allah's commands, reminding believers that their actions are constantly observed within a larger spiritual order.<sup>37</sup>

Another important category of mystic beings in Islam is the jinn, created from smokeless fire. Unlike angels, jinn possess free will and can choose to obey or disobey Allah. Some are righteous and submit to Islam, while others, like Iblis (Satan), embody rebellion and misguidance. The existence of jinn highlights the diversity of spiritual beings in Islam and serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle between good and evil influences in human life. Belief in their reality encourages Muslims to seek protection through prayer, remembrance (*dhikr*), and reliance on Allah.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ukpokolo, Isaac E. "Collective Responsibility and Human Solidarity in African Communitarian Ethics." *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions* 1, no. 2 (2012): 63–74.

<sup>38</sup>Ijiomah, Chris O. *Harmonious Monism: A Philosophical Logic of Explanation for Ontological Issues in Supernaturalism in African Thought*. Calabar: Jochrisam Publishers, 1995.

Mystic beings in Islam also extend to the recognition of righteous humans endowed with spiritual insight, such as prophets and, in Sufi traditions, saints (*awliya' Allah*). While prophets are chosen by Allah to guide humanity, Sufi mysticism often emphasizes the continuing presence of saintly figures who, through their closeness to God, can inspire and intercede on behalf of believers. Together, these categories of mystic beings underscore the Islamic conviction that human existence is part of a vast unseen reality, where spiritual forces work to guide, test, and protect individuals on their journey toward Allah.<sup>39</sup>

Mystic beings in Islam ultimately emphasize the closeness of the unseen world to human existence, reminding believers that life is not confined to material reality but deeply connected to spiritual dimensions. Angels, jinn, and saintly figures illustrate the diversity of beings created by Allah, each with roles that affect guidance, accountability, and moral choices. Their presence calls Muslims to humility, vigilance, and devotion, reinforcing the belief that success in this life and the hereafter depends on aligning one's actions with divine will while being mindful of the unseen forces that shape existence.<sup>40</sup>

### **3.4 Determinism and the Influence of Destiny in African Thought**

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<sup>39</sup>Ogwejiofor, J. Obi. *Philosophy and the African Predicament*. Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2001.

<sup>40</sup>Oyeshile, Olatunji. *The Individual–Community Relationship as an Issue in Social and Political Philosophy*. Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2005.

Determinism, as a philosophical concept, addresses the extent to which human actions are preordained by forces beyond individual control. In African thought, determinism is often articulated through the notion of destiny, a guiding principle believed to be conferred by God, the ancestors, or spiritual forces. Destiny is not seen as a rigid chain of events but as a framework within which human life unfolds.

The African idea of destiny emphasizes that every individual is born with a unique path or purpose. This purpose, often understood as one's "personal destiny," determines not only the circumstances of birth but also the opportunities and challenges one will encounter in life. The belief in destiny underscores the conviction that human existence is deeply interconnected with divine order.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, African traditions recognize the role of human agency within the bounds of destiny. While certain aspects of life—such as birth, family lineage, and mortality—are considered unalterable, individuals are believed to possess the freedom to make choices that either align with or resist their destined path. In this way, determinism and freedom coexist, reflecting a nuanced balance rather than absolute opposition.

In Yoruba metaphysics, for example, destiny (Òrì) is regarded as something chosen before birth in the presence of the Supreme Being. Yet, once in the physical world, a person must strive through effort, character, and wisdom to actualize this destiny.

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<sup>41</sup>Nkrumah, Kwame. *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-colonization*. London: Heinemann, 1964.

If neglected, the individual risks living below their potential.<sup>42</sup> This highlights the dynamic relationship between determinism and personal responsibility. African determinism is not fatalistic. Rather than suggesting that all events are fixed and unchangeable, it presents a worldview in which destiny sets the boundaries while human will operates within them. Individuals are encouraged to work, pray, and engage in rituals that strengthen their alignment with destiny, suggesting that human effort plays a vital role in shaping outcomes.

The influence of ancestors is also central to African reflections on determinism. Ancestors are believed to watch over the living, guiding them along their destined paths. Their approval or disapproval may determine whether an individual experiences prosperity or misfortune. This intergenerational dimension deepens the sense that destiny is not merely personal but embedded in a network of relationships that transcend time.

Religious practices reflect this belief. Divination systems, such as Ifa among the Yoruba, serve as tools for discerning the shape of destiny and providing guidance on how to navigate life's challenges. Such practices illustrate how determinism is not passive resignation but active engagement with spiritual forces to ensure the realization of one's purpose.

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<sup>42</sup>Senghor, Léopold Sédar. *On African Socialism*. New York: Praeger, 1964.

African determinism is also linked with morality. A person who fails to live according to ethical norms is seen as resisting or distorting their destiny. Conversely, those who cultivate virtues such as honesty, respect, and diligence are understood to be in alignment with their preordained path. Thus, moral living becomes both a sign and a means of fulfilling destiny.<sup>43</sup>

The idea of destiny also addresses social harmony. Since each individual has a role assigned by divine order, society functions best when everyone fulfills their respective responsibilities. Conflicts, envy, and injustice are interpreted as consequences of neglecting or misunderstanding destiny. Hence, the community encourages individuals to embrace their paths, ensuring balance and cohesion in social life. African determinism also incorporates ecological dimensions. Many traditions hold that human destiny is tied to the land, rivers, and natural environment in which one is born. Disrespect for nature disrupts the flow of destiny, leading to ecological and spiritual consequences. Thus, harmony with the environment is integral to the unfolding of one's fate.

It is also noteworthy that African views of determinism often resist rigid dichotomies. Instead of framing life as either determined or free, they present a relational model where destiny provides structure, and freedom enables participation in that structure.

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<sup>43</sup>Mbembe, Achille. *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

This holistic outlook avoids the extremes of absolute fatalism and absolute autonomy. Within the African diaspora, the theme of destiny has played a critical role in sustaining resilience against oppression. Enslaved Africans and their descendants drew strength from the belief that their suffering did not negate their divine purpose. The conviction that history itself had a destiny gave meaning to struggles for freedom and justice.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, destiny is seen as open to transformation. Misfortune or setbacks may not mean destiny has failed but may serve as part of the process of growth and redirection. Through rituals of cleansing, reconciliation, and renewal, individuals can realign themselves with their destined paths, demonstrating that determinism in African thought is dynamic rather than rigid. Destiny also provides a metaphysical explanation for inequality or difference in human experience. Some are destined for leadership, others for craftsmanship, while others may be destined to serve as spiritual mediators. These differences are not viewed as accidents but as reflections of divine order. However, abuse of such roles is condemned, as it undermines both personal and communal flourishing. In political contexts, African rulers were often believed to be chosen by destiny. Their legitimacy derived not only from hereditary succession but also from the belief that divine will had determined their rise. When

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<sup>44</sup>Mudimbe, V. Y. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

leaders governed unjustly, however, it was interpreted as a failure to actualize their destiny properly, thereby inviting spiritual and social consequences.<sup>45</sup>

The relationship between determinism and suffering is also significant. Misfortune is sometimes explained as part of an individual's destined journey, intended to teach resilience or prepare one for future greatness. Yet, through prayers and sacrifices, suffering can be mitigated, underscoring the belief that destiny, while powerful, is not unalterable.

Destiny in African thought is, therefore, both empowering and humbling. It empowers by giving meaning and direction to human life, assuring individuals that they are part of a divine plan. At the same time, it humbles by reminding them that life is not entirely within their control and that alignment with transcendent order is necessary for fulfillment.

Philosophically, African determinism contributes to the broader debate on freedom and necessity by offering a mediating position. It challenges Western dichotomies that treat determinism and freedom as mutually exclusive, instead affirming that freedom finds its fullest expression when exercised within the parameters of destiny.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Achebe, Chinua. *The Education of a British-Protected Child: Essays*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

<sup>46</sup>Soyinka, Wole. *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

### **3.5 African Traditional Practices and Consultation to Determine a Child's Destiny**

In African traditional practice, the birth of a child is not seen as a random occurrence but as the unfolding of a divine plan in which destiny plays a central role. It is widely believed that every child enters the world with a predetermined purpose, tied to both the spiritual and communal order. This destiny, however, is not always self-evident, and communities often rely on metaphysical consultation to uncover the unique path laid out for the newborn. Through divination and spiritual inquiry, elders, priests, or diviners interpret the child's spiritual essence and reveal insights that guide parents and the community in nurturing the child's life.<sup>47</sup>

The consultation process often involves the use of sacred instruments or rituals to communicate with spiritual forces, deities, or ancestors. Among the Yoruba, for instance, the Ifa divination system is employed to determine the destiny (*ori*) of a child, revealing their strengths, challenges, and spiritual obligations. Such consultations provide guidance not only on the child's character and potential but also on the kinds of rituals, taboos, or moral practices that must be observed to ensure that the child fulfills their divine purpose. This process situates the child

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<sup>47</sup>Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

within a larger cosmic framework, affirming that life is a gift with responsibilities.<sup>48</sup>

A crucial aspect of these consultations is the role of ancestors and deities in shaping and confirming destiny. It is often believed that ancestors may choose to reincarnate through a newborn, carrying forward unfulfilled missions or blessings from past generations. Through ritual inquiry, the community identifies whether the child represents such a return and what duties this entails. Similarly, deities are consulted to discern whether the child has a special calling, such as priesthood, healing, or leadership. In this way, metaphysical consultation ensures that the child's life is harmonized with both ancestral continuity and divine will.<sup>49</sup>

These consultations also serve a protective function, safeguarding the child from spiritual or physical harm. By uncovering the destiny early in life, parents can perform rituals of protection, dedicate the child to specific deities, or avoid harmful practices that might disrupt their spiritual path. For example, offerings may be made to appease deities or to remove obstacles that could hinder the child's growth. This protective dimension underscores the belief that destiny is not static but

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<sup>48</sup>Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.

<sup>49</sup>Horton, A. "Destiny and Determinism in African Philosophy." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2001): 23–38.

requires careful nurturing and alignment with the spiritual realm to be fully realized.<sup>50</sup>

Ultimately, metaphysics and consultation to determine a child's destiny reflect the African conviction that life is sacred, purposeful, and interconnected with the spiritual world. The act of seeking divine or ancestral guidance at birth affirms the child's value not only to the family but also to the community and cosmos. By unveiling the child's destiny, consultation provides direction for upbringing, moral education, and spiritual development, ensuring that the child grows in alignment with their divine purpose. This practice strengthens the bonds between the living, the ancestors, and the deities, weaving the child's life into the larger fabric of communal and cosmic harmony.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Falola, Toyin. *Yoruba Gurus: Indigenous Production of Knowledge in Africa*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999.

<sup>51</sup>Gyekye, Kwame. "African Cultural Values: An Introduction." Accra: Sankofa Publishing, 1996.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

#### 4.1 Evaluation

The research presented in the three chapters offers a profound and systematic investigation into the complex relationship between human freedom and spiritual determinism within African metaphysics. The work's primary strength lies in its successful departure from Western philosophical models that often frame free will and determinism as a strict dichotomy. Instead, it meticulously constructs a coherent and distinctly African framework, which can be termed relational compatibilism.

This framework is built upon a foundational redefinition of its core components. African metaphysics is presented not as an abstract speculation but as a lived reality rooted in a holistic worldview. This worldview perceives the universe as a single, interconnected reality where the physical and spiritual realms are seamlessly woven together. Within this cosmos, human beings exist in a dynamic network of relationships with ancestors, deities, spirits, the community, and the natural world.

The analysis correctly identifies the African concept of the person as pivotal. The notion that "I am because we are" is not merely a social ethic but an ontological principle. A person's identity and agency are constituted by their relationships, meaning that freedom cannot be conceived as individual autonomy from the group

or the cosmos. True freedom is found in the responsible exercise of one's will within this relational fabric.

The treatment of mystic beings is particularly nuanced. They are not portrayed as despotic forces imposing an unalterable fate. Rather, their influence is interactive and moral. Ancestors act as custodians of tradition and ethical conduct, deities enforce cosmic justice, and spirit forces shape the environment of one's destiny. The concept of **\*\*destiny\*\*** (*\*chi\**, *\*akala\**, *\*ori\**) is critically examined and revealed not as a fixed script but as a pre-birth potential or a life's foundational purpose. This redefinition is crucial, as it creates the space for genuine human agency. Destiny provides the structure, but freedom is the power to build within it through effort, choice, and moral living.

The research effectively highlights the mechanisms of this negotiation. Rituals—such as sacrifices, divination, and prayers, are framed as practical technologies for engaging with the spiritual world, seeking guidance, and maintaining harmony. Similarly, moral conduct is not just a social obligation but a metaphysical necessity for aligning with the cosmic order and strengthening one's vital force. This integration of metaphysics, ethics, and daily practice demonstrates the sophistication and practicality of the African philosophical system.

While the argument is robust and cohesive, it implicitly invites further inquiry into certain tensions. For instance, the limits of negotiation with mystic beings when

individual conscience conflicts with communal or ancestral norms are not fully explored. Similarly, the framework's capacity to accommodate radical social change or profound individual dissent could be probed further. Nonetheless, the work provides a comprehensive and powerful foundation for understanding how African thought reconciles the influence of unseen forces with the human experience of choice and responsibility.

## **4.2 Conclusion**

In response to the central question, "Can Man Act Freely in the World of Mystic Beings? In African Metaphysics," the research leads to a definitive yet nuanced conclusion: yes, but this freedom is relational, contextual, and deeply responsible.

Human beings in the African metaphysical universe are not autonomous agents operating in a spiritual vacuum, nor are they puppets controlled by mystic strings. They are co-authors of their destiny in active collaboration with the spiritual world. The mystic beings—ancestors, deities, and spirits—establish the moral and cosmic order, set the broad contours of a person's destiny, and provide continuous guidance and judgment. However, they do not pre-empt human action.

True freedom, therefore, is the capacity and responsibility to navigate this spiritually charged environment. It is exercised through diligent effort, ethical choices, and ritual engagement to align one's life with their pre-ordained potential. A person who fails to act, or who acts immorally, is not fulfilling their destiny and

is thus living in a state of spiritual dissonance and unfreedom. Conversely, the one who actively and virtuously strives to realize their purpose is truly free, harmonizing their individual will with the collective well-being of the community and the divine will of the cosmos.

Ultimately, the African metaphysical perspective offers a profound vision where freedom is not the absence of influence but the presence of meaningful relationship. To be free is to consciously and ethically participate in the vast, interconnected community of beings, both seen and unseen, fulfilling one's unique role within the harmonious and purposeful order of existence. This view presents a powerful alternative to individualistic conceptions of liberty, asserting that the highest form of autonomy is realized through responsible relationship with the entire cosmos.



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